

REACHES

Research, Engagement and Communities
for Hispanic/Latino Educated Students



GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

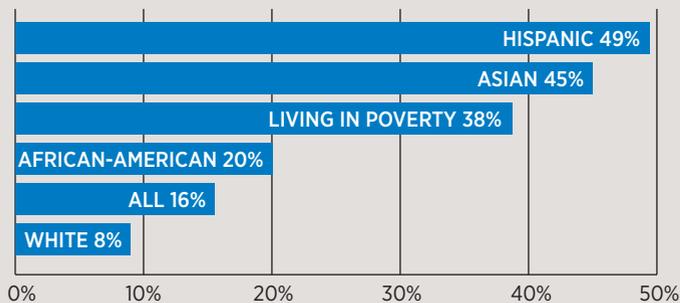
For more than two decades, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education has held a commitment to providing all students in Georgia with an education that prepares them for success in college or career.

The Georgia Partnership launched REACHES, supported by The Goizueta Foundation, in June 2011. The goal of the initiative was to strengthen the education pipeline of Hispanic/Latino students in Tattnall County Schools and Calhoun City Schools so students would become college and career ready. REACHES was guided by the project's state and local advisory boards with leaders from the business, education, research, and child advocacy communities.

The Economics of Education Facts

Hispanic students are among the fastest-growing demographic groups in Georgia.

Georgia Percent Population Change, 2001-2010



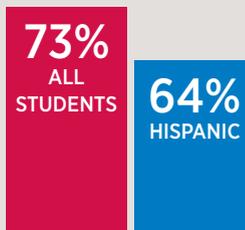
U.S. Census Bureau. (2001-2010). *American Fact Finder*. Washington D.C.

To support its economic development, Georgia must produce 250,000 more graduates than we are on course to have by 2020.

By 2020, 60% of jobs will require some higher education. Currently, only 42% of Georgians have a post-secondary degree.

Citizens who are poorly educated have reduced earning potential, increased unemployment and limited opportunities.

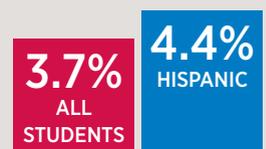
Georgia Graduation Rates



Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2013-2014 Report Card.

High school noncompleters, who are not ready for college or work, directly impact our communities. Local businesses need well educated, prepared workers.

Georgia Dropout Rates



Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2013-2014 Report Card.

HOW IS YOUR COMMUNITY DOING?

Do you know the demographic trends of your school system and community?

Are all kindergarteners ready to learn?

What is your high school graduation rate by subgroup?

Are all third-graders reading on grade level?

Are all your graduates ready for college and/or work?



Leaders in Tattnall County Schools and Calhoun City Schools took community voices, research, and the Economics of Education data to heart and took action. Their work empowering their Hispanic/Latino communities can serve as case studies from which other communities can learn.



About Calhoun



- Located 68 miles north of Atlanta
- Seat of Gordon County
- 3,660 K-12 students
- 1 cluster of 4 schools
- Charter system
- 33% Hispanic, 57% white and 6% black students
- 14%, or 513 ESOL students



About Tattnall



- Located in the heart of southeast Georgia
- Home to Reidsville (county seat), Cobbtown, Collins, Glennville and Manassas
- 3,460 K-12 students
- 7 schools (including 1 high school)
- Charter system
- 17% Hispanic, 53% white and 25% black students
- 7%, or 243 ESOL students
- 4% migrant students

How REACHES Began

The Georgia Partnership researched the existing conditions of Hispanic/Latino students throughout Georgia. Lessons learned from this work can be found in “Promising Practices for Engaging Hispanic/Latino Students in Georgia” at <http://www.gpee.org/REACHES.382.0.html>.

Local REACHES Advisory Committees were established in Calhoun and Tattnall. Their purpose was to design, implement, and continue to improve a system for promoting Hispanic student outcomes. To prepare community leaders for this task, research continued in partner communities with a central question: What key strengths and challenges are facing Hispanic students and families in your community?

Leadership buy-in and continued support was critical to success and key community leaders were aggressively recruited.

What key strengths and challenges are facing Hispanic students and families in your community?

To answer that question, Calhoun and Tattnall:

1. Conducted English and Spanish focus groups with teachers, students, and parents;
2. Administered English and Spanish staff and student perception surveys;
3. Reviewed student achievement and school system improvement data;
4. Conducted an education summit to discuss results with local leaders; and
5. Created a REACHES Action Plan based on identified strengths and challenges.

REACHES Action Plans



With a foundation of local voices and data, both communities tailored their action plans to meet their specific community-defined objectives.

Each plan detailed strategic activities to carry out the plan, timelines, who's responsible, necessary resources, and a measurement system. Rather than creating a stand-alone initiative, the goal was to facilitate a process to support school system improvement plans.



Calhoun Objectives

1. Reduce academic performance disparity compared to "all students"
2. Improve early literacy skills and school readiness of Pre-K students
3. Improve high school students' knowledge base of post-secondary opportunities
4. Improve parental involvement and remove communication barriers
5. Improve teacher quality through professional development



Tattnall Objectives

1. Improve school attendance
2. Improve reading and math performance
3. Increase parent understanding, participation, and involvement in the school system
4. Increase character building and self-esteem

The Work

Calhoun and Tattnell employed a number of activities to address each of their objective areas.

Calhoun Objectives



1. Reduce academic performance disparity between Hispanic/Latino students and all students
2. Improve early literacy skills and school readiness of Pre-K Hispanic/Latino students
3. Improve high school students' knowledge base of post-secondary opportunities
4. Improve parental involvement and remove communication barriers
5. Improve teacher quality through professional development opportunities focused on Hispanic/Latino learning needs

Activities

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1 3 | Employ an English Learners Student Liaison (ELSL):
- provides individual/group support to at-risk high school students
- advocates for students in education and community settings
- acts as liaison between community groups on student needs |
| 1 | REACHES Peer Tutoring |
| 1 | REACHES Summer Camp |
| 2 5 | Employ an Early Childhood Language Intervention Specialist (ECLIS):
- provides early literacy interventions to at-risk Pre-K students
- establishes early learning lending library
- communicates with primary school about individual students
- provides professional development to Pre-K staff members on early literacy needs of Hispanic/Latino students |
| 3 | Work with Latinos for Education and Justice Organization (LEJO) to establish and populate resource center with post secondary opportunity information |
| 4 | Establish stakeholder group to examine translation tools:
- ensures paper communications are in parents' native language
- ensures "Shout Point" phone system has native language options |
| 4 | Conduct Education Summit event addressing the state of the schools and importance of education |
| 5 | Provide teachers opportunities to earn English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement |
| 5 | Provide professional development focused on ELLs |

MAKING THE MOST OF EXISTING PARTNERS: Calhoun made collaborating with an existing local Latino education agency, Latinos for Education and Justice Organization (LEJO), a priority. The district worked with LEJO to provide post-secondary transition resources to Hispanic students.

Tattnell Objectives



1. Improve school attendance of Hispanic/Latino students
2. Reading and math performance of Hispanic/Latino students will improve throughout the school year
3. Parents of Hispanic/Latino students will have increased understanding, participation, and involvement in the school system
4. Increase character building and self-esteem of Hispanic/Latino students

Activities

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 1 2 | After-school CAMINO Program at high school |
| 2 | Math tutoring for high school students |
| 2 4 | Support language growth of high school age out-of-school youth |
| 1 3 4 | REACHES Summer Camp for at-risk high school students |
| 1 3 4 | Leverage community resources for immigrant students and families |
| 1 3 | Language acquisition: Adult ESOL classes for Spanish speaking parents |
| 3 | Parent Café family outreach |
| 3 4 | Support university visitation and planning opportunities |
| 4 | Professional development on cultural competency |
| 4 | Ensure media centers promote culturally rich student experiences |

TAILORING PROGRAM GOALS TO MATCH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS: In Tattnell, attendance is a district-wide area of focus. As part of the REACHES initiative, school attendance of Latino students took center stage.

Continuous Improvement

Adaptations to plans were made on an ongoing basis as program leaders in each community implemented their visions.



Calhoun Improvements

Calhoun's English Learner Student Liaison continually sought ways to foster student leadership skills.

- Academically advanced bilingual Latino students were encouraged to attend a district tutoring program to assist their peers learning English. They received community service hours for their work.
- A post-secondary resource fair targeting Hispanic students was planned and led annually by some of the district's own Hispanic students.



Tattnall Improvements

The language barrier between parents and educators was a concern to the Tattnall community. By request, Rosetta Stone was purchased and offered to educators to learn Spanish.

When the program was not fully utilized (due to time constraints and competing priorities), the district opened the language program to Spanish speaking parents. The program grew into a weekly adult ESOL class, complete with instructors!

How Are They Making a Difference?

Calhoun and Tattnall made strides towards achieving their objectives. Calhoun City saw success in their Pre-K and high school initiatives with English learners, while Tattnall made notable progress in wrap-around initiatives – from professional development and trainings for educators, to providing parent programs and transportation services.



Calhoun Outcomes

- By 2014-2015, REACHES English Language Learner (ELL) high school students reached through the high school English Learners Student Liaison had a 93% academic class pass rate.
- Following six to eight months of literacy intervention, over half of REACHES Pre-K students learning English advanced a year and a half developmentally to match kindergarten readiness expectations.
- After receiving REACHES language intervention normally not offered in Pre-K, fewer rising kindergartners required K-12 ELL services than similar students prior to REACHES.



Tattnall Outcomes

- Spearheaded educator and community training on the education and legal rights of immigrant students. Three quarters of attendees plan to use lessons learned in their work with students.
- Improved the cultural competency skills of all system educators through diversity training.
- 100% of Parent Café participants were very satisfied and believe the program will have a lasting effect on their children.
- Launched and grew a free English language program, helping reduce the language barrier and accomplish the goals of more than 40 parents.
- Transportation is a critical challenge in rural Tattnall County for everyone, especially the Latino community. REACHES made attendance to ongoing afterschool college-readiness programs and several university visits possible.

“REACHES has been extremely beneficial to Calhoun. We have more folks around the table aware of and focused on the needs of our children who are learning English.”

– Dr. Michele Taylor, Superintendent, Calhoun City Schools

“The program has been a great return on investment. Our educators, Hispanic families, and community leaders all have a stake in and benefit from this initiative.”

– Dr. Gina Williams, Superintendent, Tattnall County Schools

This is just the beginning!

These four components continue as priorities for Hispanic/Latino student success in both communities.

- Parent-school communication and engagement
- Academic support for students learning English
- Educator professional development
- College and career readiness of Hispanic students

Change takes time and commitment. These communities are committed to continuing the work they have started.

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, Calhoun City Schools and Tattnall County Schools have “learned by doing” and want to make things as easy as possible for other communities who want to develop their own improvement initiatives similar to REACHES.

For more information and resources from the project visit the Georgia Partnership website at www.gpee.org. Click on “Programs/Reports,” then click “REACHES.”





GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

270 Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 2200
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
404-223-2280 www.gpee.org