



Increasing Achievement for Multilingual Learners in Greater Minnesota

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Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity

- 1. Prioritize equity.**
- 2. Start from within.**
- 3. Measure what matters.**
- 4. Go local.**
- 5. Follow the money.**
- 6. Start early.**
- 7. Monitor implementation of standards.**
- 8. Value people.**
- 9. Improve conditions for learning.**
- 10. Give students options.**

Growth in Multilingual Learner Communities

450,000 residents are foreign born, 8% of the state's population

80% of immigrants and refugees live in Minneapolis or St. Paul

However, growth is occurring in Greater Minnesota

14% of Somali, 30% of Mexican, and 34% of Korean immigrants

How refugees from a particular country actually get to Minnesota involves complex vetting.

Minnesota has a strong tradition of “active volunteerism,” and this is evident in the high number of voluntary resettlement agencies (VOLAGs).

When refugees settle in the US, they must have a sponsor to help with their transition to life in the US. VOLAGs often serve as the actual sponsors for refugees, and/or help individual groups (such as specific churches, mosques, temples or gurdwaras) connect with refugees to serve as sponsors or provide the support new immigrants need to find housing, acquire social services, enroll children in school, assist in language instruction, get driver's licenses, and navigate the complexities of moving to a new country.

The Minnesotan response to immigration is been positive. In the 2016 election, for example, the first Somali Muslim woman, Ilhan Omar, was elected to serve in the Minnesota State Legislature, representing Minneapolis House District 60B.

Can You Define?

RAEL - Recently Arrived English Learners

LTEL - Long-Term English Learners

SLIFE - Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

MEP - Migrant Education Program

ILP - Individual Language Learning Plan

1776

In the 13 colonies, German, Dutch, French, Swedish and Polish were all commonly spoken languages. The writers of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights decided not to proclaim any one language as the formal language of the new nation, because to do so would give one language group dominance over another.

1840 – A law in several Midwest states passed requiring German language instruction whenever 75 or more parents demanded it.

1864 - Congress makes it illegal for Native Americans to be taught in their native languages. Native children as young as four years old are taken from their parents and sent to Bureau of Indian Affairs off-reservation boarding schools.

1896 - Plessy v. Ferguson decision. The U.S. Supreme Court rules that the state of Louisiana has the right to require "separate but equal" railroad cars for Blacks and Whites.

This decision meant that the federal government officially recognized segregation as legal.

One result was that southern states passed laws requiring racial segregation in public schools.

1905 - The U.S. Supreme Court requires California to extend public education to the children of Chinese immigrants.

1906 - San Francisco School Board creates segregated schools for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students.

1954 - U.S. Supreme Court Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision, ending “separate but equal” doctrine that supported racial segregation of public schools.

1964 - Civil Rights Act is passed. Institutions receiving federal funds cannot discriminate based on race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.

1970 - Office of Civil Rights (OCR) position states that the native languages of minority students should not inhibit their participation in the educational system.

Equal Educational Opportunity Act 1972

- Removal of language barriers
- Ensured equal participation of students in instructional programs
- Equal education is not the same education for all, but **equal access** to educational opportunities

Lau v. Nichols 1974

"There is no equality of treatment by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education"

Plyler v. Doe - 1982

Guaranteed the right to public education for **all students** regardless of legal documentation.

School districts should not take actions that could be seen as chilling or discouraging undocumented students from attending school.

Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success

- Multilingualism as an Asset
- Teacher and Administrator Skills and Knowledge
- Diversity of Multilingual Learners
- Multiple Voices Engaged

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- Academic Achievement
- Progress Toward English Language Proficiency
- Academic Progress
- Graduation Rates
- Consistent Attendance

Specific Communities

Districts with Pacific Islander communities:

La Qui Parle Valley

Chuukese immigrants from Micronesia moved to Milan, “Little Norway.” Half of the population (400) is Micronesian. The town was reinvigorated with the immigration. In 1979, a resident had worked in that area while in the Peace Corp.

The 1986 “Compact of Free Association” gives the U.S. use of the islands for military exercises in exchange for immigration. Lagging economic development and rising sea levels lead to increased immigration. Families came primarily for a better education for their children.

Monthly get-togethers connect communities. “Who lives here?” “Old people pretty much.” Micronesians are not eligible for financial aid for post secondary education, USDA grants, or federal programs such as Medicaid.

Many families work at Jennie-O turkey plant in Montevideo.

Specific Communities

Districts with Somali communities:

Faribault, St. Cloud

Around 150,000 Somalis, both refugees and nonrefugees, live in the United States, according to U.N. estimates from 2015. More Somalis live in Minnesota than any other state. Early 1990's visas were issued for families. 52,000 people moved to Minnesota starting in Marshall to work in meat processing plants.

Stearns County has resettled 1,774 primary refugees from 2005 to 2018, of which nearly 90% are Somali, according to the Minnesota Department of Health. Benton and Sherburne counties have resettled 117 and 46 refugees, respectively, in that time frame.

“Farhiya recalled growing up with her high school classmates who bullied Somali students and older residents who yelled at her to leave. She hears the same racist taunts in St. Cloud today.”

Specific Communities

Districts with Karen communities:

Willmar, Marshall, Austin, Albert Lea, Worthington-

Many Karen left Burma due to violence. Ten thousand Karen live in Minnesota, arriving between 2005 and 2018. Karen Organization of Minnesota (KOM) in St. Paul is the largest Karen nonprofit in the U.S. The First Baptist Church in Albert Lea was purchased by the Karen community and renamed Zion Baptist Church.

Select Foods pork processing plant in Albert Lea has 300 Karen employees.

In Albert Lea, the suicide of a 14 year old ninth grader, Pla Mo, led to a review of support system.

Specific Communities

Districts with Latinx communities:

Worthington, St. James, Butterfield-Odin

About 60% of Latinos in Minnesota were born in the United States. The sugar beet industry drove the initial Latino migration to Minnesota.

By the 1990s, the Latino community began to grow rapidly in many rural places, such as Worthington, Willmar, Pelican Rapids, St. James, Le Center, and Madelia.

In those communities, Latino families helped reinvigorate towns and schools. In the 2010s, Minnesota features large clusters of Latino families near meat- and poultry-packing facilities. St. James and Butterfield, for example, may be over 50% Latinx in elementary schools.

“The first time being undocumented “really hit” was when she was 15, and her peers were going to drivers education classes. Having to justify not going, she lied, telling people she’d gotten into driving trouble, which caused the delay in her ability to get a license.

“It takes a deep psychological toll; you’re always on alert, and it’s the little things that people (who have social security numbers) take for granted,” she said. “I feel like a ‘free’ bird in a golden cage; DACA has given me a lot of amazing opportunities, but I’m still not fully acknowledged nor included in this country--I still have to see the fear in my mom’s eyes.”

Marquez Trapero is in a mixed-status family, where some of her relatives are U.S. citizens, some--like her--are on DACA, and others are undocumented, she said. Still, “everyone in my family was so happy for me (when I got DACA); it lifted everyone.”

Current Challenges

COVID-19

Willmar and Melrose Jennie-O Turkey Stores closed in April/May, 2020 after workers tested positive (1,200 employees).

Integration and a lack of mental health services

“Integrating into a new culture inevitably presents new tensions and struggles. Young immigrants like Paw and Najma often become ambassadors twice over: for the Americans they meet at school, at work, and in the community, they’re expected to provide insights about the traditions and beliefs of the place they came from.” (Stepping Up at Jennie-O)

Immigration fears

Raids greatly affect students and their parents. In 2006, more than 200 workers were detained by federal agents in Worthington, leaving families without income and concerned for their elders.

Rubric: What to Look For

1. Culture: How to build better relationships?
2. Language: How to implement better language support?
3. Content: How to ensure access to achievement opportunities and enrichment?

School Improvement Process

1. Choose a high leverage achievement goal to improve. Include family and student input process to learn from and with them.

Consume substantial resources, results vary greatly, change will lead to significant improvement.

2. Understand the current process and why it's not working for multilingual students.

3. Identify a measure.

4. Create networked improvement communities and disciplined inquiry.

Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better,
Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu (2016)

Sample Improvement Process

Butterfield-Odin

Interview with Superintendent, Steve Thomas

1. Worked with School Board
2. Hired more bilingual, bicultural staff with braided funds and new tiered licensure system
3. Worked with local organizations, regional centers, local universities, and MDE to develop networked improvement process

Thank you!

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