



SUCCESSFUL PATHWAYS TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION FOR PUERTO RICANS

CARMEN I. MERCADO

ABSTRACT

This article makes program and policy recommendations for the design of effective pathways to teaching careers for Puerto Ricans that combine college readiness with workforce development in sectors where there are opportunities for entry-level employment with minimal credentials and opportunity for advancement at a salary above the minimum wage. The pathways target vulnerable members of the Puerto Rican community, such as young males, ages 16 to 24, who are in high school, unemployed, or employed in low-wage industries [Key words: Puerto Rican communities, pathways, teaching careers, youth, low-income, economic mobility]

“We will not achieve big improvements in college readiness or teacher effectiveness without a sense of urgency and the public and political will to take on tough problems in public education, confront the barriers that we’ve skirted in the past, and demand that doing things the way we have always done them is not acceptable.”

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THE U.S. PUERTO RICAN COMMUNITY CURRENTLY FACES

an education crisis that has resulted in the majority of Puerto Ricans being either unemployed or working in low-wage jobs with little possibility of economic mobility (Meléndez and Visser 2011). In New York City, where Puerto Ricans represent the majority of Latinos, a recent policy study by the Community Service Society identifies Puerto Rican young men ages 16–24, in particular, as the most disadvantaged and neglected youth group; their rates of school enrollment, educational attainment, and employment are lower than any other comparable groups of Latinos, including young black males (Treschan 2010). Similarly, Puerto Rican women show more challenges than other female youth. That Cordasco (1967) and La Fontaine (1969/1973) reported similar findings more than four decades ago suggests a lack of political will to address a problem the nation’s leadership now admits it can no longer overlook if the U.S. is to remain competitive in the 21st-century global economy.

From 2000 to 2010, the growth rate for the U.S. population overall was 9.7 percent and 47 percent for Latinos (largely of Mexican origin, with 63 percent; Puerto Rican, 9 percent; Cuban, 4 percent). The exponential growth of the Latino population has heightened awareness that U.S. Latinos will drive the growth of the labor force over the next several decades, yet “only 13 percent of Latinos hold a bachelor’s degree and just 4 percent completed graduate or professional degree programs” (Winning the Future 2011). Over the past decade, in reaction to this educational and economic crisis, alternative pathways to preparation for skilled employment or workforce development have emerged, offering one promising response to a serious problem that requires complex solutions. Some pathways target achieving but vulnerable high school youth at a critical transition in the educational pipeline (Oakes and Saunders 2008; Oliva and Staudt 2003); others target youth who have exited or are about to exit high school because they are overage and under-credited, not because they are lacking in ability (New York Department of Education 2007).

The Multiple Pathways model proposed by Oakes and Saunders (2008) is a response to institutional practices such as curriculum tracking, which structure inequality for Latinos and African American students and limit their opportunity to learn. Such practices explain why college enrollment rates of Latinos and African Americans continue to lag behind those of whites and Asians. Nationally, only 20 percent of Latinos leave high school prepared for college. Rothstein et

al. (2008) argue that even students who do not graduate from a four-year college should be prepared for “adequately remunerated skilled work.” Carefully designed pathways that connect education to the world of work, in particular, high school to post-secondary education (usually a 2-year college), may provide a basic level of preparation for employment in high-need industries that offer opportunity for advancement, such as the health professions and education.

As a high school reform model, Multiple Pathways is unusual in that it integrates college and career preparation for all students, and includes field-based learning and other support services that engage and guide at-risk youth. The model assumes that: (a) securing a well-paying job in a dynamic global economy requires post-secondary preparation and constant upgrading of skills; (b) that a professional core curriculum will motivate high school retention and persistence (culminating in graduation) by connecting school work with the world of work, as an academic core curriculum will develop and sharpen skills and competencies associated with college access and success, and well-paid occupations; and that (c) all students are capable of college-level work, as research on school dropouts suggests (De Jesús and Vásquez 2005; Vélez and Saenz 2001). Oakes and Saunders (2008) recognize ideological, public policy, and programmatic challenges of implementing a school-reform model that goes against established practice. Nevertheless, several large school districts in California are experimenting with the Multiple Pathways model, closely monitored by the School Redesign Network at Stanford University under the leadership of Linda Darling-Hammond (School Redesign Network 2009).

The Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (OMPG) of the New York City Department of Education offers a program that enables overage and under-credited youth who have dropped out or who are significantly off-track for graduation to complete the requirements of a high school diploma at special centers. Although OMPG offers some college readiness and workforce preparation, its primary goal is to increase graduation rates by helping students earn either a high school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), with the majority earning the latter. Thus, while it may appeal to youth who have pressing economic needs, limited attention to structures of support, in general, and to workforce development, in particular, are serious limitations. However, the New York City Department of Education trial suggests that it may be possible to offer out-of-school youth the version of Multiple Pathways Oakes and Saunders describe through collaborative efforts between the OMPG, community-based organizations willing to house the program, and CUNY community colleges and professional schools.

The teaching industry, which makes up the largest workforce in the nation (Ingersoll 2004), appears as an especially promising one for Puerto Rican youth for several reasons. First, the growth of the U.S. school population in which one in four students is Latino, including many bilinguals (see the USDOE 2011), justifies targeted workforce development for an industry that is overwhelmingly non-Hispanic white and female. Statewide, the teaching workforce in New York is 76.04 percent non-Hispanic white, and only 4.44 percent Puerto Rican, .051 Mexican American, 1.39 percent Dominican, and 3.33 percent other Latinos (Ruggles et al. 2010). In New York City, where Puerto Ricans and African Americans have made up the majority of public school students for over 60 years, Andreato (2006) cites data from the New York City Department of Education which indicate that public school teachers are 53 percent non-Hispanic white, 20.5 percent non-Hispanic black, and 13.5 percent Hispanic. Despite budget cuts that threaten the loss of thousands of teaching jobs

in the city, public school teaching is a service industry that requires the recruitment and preparation of competent professionals (from entry-level teaching assistants to teachers) to address teacher shortages in high-need areas. Currently, teacher-shortages in two areas have serious consequences for the Latino community: English language learning and early education for children ages 3 to 5. The need for instruction in English skills increases as the city's Latino population grows; one in four students participates in or has participated in programs for English language learners (ELLs). The great majority of these students (67.4 percent) are from Spanish-speaking homes; of these, 57 percent are U.S.-born, 55 percent are in grades K-5, and 55 percent are male (New York City Department of Education 2009).

THE TEACHING INDUSTRY, WHICH MAKES UP THE LARGEST WORKFORCE IN THE NATION (INGERSOLL 2004), APPEARS AS AN ESPECIALLY PROMISING ONE FOR PUERTO RICAN YOUTH FOR SEVERAL REASONS.

However, despite the need to recruit and prepare individuals for teaching who are bilingual in Spanish and English, especially for the elementary grades, few new Latino teachers have been hired. This is in part due to the small percentage of Latinos who are college graduates and the impact of the No Child Left Behind legislation that privileges a liberal arts major, preferably in mathematics and science. Compounding the problem, many bilingual teachers who entered the system in the 1970s and 1980s have or will soon retire.

Recruiting and preparing Puerto Rican teachers is a promising strategy for addressing the shortage of teachers of ELLs. As the largest of the Latino groups in New York City since the turn of the 20th century, Puerto Ricans are often the most proficient in English with Spanish language competence (USDOE 2011; Zentella 2000). Furthermore, as long-term residents of the city and as U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans have developed what Dai et al. (2007) describe as “location specific knowledge.” This includes knowledge of Puerto Rican and Latino neighborhoods, as well as knowledge of cultural practices and values that shape the upbringing and education of children from Spanish-speaking homes. Scholars refer to this knowledge as “sociocultural knowledge,” which Huerta and Brittain (2010) found is associated with good teaching: “Effective teachers of Latino students apply their own sociocultural assets to build relationships and curriculum around the sociocultural assets Latino students bring to school.” Equally important, Puerto Ricans come to the teaching profession with insider knowledge of institutional practices that contribute to school success (and school failure). Vélez and Saenz explain that, “to succeed in school, students must acquire a set of skills known as “funds of knowledge,” which allow them to

decode the school's institutional culture" (2001: 456). Studies indicate that Latinos who enter the teaching profession with this institutional knowledge apply it to mitigate the effects of negative practices on at-risk Latino students, many of whom are males. The few studies that are available indicate that Latino students express preference for teachers who motivate and listen to them, and who assume the role of models and mentors, suggesting that positive teacher-student relationships contribute to student learning and success (Avery and Burling 1997; Oliva and Staudt 2003).

An educational policy priority should be the construction of a "safety net" that provides multiple levels of support to talented but vulnerable Puerto Rican youth interested in becoming teachers (Torres et al. 2004). The Puerto Rican community is well positioned to assume leadership in addressing this challenge and providing this support. The economic mobility that sectors of the Puerto Rican community enjoy today can be attributed to the teaching industry, where many college-educated Puerto Ricans found stable employment and opportunity for advancement, through the educational activism of the community during the Civil Rights movement (Acosta-Belén et al. 2000; Aspira 1968; Rivera-Batiz and Santiago 1994; Sánchez Korrol 1994). These experiences have enabled the Puerto Rican community to develop human capital ("the ability, education and training people bring to a job" [Leana 2010]), and social capital (social networks in the education industry) needed to build a strong safety net that can mitigate obstacles Puerto Rican students are likely to encounter as they move through the K-16 educational pipeline and beyond. With a range of new technological tools and a growing professional class, the Puerto Rican community could nurture its own workforce prepared with requisite language and cultural competencies, which in turn would offer an intellectually challenging curriculum that all children in public schools deserve.

This article reviews sustainable pathways that seek to increase the number of qualified Latino teachers who possess human capital that is location- and job-specific (Dai et al. 2007). Of specific interest are best practices of successful local and national models that integrate college readiness with workforce development resulting in a teaching workforce that provides adequate compensation for skilled work. Suggestions are made for designing an innovative multiple pathways program for promising Puerto Rican youth who demonstrate a commitment to the teaching profession, followed by recommendations for policy and research.

Literature Review: Pathways to Teaching

The pathways model of individuals becoming teachers includes programs that combine coursework and clinical experience such as student teaching with systems of support appropriate to the target population. For vulnerable high school students, support means access to an intellectually rigorous curriculum, college orientation, guidance and counseling services, and cross-institution collaborations and articulation. The pathways metaphor is distinct from the more traditional "pipeline" metaphor, which represents the successful movement through successively higher levels of education, with transitions from middle school to high school to college requiring coordination among diverse institutions. In their comprehensive analysis of the Latino educational pipeline in New York State, De Jesús and Vásquez (2005) document how blockages in the pipeline result in the exiting of Latinos beginning in 10th grade, when students are first required to take the NYS Regent's exams. Poor performance on these exams decreases the number of these students pursuing post-secondary education.

Pathways, in contrast to the educational pipeline, are often designed to attract specific pools of teacher candidates—for example, mid-career changers, paraprofessionals, and ethnic or racial minorities. Each pool brings unique competencies and dispositions but also shortcomings that shape the preparation they receive. For example, pathways designed to increase the number of Puerto Rican teachers anticipate and reduce constraints or blockages associated with the instructional infrastructure—for example, pedagogy, rigor of the curriculum, and teacher preparation—and the school learning environment—for example, expectations and commitment of teachers and staff—thereby minimizing school-related obstacles that contribute to gaps in achievement (Barton and Coley 2009). As research has shown, students who exit school before high school completion are not necessarily lacking in ability (De Jesús and Vásquez 2005; Vélez and Saenz 2001). In addition to institutional practices that limit students’ opportunity to learn (Oakes and Saunders 2008), there are “out of school” poverty-induced factors that play a “powerful role” in shaping school success, such as family stress, food insecurity, and inadequate medical attention (Barton and Coley 2009).

Despite their promise of success, pathways that target Puerto Ricans run counter to current pathways to teaching ushered in by policies and practices associated with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of 2002, which favors graduates of elite colleges and universities with high GPAs and test scores. The New York City Department of Education’s Teaching Fellows (NYCTF) Program is the largest of these pathways and indeed is the largest alternative teacher certification program in the nation (United States Department of Education 2006). NYCTF, launched in 2000 in response to a chronic teacher shortage, recruits and selects mid-career professionals, recent graduates, and retirees from all over the country. New York also prepares the largest number of teachers, more than 19 percent of the nation’s teaching force, in comparison to 12 percent in California and 9 percent in Texas (United States Department of Education 2006). In New York City, one in ten teachers is a teaching fellow and 74 percent teach in the highest need subject areas, including Spanish and bilingual education (New York City Department of Education Teaching Fellows Program 2010—downloaded from the web at www.teachingfellows.org). Few Latinos are teaching fellows given that only 13 percent of Latinos hold a bachelor’s degree, and those who do, often opt not to teach (Winning the Future 2011). Teach for America (TfA), the oldest pathway to teaching ushered in the aftermath of the influential Nation at Risk, of the Reagan administration. TfA has trained more than 28,000 corps members over the past 20 years, and is unusual in that it is well financed by philanthropic donors. The common feature of both NYCTF and TfA pathways is the acceleration of the placement of teacher candidates in classrooms.

However, despite the academic credentials of teachers enrolled in these two programs, only modest improvement has been made in student achievement in the poorest schools (Boyd et al. 2005), particularly in schools serving Puerto Rican communities (Treschan 2010). Entry-level attributes of individual teachers explain in part the minimal teacher effectiveness on student performance (Goldhaber and Anthony 2003). In addition, there is a high attrition rate among new teachers who are often unprepared for challenges they encounter in high poverty urban schools (Darling-Hammond, Chung and Frelow 2002). Between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers leave teaching after five years; and those with high test scores on Scholastic Aptitude Tests and National Teacher Examinations are the most likely to

leave (Ingersoll 2004). Further, research documents that high scores on licensure tests do not uniformly predict teacher quality across demographic groups (Goldhaber and Hansen 2008). Scholars reason that teacher quality is context-specific and that teachers who are highly effective in one setting are not in another. A few studies suggest the importance of teacher-student relationships, with relationships between teachers and students whose ethnicity match being closer and less conflicted than those that do not (Hamre and Pianta 2001).

DESPITE THEIR PROMISE OF SUCCESS, PATHWAYS THAT TARGET PUERTO RICANS RUN COUNTER TO CURRENT PATHWAYS TO TEACHING USHERED IN BY POLICIES AND PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) LEGISLATION OF 2002, WHICH FAVORS GRADUATES OF ELITE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES WITH HIGH GPAs AND TEST SCORES.

Thus, policies and practices influenced by NCLB have changed teacher labor markets significantly and have produced a new corps of teachers with strong academic backgrounds and verbal abilities (Boyd et al. 2005), but who lack competency in responding pedagogically to the developmental paths of children from low-income communities (García Coll et al. 1996; Dai et al. 2007). It takes more than verbal ability in English (or Spanish) and subject knowledge to teach effectively, especially at the primary and elementary level in low-income communities. All these studies suggest the need to reexamine dominant notions of teacher quality and to reevaluate and reframe influential state and national teacher recruitment policies and practices.

Pathways to Teaching for Latinos and Other Minorities

Diversifying the teaching workforce has been a long-standing concern for professional (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education 1972; Blankenship et al. 1992; Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Workforce 2004;

Eubanks and Weaver 1999) and scholarly communities (Futrell 1999; Hunter-Boykin 1992; Nieto 2000a; Quiocho and Rios 2000; Villegas and Lucas 2002). Nationally, the teaching workforce is 83.5 percent non-Hispanic white, 6.9 percent Hispanic, and 6.7 percent non-Hispanic black (National Center for Educational Statistics 2009). While the teaching workforce in New York State and New York City is relatively more diverse than the national workforce, it is far from representative of the pupils it serves.

DIVERSIFYING THE TEACHING WORKFORCE IS AN IMPERATIVE NOW THAT ONE IN FOUR CHILDREN COME FROM A HOME WHERE SPANISH IS SPOKEN.

As Torres et al. (2004) report in their extensive review of minority teacher recruitment, development, and retention, research from the business community suggests that a diverse teaching workforce that broadens the range of perspectives, cultural competencies, and bilingual verbal abilities holds out the promise of serving all students well. It also strengthens the teaching force from within as teachers benefit from the exploration of problems of practice through multiple perspectives and experiences of a diverse teaching staff. Teacher labor markets benefit from job-specific (e.g., cultural competencies) and location-specific (e.g., knowledge of local communities) human capital found in local communities (Dai et al. 2007). Human capital theory predicts that the more job-specific and location-specific human capital individuals bring to training, the more likely they are to succeed (Dai et al. 2007), which explains why paraprofessional career ladder programs have been so successful (Bilingual Pupil Services Program 1997; Clewell and Villegas 2001; Dai et al. 2007).

Diversifying the teaching workforce is an imperative now that one in four children come from a home where Spanish is spoken. Reyes et al. (2008) report that a high percentage of Spanish-speaking children enter kindergarten lacking basic literacy and pre-literacy skills, as parents are reluctant to place young children in programs outside the home. Additional pre-school teachers with bilingual verbal abilities and cultural competencies to promote language and literacy development is likely to increase enrollment of Spanish-speaking children in early education (ages 3-5), which improves school readiness and success.

However, Torres et al. (2004) note the disproportionate attrition of minorities within the teacher pipeline who either “leak” out of the system or are explicitly blocked in their progress toward careers of choice. These scholars conclude that at virtually every juncture in the teacher preparation pipeline, the forces of labor market segmentation contribute to the further concentration of whites and a reduction of blacks and Hispanics in this occupational group. Without support from effective pathways—not pipelines—that mediate access to teacher labor markets, Latinos prepared with the knowledge, skills, and competencies that correspond to the needs of local labor market will have difficulty finding employment in the field.

Successful Pathways to Teaching for Latinos

Although they have received little national attention in comparison to Teach for America and The New York City Teaching Fellows, several Latino pathway programs have been operating for more than three decades. With support from the Ford Foundation, community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, and unions have collaborated on preparing young people for the teaching profession. Latino pathways to teaching are particularly responsive to the needs of schools in local communities. Through a review of the literature, four distinctive features emerge that may account for their success and sustainability:

- They comprise key stakeholders—local school districts, post-secondary institutions, community-based organizations, and unions—who collaborate on program planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- They utilize sociocultural resources and/or human capital from the community for the academic course of study and professional preparation.
- They provide ongoing social, academic, and financial support to enable participants to navigate pathways successfully.
- They subscribe to workforce development as a strategy for community development, not simply individual advancement.

It is significant, though not surprising, that systems of support within and across programs align with research on effective college-access programs for Latinos in middle and secondary schools. As Gándara's (2010) research indicates, successful college-access programs provide academic, social, and emotional support. Effective strategies for college access include: assigning a mentor to monitor the progress of individual students; designing course-specific modifications and adjunct courses to mediate access to challenging curricular content; addressing vulnerabilities in oral and written English for professional purposes; and using the Spanish language as a medium to gain comprehension of challenging content. Distinctive practices as part of professional preparation include: mediated field and/or clinical experiences in local communities to develop practical understandings and appreciations of community funds of knowledge; and special classes that prepare participants to pass requisite certification exams.

The next section presents a summary of two distinct pathways to teaching. One arose in the context of a Hispanic Serving Institution, while the other developed through a local board of education under the leadership of Puerto Ricans. The first pathway leads from high school to college to teaching careers. The second follows a career-ladder from paraprofessional (teacher's aide) to professional (certified teacher). Both are of specific interest because they address workforce development issues of relevance to the young adult population in the Puerto Rican community.

Oliva and Staud (2003) conceptualized and initiated a university-high school collaboration to promote college access for at-risk Latino and Latina students in grades 9-12. Their carefully designed project provides a detailed case study of a multiple pathways approach within a "pre-collegiate, teacher-preparation magnet school" (the Socratic Institute) at Riverside High in El Paso, Texas. A strong inter- and intra-institutional relationship between the magnet school and the University of Texas, El Paso, facilitated mentoring by college students, professional development by competent, caring, and committed high school teachers, and college socialization and research activities by doctoral students and faculty. The latter responded informally to student curiosity about college and formed a part of the research team. As Oliva and Staudt found, a high level of support within and across institutional

settings is needed to enable vulnerable Latino students to meet challenging graduation requirements and equally challenging professional requirements.

At the University of Texas, El Paso, the “pre-pre-service” professional preparation sequence included six teaching-oriented courses (e.g., pedagogy, speech) and a yearlong senior practicum, not unlike the formal preparation pre-service teacher candidates receive at the undergraduate and graduate level. The Socratic Institute was specifically designed to recruit Latinos for teaching careers (as high school teachers and coaches) given the shortage of Latino teachers. Concurring with prior researchers, Oliva and Staudt claim that Latino teachers bring to the teaching profession forms of human capital that have positive influences on minority students’ achievement. Especially valuable is the teacher’s “insider knowledge” of Latino children’s socialization and experiences, and thus the capacity to enact a culturally sensitive “ethic of care” (Valenzuela cited in Oliva and Staudt 2003).

Oliva and Staudt also conducted an impact study to understand Latino 9th and 10th graders (ages 15-16) (a) knowledge of the teaching profession and (b) motivation for teaching, as a career and as an influence on their educational attainment. The researchers collected data with assistance from doctoral students who served as examples of teaching and collegiate success. Doctoral students also responded to student questions about college and its challenges, and about the teaching profession. Data included formal and informal observations and interview data. Doctoral students also responded to student questions about college and its challenges, and about the teaching profession. University faculty and students also conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with select students and parents to elicit story-length narratives that illuminate how students made meaning of their experiences.

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Two particular findings are insightful. First, in contrast to the dominant notion of teacher quality codified in the No Child Left Behind legislation and enacted in policy affecting teacher recruitment and preparation, the majority of Latino high school students (35.4 percent) identified “inspirational” or “moral” qualities, such as “caring, nurturing, and encouraging” as qualities of “perfect” teachers. Only a minority (7.3 percent) held to the view that a perfect teacher is “clear, understandable, and explains well.” The second finding indicates that students begin to form professional identities as early as 9th grade, which suggests that the best time to

introduce a professional core is in the transition from middle school to high school, the period that coincides with “leaks” in the educational pipeline described by De Jesús and Vásquez (2005). The Socratic Institute program provides a powerful example of how cross-institutional support can help talented but vulnerable Puerto Rican youth succeed academically and professionally. As will be seen, this model can be offered by a traditional high school setting or a community-based organization such as El Puente, in Brooklyn.

Even earlier, in the 1970s, the New York City Board of Education’s Division of Bilingual Education had created a successful alternative pathway known as Bilingual Pupil Service (BPS) as a paraprofessional to teacher pipeline. BPS prepared mostly educators to meet the needs of students with limited English proficiency (LEP), though not exclusively Puerto Rican or other Latinos. (Chinese- and Haitian Creole-speaking bilingual educators were also trained.) Participants received tuition for courses offered through the City University of New York that prepared them to meet the needs of students now referred to as English language learners (ELLs). In addition, participants attended professional development sessions and were supervised in their field placements by bilingual program specialists. Thus, bilingual professional assistants, educational assistants, and educational associates were trained to supplement reading and mathematics instruction in grades 1 through 9 classrooms, in both English and Spanish. Given the demographics of the city in the 1970s, the majority of program participants and staff were Latinos, mostly Puerto Rican.

BPS received national recognition as a quality Paraprofessional to Teacher Career Ladder program that contributed to a certified bilingual workforce and served as a model for another nationally recognized program: the Paraeducator Program at University of Southern California, now the Latino and Language Minority Teacher Project. However, due to policy changes after the Reagan administration, and with fewer positions available for bilingual teachers, bilingual certification decreased, and with it, attention to bilingual teaching approaches.

According to BPS’s 20-year program evaluation, more than 1,500 teachers earned their teaching licenses through the program and have served more than 50,000 LEP students. Many teachers remained in New York City, and a number were hired to work as regular classroom teachers in their intern placement schools. Some have gone on to become assistant principals, bilingual coordinators, and principals, and a few have even become community school district superintendents (Bilingual Pupil Services Program 1997).

BPS prepared individuals who had completed 60 college credits (see Educational Associates below). However, the requirements for teaching assistants and paraprofessionals have changed, and currently there are three distinct levels of positions:

- Teaching Assistant P1 must have: a high school diploma or GED; a qualifying score on the New York State Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills Test (NYSATAS) or the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST) prior to employment; completion of Child Abuse Identification and School Violence Prevention and Intervention workshops prior to employment; and a Teaching Assistant Level I Certificate issued by the State Education Department. Starting salary: \$21,713.
- Educational Assistant A-I (P2) must have: a high school equivalency diploma; 6 appropriate college credits; one year of educational paraprofessional experience with the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE). Starting salary: \$24,692. Salaries increase with additional college credit and service, e.g., with 15 college credits, \$25,378; with 30 , \$25,378; and 45, \$26, 343.

- Educational Associates must have: a bachelor's degree; and one year of satisfactory experience as a paraprofessional with the NYCDOE. Starting salary between \$30,127 (with 60 college credits) and \$34,540. (2009 summary of requirements and salaries from the NYCDOE website).

All salaries are well above minimum wage, even at the lowest and most accessible level in the teaching industry. The program also includes incentives to work up to a full-time teaching job and beyond. However, increasing the number of qualified Latinos in these positions has become challenging as the competition for teaching jobs becomes more competitive during the recession. The needs of ELLs who benefit from teaching assistants and paraprofessionals who develop positive relationships and make accessible curriculum content in both English and Spanish remain unmet. This serious problem warrants community activism and policy intervention.

In sum, these two national long-standing models, found at the Socratic Institute in El Paso and Bilingual Pupil Services in New York City and Southern California, have proven to be successful and sustainable community-oriented pathways for Latinos. The study of these models, together with a historical review of educational programs and approaches in the New York Puerto Rican community, yield insights for designing new pathways to teaching careers for Puerto Ricans within the network of City University of New York (CUNY) colleges. What follows is an exploration of what a collaborative partnership might look like for a Pathway to Teaching Career Program designed to increase the number of Puerto Rican teachers for early childhood and childhood education.

Building a Research-Based Pathway to Teaching Careers for Puerto Ricans

This section explores planning and implementation issues that relate to (a) the identification of appropriate sites for a career ladder pathway to teaching careers for Puerto Ricans; (b) inter- and intra-institutional collaboration and support; (c) the selection of student cohorts, and (d) the adoption of a teacher-preparation curriculum that builds on effective practices and is responsive to the needs of Puerto Rican teacher candidates and the students they will serve.

Program Sites

Presently, the Bronx is the borough with the highest concentration of Puerto Ricans, followed by Brooklyn and Manhattan (New York City Department of City Planning 2007). Brooklyn has the largest number of poor, unemployed Puerto Ricans not in the labor force (Centro Search Conference Policy Brief 2009). Thus, the Bronx and Brooklyn are fitting locations in which to situate a career ladder that would prepare promising Puerto Rican students for the teaching profession.

As previously discussed, successful movement along the pathway depends on strong intra- and inter-institutional collaborations that include, at the very least, community-based organizations (CBOs), the city's public schools, and local colleges. According to the model, the high school and CBO would introduce the multiple pathways model beginning with pre-pre-service, the 2-year college would prepare participants for paraprofessional positions, and the 4-year college would prepare participants for credentials as the teacher of record in early education or childhood education. Finally, community schools and learning centers would serve as sites for supervised clinical observation and practice. In addition to establishing partnerships, curricular alignments and structures of support for student cohorts need to be established to assure success within and across levels.

Similarly, supervision of placements at clinical sites requires the identification of experienced faculty with appropriate cultural competencies who will monitor school-based activities to ensure that teaching candidates receive timely guidance and support and that program goals are met.

High School Partner

The long-range goal at the entrance to the pathway is to increase high school completion and access to college for Puerto Ricans. However, the immediate goal is to offer an integrated curriculum that combines a college preparatory component and a professional core that introduces interested students to teaching through course work, service, and supervised teaching experiences. This enables high school students to explore and develop teaching identities. Students also require academic guidance, tutoring, and other support services such as counseling to assist in transitioning to new academic and professional identities.

One ideal high school partner in Brooklyn likely to embrace the challenges of implementing this experimental program is El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice. Because El Puente is both a high school and community-based organization, it is also able to offer parallel versions of multiple pathways, one in the high school and one in the CBO (in collaboration with OMPG), for out-of-school youth, ages 16 to 24.

Founded by community activists and staffed by caring and competent educators, El Puente Academy is a hospitable site for community-oriented educational innovations, primarily in the arts and the environment. (For research conducted at the school, see Antrop-González and De Jesús 2006 and Rivera and Pedraza 2000.) As its website indicates, El Puente's mission is the cultivation of youth leadership as a way to improve economic and educational conditions for Puerto Ricans in the diaspora. Enabling young people to explore whether the teaching profession is an appropriate choice for them fits into El Puente's mission to develop youth leadership through community service, or community service through teaching, and they have the community contacts and guidance and support services needed to implement the program.

Community College Partner

All CUNY colleges have as their primary mission providing access to the middle class through professional preparation, with workforce and economic development a new priority. Despite recent declines in Puerto Rican students (Leinbach and Bailey 2006) and faculty (Pimentel 2005), the City University of New York (CUNY) has traditionally been home to the largest concentration of Puerto Rican college students in the U.S. Two-year community colleges in the CUNY system provide a critical labor intermediary in workforce development, particularly in the preparation of paraprofessionals and teacher assistants.

Bronx-based Hostos Community College states its mission as providing “educational opportunities leading to socio-economic mobility for first- and second-generation Hispanics, African Americans, and other residents of New York City who have encountered significant barriers to higher education” (Hostos Community College website). The only bilingual (Spanish/English) community college within CUNY, Hostos also has human and social capital in its bilingual faculty with a long history of teacher preparation in early childhood education. Hostos Community College seems an ideal partner and an easy transition from El Puente Academy to a community college that not only specializes in preparing students for entry-level positions in early education, but which promotes bilingualism and biliteracy.

Four-Year College Partner

Moving up the career ladder to a classroom teaching position requires participants to transfer to a four-year college. Institutional agreements between Hostos Community College and Lehman College, also in the Bronx, may ease that transition. As one of the few Hispanic-serving institutions within CUNY, Lehman College would provide a supportive structure for teacher assistants or paraprofessionals to obtain their credentials as classroom teachers. Lehman engages in multiple collaborations with middle and secondary schools, and offers a career ladder in early education, bilingual early education, and special education. Furthermore, as the American Association of Colleges and University reports (2004), both Hostos and Lehman Colleges are collaborators in CUNY's "Bridge to College," a college-readiness program for nontraditional adult students. The "Bridge to College" program focuses on increasing student comfort levels with academic settings and exams by teaching the culture of learning and of being a college student, which may benefit participants in the pathways program.

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Given their stated institutional priorities and experiences in college access, workforce development, and service to Spanish-speaking communities, El Puente Academy, Hostos Community College, and Lehman College are well suited for adapting the Pathways to Teaching Careers model. In addition to the characteristics detailed above, all three institutions evidence features of culturally competent systems. According to Cross et al. (1989), a culturally competent system acknowledges the importance of culture, assesses cross-cultural relations, is aware of dynamics that result from cultural difference, expands cultural knowledge, and adapts services to better serve ethnically and racially diverse clients. Therefore, it is anticipated that these three institutions will provide a broader level of support than other schools and institutions that fall under the purview of the New York City Department of Education and the City University of New York.

Recruiting Puerto Rican Teacher Candidates

As mentioned above, recruitment that specifically targets Puerto Ricans is warranted as a response to the educational and economic crises affecting the Puerto Rican community. Outreach to recruit a pool of young adults with an interest in early and childhood education must begin while students are still in middle school, preferably those that serve as feeder schools to El Puente Academy. Outreach for young adults enrolled in alternative high school diploma program requires collaboration with the New York City Department of Education OMPG program to locate their Brooklyn centers. Thus outreach should seek to recruit young men and women, ages 16 to 24, whether or not they are still enrolled in high school, with a specific goal of increasing the number of male educators presently underrepresented in the teaching profession.

As previously stated, a key goal of workforce development is to produce a well-trained labor force that helps economies grow. Ideally, workforce development in the teaching industry begins by assessing the talents and competencies of young people who are motivated to explore careers in teaching. Of initial interest is seeking evidence for what Wagner (February 2009) refers to as the seven survival skills students need to succeed in the new global economy. These skills may serve as evidence of the practical intelligence that teaching in the 21st century requires, and that are often overlooked in more traditional forms of assessment: (a) critical thinking and problem solving; (b) collaboration and leadership; (c) agility and adaptability; (d) initiative and entrepreneurialism; (e) effective oral and written communication; (f) accessing and analyzing information; and (g) curiosity and imagination. Indeed, these skills are important in all industries, and they are sharpened through real world experiences in the schools and classrooms where students are placed and supervised. Therefore, regardless of whether students continue on the careers to teaching pathways, these skills should serve them well in their personal and professional lives.

High school students who express an interest in teaching careers will also be interviewed to assess job-specific experiences, maturity, and dispositions needed to work with young children and bilingual communicative competence. Candidates accepted into the program will complete the reading and writing sections of the Assessment of Teaching Assistants Skills (ATAS) of the New York State Teacher Certification Exam by way of identifying strengths and skills specifically related to an entry-level teaching position, and that will guide adaptations made to the instructional component. It is anticipated that high school students will require intensive practice in writing for the teaching professions.

Adapting the Teacher Preparation Curriculum

All teacher candidates must meet teacher-preparation standards in their area of specialization, for example, early childhood education, as required of the nation's teaching force (see INTASC, NCATE, NBPTS). Table 1 provides a summary of requirements for Infant Toddler Care and Education, typically for individuals preparing to work with children age 3 or under.

Requirements may be adapted to respond to changing needs of early education programs as well as those of targeted groups of teacher candidates, primarily though not exclusively, through pedagogical strategies that build on the human capital of program participants. The emergent biliteracy unique to Puerto Ricans is a valuable communicative resource that needs to be further developed as a positive asset, precisely because it is misunderstood and stigmatized by both mainstream and Latino/Puerto Rican educators. Specifically, participants will develop bilingual and biliterate competencies professionals needed to form

TABLE 1.

TOPIC I. INFANT AND TODDLER DEVELOPMENT	Competency A: Theories and Current Research
	Competency B: Social, Emotional, And Creative Development
	Competency C: Physical, Cognitive, Language and Literacy Development
TOPIC II. FAMILY & CULTURE	Competency A: Family Relationships
	Competency B: Attachment and Separation
	Competency C: Early Intervention
TOPIC III. ENVIRONMENT AND CURRICULUM	Competency A: Health & Safety
	Competency B: Environment
	Competency C: Curriculum
TOPIC IV: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION	Competency A: Record Keeping and Recording
	Competency B: Program Management
	Competency C: Professionalism

relationships with young children and their families, to read aloud to children in English and Spanish, and to make challenging curricular content accessible through play and informal learning (see Huerta and Brittain 2010; Mercado 2005, Mercado and Brochin 2011). Building on strengths is likely to increase the confidence, self-knowledge, and self-efficacy of underprepared teacher candidates, and therefore their willingness to invest time and effort in challenging and rewarding work.

In addition to curricular adaptations, syllabi for early education courses should reflect the growing scholarship of Puerto Rican researchers who, in reframing the conversation from deficits to assets, offer a very different representation of Puerto Ricans in the diaspora. (See, for example, García Coll et al. 1996; Hidalgo 2000; Mercado 2005; Mercado and Moll 1997; Nieto 2000b; Olmedo 1997). Exposure to this body of literature, combined with guided clinical experiences in school, will serve to reorient the personal teaching ideologies of future Puerto Rican teachers and help them better understand how to influence the educational success of children from U.S. Puerto Rican communities.

Summary

This article argues for the urgency of designing new career pathways for nontraditional Puerto Rican teacher candidates as a strategy for increasing the supply of bilingual and biliterate teachers committed to tackling educational problems faced by Latino students. By building the capacity of the Puerto Rican community to respond to unmet needs of local teacher labor markets, the participation of certain sectors of the Puerto Rican community will increase and contribute to the improvement of the economy. Specifically, the article offers suggestions for the design of high school to career pathways that would target especially vulnerable members of the community. Such programs would build on extant human capital to meet the high demand for early education and childhood education teachers. Insights from national community-oriented models already incorporating best practices could be merged with existing college-readiness and educator programs at CUNY colleges to ease the transitions to college and early educator preparation for Puerto Rican candidates. Career pathways that are comprehensive and seamless will facilitate movement of candidates and assure desired outcomes. Pathways are especially relevant in the southeastern region of the nation (e.g., Florida) where Puerto Ricans and other Latinos are a new majority and where school systems lack the human and materials resources to educate this growing student population appropriately across the developmental continuum.

Given the complexities of designing and implementing the high school Multiple Pathways model, ongoing assessment should be built in to allow for program adjustments and for support of participants' academic preparation and teaching expertise as they move through key transition points. Ultimately, a summative assessment should seek to provide evidence for the effectiveness of the pathways in preparing competent, caring, biliterate educators for entry-level positions, and to identify the level of support these educators require during the critical first year of teaching.

TO DATE, EMPIRICAL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ON LATINO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND TEACHER ATTRIBUTES HAS FOCUSED ON WHAT IS EASILY COUNTED BUT HAS FAILED TO EXAMINE INTERACTIONS AMONG THE MANY DIMENSIONS OF TEACHING, LEAVING IMPORTANT QUESTIONS REGARDING THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER ATTRIBUTES UNRESOLVED.

Policy Implications and Further Research

The following section outlines five specific recommendations and concludes with a suggestion for an approach to future research.

First, state and federal funding or financial incentives should be provided to high schools willing to adapt the Multiple Pathways model in communities with large numbers of Puerto Rican youth who evidence low rates of school enrollment, educational attainment, and employment.

Second, teacher quality must be redefined to include competencies needed in the 21st century teaching workforce. Narrow conceptions of quality in terms of subject matter knowledge from liberal arts majors and verbal ability in English, while important at the secondary level, are insufficient alone to improve achievement among low-income Latino students in early education and childhood education. Cultural competence and bilingualism have been shown to be critical to children's academic achievement, and policies on quality teaching must be reframed to acknowledge these attributes.

Third, there are non-traditional and talented Latinos with the dispositions as well as cultural and communicative competencies from which to recruit teachers to work in high-need areas. Among these candidates are high school students who are at risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out, unemployed or underemployed, young adults, and young veterans. A national workforce development policy should provide incentives to institutions and organizations to recruit and prepare targeted groups of such non-traditional teacher candidates.

Fourth, colleges and schools of education need to hire Puerto Rican and Latino faculty with experience, pedagogical knowledge, and cultural and language competence to supervise the learning of teacher candidates during their academic and clinical experience, which would also benefit schools in low-income urban settings.

Fifth, whether experienced or new, all teachers require ongoing professional development to best serve students. Local academics, educators, and other specialists representing a broad range of human capital—based on experiential, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic diversity—who can respond to community needs can provide timely, effective, efficient, and less costly professional development.

To date, empirical educational research on Latino student achievement and teacher attributes has focused on what is easily counted but has failed to examine interactions among the many dimensions of teaching, leaving important questions regarding the influence of teacher attributes unresolved (Plecki and Loeb 2004). An inquiry approach that combines teaching and research will yield new understandings of what quality teaching looks like in local communities where Puerto Ricans and other Latinos are in the majority. A participatory action research approach that includes qualitative and quantitative data analyses will help educators and administrators develop high quality education for Latino children through a Latino teaching workforce, thus addressing the educational and economic crisis affecting the Puerto Rican community in the U.S.

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