



Celebrating 20 Years of Progress

# TRPI

The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute

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**Changing the Face of Early Education:  
TRPI National Poll of Latinos Reveals Strong Support for Pre-K**

*Survey is the first national study focused exclusively on Latinos' early education views*

(Washington, D.C.) – Latino families show strong support for increased access to high-quality pre-kindergarten, according to a national poll conducted by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) and released today by Pre-K Now.

Latinos are changing the face of early education in America. According to the U.S. Census Bureau racial or ethnic minorities make up nearly half of the nation's children who are five or younger. Much of this increase is fueled by the rapid growth among the Latino population. In order for education reform initiatives to be truly effective, states must consider the effects on, and the role of, this burgeoning population.

“Latino families not only believe pre-k is important but they also think elected officials should make pre-k a priority before taking on new responsibilities in K-12,” said Danielle Gonzales, Deputy State Program Director for Pre-K Now. “Despite their high-levels of support for pre-k, Latinos participate at lower rates because they face major obstacles to enrollment such as affordability, language barriers and a general lack of awareness of the existence of such programs. These issues must be addressed.”

The public opinion survey focuses on Latino families' knowledge, preferences and support for public pre-k programs. Completed between March 1, 2006, and March 12, 2006, the poll showed that 96% of Latinos believe it is important for children to attend a pre-k program before kindergarten. The random telephone survey sampled 1,000 mostly working-class respondents in 10 states (California, Texas, Illinois, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Arkansas, North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee) among Mexican, Cuban, Dominican, Central American, and Puerto Rican respondents. The areas represent both traditional and non-traditional Latino-populated states. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and English.

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*TRPI is an independent 501 (c) (3) organization*

Some additional highlights:

- An overwhelming majority (95%) of Latinos believe that children who attend pre-k have strong educational advantages over those who do not attend;
- 78% of respondents would be more likely to support a candidate running for city, state or county office if they proposed making early education voluntarily available to all families who wanted it; and
- 73% of Latinos would pay more taxes to expand public pre-k programs if they served more children.

While Latinos have a strong belief in the importance of 4-year-olds spending time in learning environments outside the home, nationally only about 40% of Latino children are enrolled in pre-k, compared to 59% of Caucasian children and 64% of African-American children. For many years, it was believed that this discrepancy was due to a desire to have children stay at home with family members. However, the polling shows that Latinos experience a lack of awareness of where to get information about pre-k and an inability to afford the high cost of many private pre-k programs.

“When it comes to raising Hispanic educational achievement, Latinos understand the urgency and importance of pre-k,” Gonzales said. “In order to lower the barriers to Latino participation in state pre-k and Head Start programs elected officials must move away from targeted programs to a pre-k-for-all model. This poll shows overwhelming support among Latinos for this approach.”

#### ***About TRPI***

*Founded in 1985, the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute advances critical, insightful thinking on key issues affecting Latino communities through objective, policy-relevant research and its implications, for the betterment of the nation. TRPI is an affiliated research unit of the University of Southern California School of Policy, Planning, and Development, and is associated with the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy at Columbia University. To learn more about the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, visit the Institute's website at <http://www.trpi.org>.*

#### ***About Pre-K Now***

*Pre-K Now is a national early education advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. which works with states to expand pre-k access.*

*Pre-K Now collaborates with state advocates and policymakers to lead a movement for high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds. The following funders contribute to making this important work possible: The Pew Charitable Trusts, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, CityBridge Foundation, and the Schumann Fund for New Jersey.*

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