

The State Of Hispanic Education In Kentucky School Districts  
By

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to provide information on the state of Hispanic education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The data were obtained from Kentucky school Superintendents or their designees in 175 public school districts through a survey (12 questions) mailed in late spring, 2007. Responses were received from 136 school superintendents for a 77.7% return percentage. A majority (81%) of the Kentucky public school districts have Hispanic students. Only nineteen percent of the public schools have no Hispanic students. A total of 12, 386 Hispanic students were reported to attend K-12 public schools in the Commonwealth. The range in Hispanic students in Kentucky school districts was 0 - 4,039. The reporting Kentucky school districts employ a total of 39, 376 teachers. The range was 25 to 5,896 teachers. The school districts reported a total of 191 Hispanic teachers. The Hispanic teacher total represents 4.58% of the total Kentucky teachers. Eight (8) urban school districts have 7,264 Hispanic students, a clear majority. A majority of the school districts reporting identified themselves as rural or small town. The majority of Hispanic students were reported attending schools in districts with average to poor wealth. A majority of Kentucky school districts have provided multicultural training for their school district personnel.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to survey Kentucky school districts (175) to assess the state of Hispanic education. The information was compiled from data collected from Kentucky school **superintendents**. The collected data will add to the information available to the Commonwealth, universities, school districts, administrators, teachers, and the public concerning the fast growing Hispanic school population.

### **Objectives:**

1. To add to the **research** concerning Hispanics attending school in the Commonwealth of Kentucky;
2. To add to the **research on the employment of Hispanic teachers in Kentucky**;
3. To **disseminate the results of this study to** universities, school districts, administrators, teachers, and the public;
4. To improve the state of education for Hispanics in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

## **Review of Literature**

This is a review of the Kentucky studies on Hispanic students. This was a unique study **on** Hispanic students and teachers in Kentucky. **There has been very little relevant research** done on Hispanics in Kentucky schools. The data from the current study, **while** reflective of Kentucky schools, **cannot be generalized to the rest of the United States because the survey responses were** provided by Kentucky Superintendents or their designees.

## **Kentucky Studies**

The Kentucky Department of Education has released several reports on the percentages of Hispanic students **attending Kentucky school districts for 1996-97 to**

2004-05 (Department of Education, 2006). Jefferson County, followed by Fayette County, were the top two locations for Hispanic students in Kentucky for the two years being compared. It is interesting to note that Fayette County's Hispanic growth was 7% between 1996-97 and 2004-05. By comparison, Jefferson County's Hispanic growth rate was only 3% during this period of time. However, by the 2004-05 school year Jefferson County had 26% of the Hispanic students in Kentucky. Jefferson County was followed by Fayette County with 17% of the Hispanic students in Kentucky.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2000) reported a Hispanic population in Kentucky of 59,939 (1.5%) of a total Kentucky population of 4,041,769 people. The majority of Hispanics in the census study came to the United States from Mexico. The census lists 31,385 Mexicans under Hispanic data for Kentucky.

#### **Methods/Research Design:**

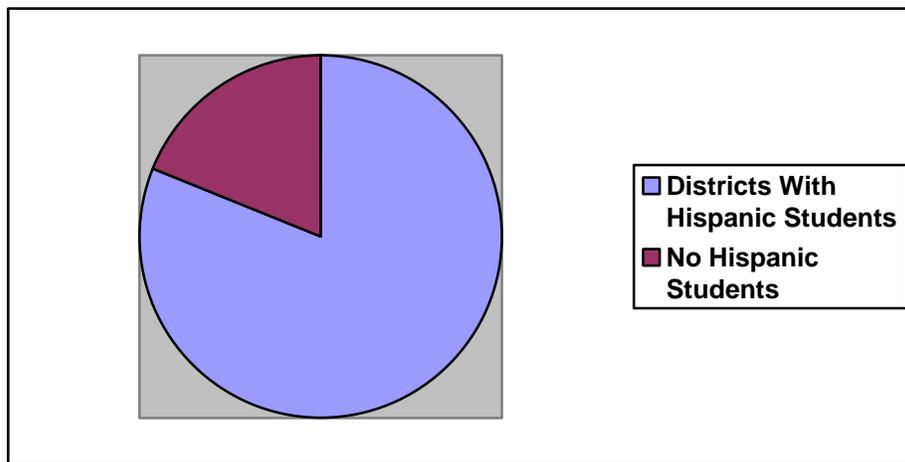
Each school district Superintendent or their designee was asked to complete and return a survey to Morehead State's Department of Professional Programs in Education. The survey was developed, mailed, and the results were compiled and analyzed by Dr. Victor Ballesteros and Dr. Sam Wright. The first survey was mailed on April 1, 2007 and was to be returned by April 27. The first mailing resulted in 86 surveys returned. A follow-up survey was mailed on May 21. The follow-up survey was to be returned by June 8. The follow-up survey resulted in 50 additional surveys being returned for a total of 136 returns. This provided a 77.7% return percent for the survey. A copy of the survey and the informational letter are included as Appendix A and B respectively.

**Survey Results:**

The analyses of the data for this study on Hispanic education were based on the 136 Kentucky school districts that responded to the survey.

**Question 1.** Are there Hispanic students in your school district?

There were 109 districts (81%) that indicated they have Hispanic students and 26 districts (19%) responded they had no Hispanic students.



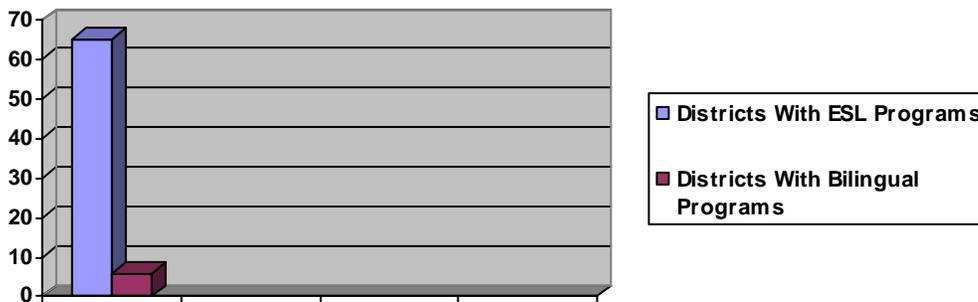
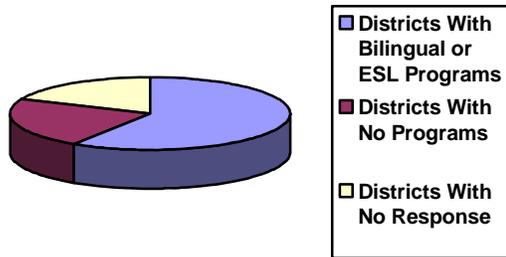
**Question 2.** How many Hispanic students are there in your school district?

The data indicate there were 12,386 Hispanic students that were reported for the 135 Kentucky school districts. The range was 0 to 4,039 Hispanic students.

**Question 3.** Does your school district offer Hispanic students a bilingual or English as Second Language (ESL) program? (Yes or No) Which Program?

Eighty (80) school districts responded yes they offer either bilingual or English as a Second Language programs. Thirty (30) school districts that responded no to the question. The rest of the districts (25) did not provide a response to this question. Most

of the school districts (65 districts or 48%) indicated they offer English as a Second Language for Hispanic students. A bilingual program was offered by (6 or .04%) of the school districts.



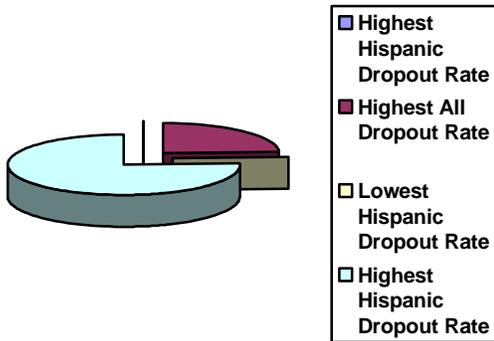
**Question 4.** What is the overall school district dropout rate for all students?

The average dropout rate for all students in the 109 reporting school districts was 2.44%. The lowest rate reported for all students was zero dropouts.

The highest rate reported for all students was 16%.

**Question 5.** What is the dropout rate for Hispanic students?

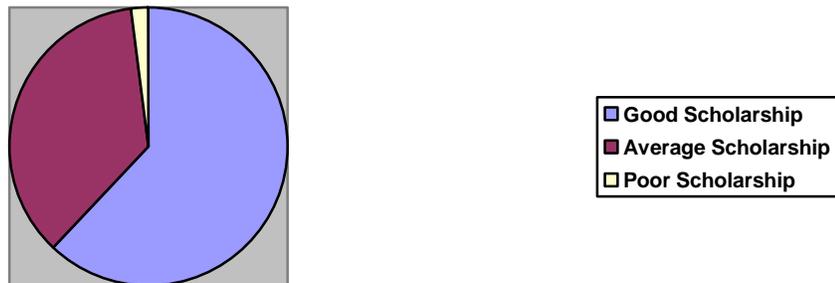
The average dropout rate for Hispanic students was .72 percent of 103 districts reporting. The lowest dropout rate reported was zero. The highest dropout rate reported for Hispanics was 50%.



**Question 6.** Rate the scholarship of all your district students?

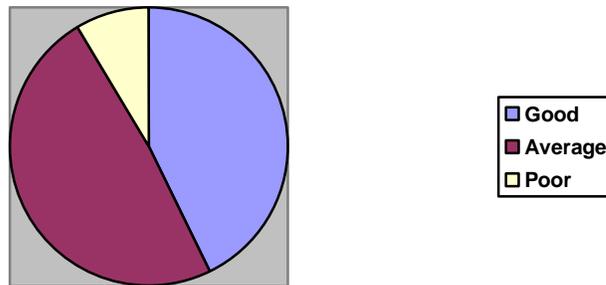
- Good
- Average
- Poor

There were 108 responses to this question on scholarship. The majority of the responses (67) or 62% indicated good scholarship for all district students. There were 39 (36%) districts that reported average scholarship responses. Only two districts (.02%) reported poor scholarship for their students.



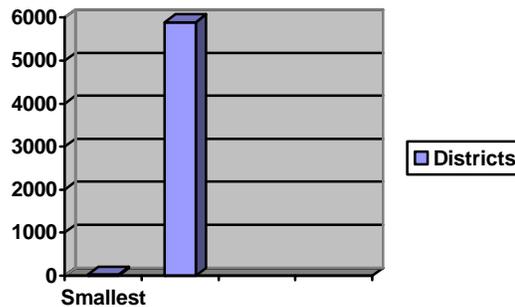
**Question 7.** Rate the scholarship of Hispanic students?

There were 103 responses to this question concerning scholarship of Hispanic students. Hispanic students were rated as having good scholarship by 44 districts or 43% of the Kentucky school districts that responded. Fifty of the districts (49%) rated the Hispanic students as average on their scholarship. Only 9 districts or .08% rated Hispanic students as having poor scholarship.



**Question 8.** How many total faculty members do you have in your school district?

For this survey, 112 Kentucky school districts reported 39,376 faculty members. The smallest district reported having 25 faculty members. The largest district reported



having 5,896 faculty members.

**Question 9.** How many Hispanic faculty members do you have in your school district?

There were 113 school districts that reported having a total of 191 Hispanic faculty members. The range for all school districts was zero Hispanic teachers to 41 Hispanic teachers. The average was 1.69% Hispanic teachers for all the school districts.

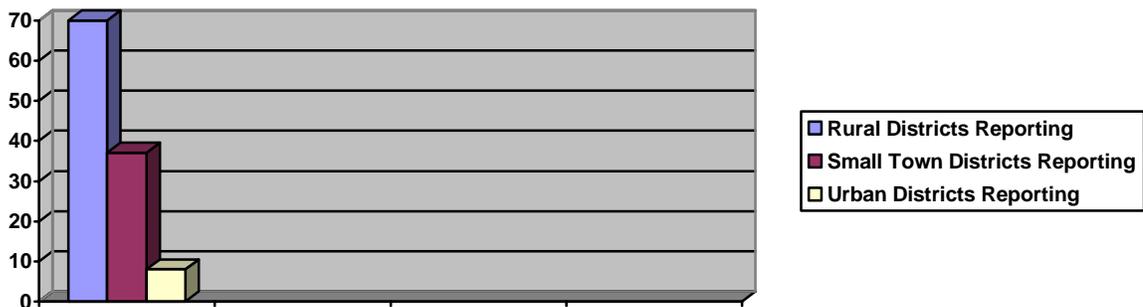
#### Hispanic Teachers in Kentucky School Districts

Hispanic Teacher Numbers:

- 0 80 Districts
- 1-5 52 Districts
- 6-10 2 Districts
- 10+ 2 Districts

**Question 10.** Identify your district as either rural, small town, or urban.

There were 115 responses to this question. The majority of the school districts (69 districts or 61%) identified their school district as being rural. There were 37 school districts (or 32%) that identified their school district as being located in a small town. Only 8 school districts or .07% of the school districts indicated they were urban districts.



The majority of the 12, 386 Hispanic students were located in eight urban school districts.

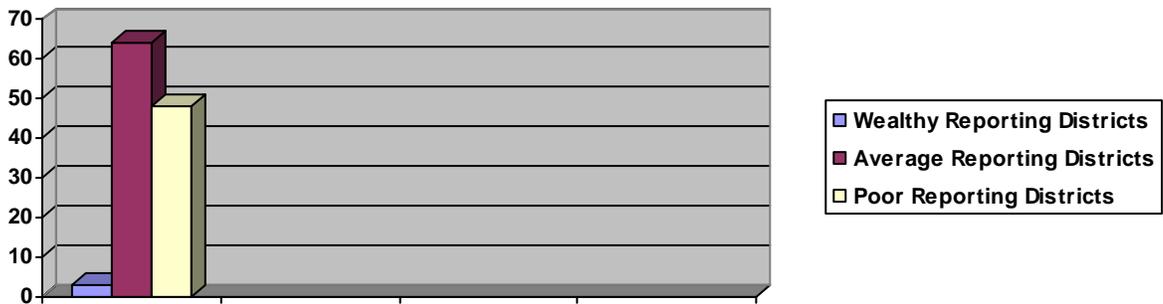
These eight urban districts account for 7,264 of the Hispanic students. Small towns have

2,847 Hispanic students and rural Kentucky school districts have 2,275 Hispanic students.



**Question 11.** Identify your district in terms of wealth?  
 Wealthy  
 Average  
 Poor

There were 113 responses to this question concerning district wealth. Only 2 or .02% identified themselves as being a wealthy school district. The majority of the school districts (63 or 56%) responded they were average in terms of wealth. There were 48 or 42% of the districts that indicated they were poor school districts.



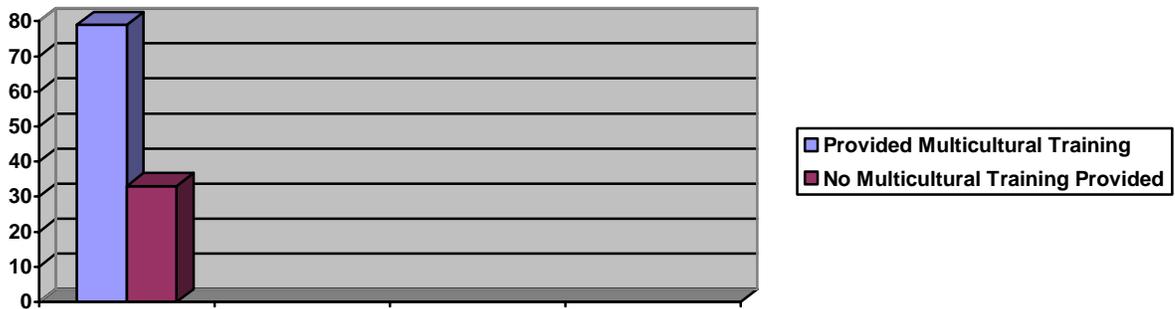
The majority of Hispanic students (7,109) were identified in school districts of average wealth. Another large group of Hispanic students (4,897) is in districts of poor wealth.

Two of the districts identified themselves as wealthy districts reported having 380 Hispanic students.



**Question 12.** Has your school district provided multicultural training for school district personnel? Yes or No

There were 112 responses to this question. The majority (79 or 71%) of the responding school districts indicated they have provided multicultural training for their personnel. There were 33 school districts (29%) that indicated they provide no multicultural training for school district personnel.



## Conclusions:

A majority of the Kentucky school districts (81% or 109 districts) responded they have Hispanic students enrolled in their schools. Only 26 school districts (19%) reported they had no Hispanic students. According to the responses from Superintendents in this study, there are 12,386 Hispanic students attending Kentucky schools. This was greater than the 11,464 figure for Hispanics reported by the U.S. Department of Education (2007). For this study, the range was from zero Hispanic students in 26 school districts to a high of 4,039 Hispanic students in one district. The growth in the Hispanic student numbers has been rapid and has major implications for Kentucky and its citizens. The New Century Foundation (2006) concluded that the average Mexican immigrant would collect \$55,200 more in government services than they will pay in taxes. This is something the Commonwealth and local governments in Kentucky will have to address very soon. Hispanics are the main reason for the increase in poverty in the United States, they are the least likely to have health insurance, a large percent of Hispanics (44%) do not speak and read English well enough to perform routine tasks, and Hispanics have higher high school dropout rates and lower high school completion rates than other groups. What does this mean? How can the Commonwealth and local governments in Kentucky meet the needs of Hispanic students and citizens? One way Kentucky could help would be to raise taxes to pay for the increased social and educational costs. Some Kentucky communities will face bigger financial challenges than other communities in the state. Additional school facilities will be required in urban areas where concentrated groups of Hispanics have located. This will be a sizeable cost for local and state taxpayers. Hispanic students will require immunizations, school physicals, eyeglasses,

dental work, and medical services. Hispanic families are the least likely to have health insurance. A majority of Hispanic families are poor and someone will have to bear the costs for the social, medical, and educational services for their children. In addition, textbook costs and other school expenses may have to be paid by the public. A controversial solution would be to address these local costs or state costs by big increases in property taxes (local) or income/sales taxes (state). The American public seems unwilling to raise property taxes, and at times even appears to hate to pay any taxes. The increased costs for Hispanic social and educational services could lead to a local or statewide taxpayer revolt in Kentucky similar to what other states and cities are facing right now. Daleiden (1999) maintains, “The United States has adopted a policy of importing poverty, as if we did not have enough poor of our own”. Illinois will have to build a new school every month for the next twenty-five years to keep up with the rate of immigration. Texas needs to build two schools a week; California must build a school a day. More than one-half of all the schools and public infrastructure constructed since 1970 have been built to accommodate immigrants. Many public office holders would be understandably concerned about raising taxes because there is the possibility they could be ousted as a result of tax increases. Politicians are held accountable for tax increases and the public would have to agree that this is a wise action. The tax shifting of recent years, from lifting the responsibility of paying taxes from corporations to placing the burden on home owners may be a huge political problem for Kentucky. Rasmus (2005) wrote, “A tax shift has therefore clearly taken place for the corporate income tax on the one hand and the payroll tax on the other, with workers paying an ever-increasing relative share of federal tax revenues and corporations a corresponding lesser share”. Rattner

(2004) stated, “Over the past 50 years, the share of tax revenue coming to the federal government from business has collapsed. In fiscal 2003, corporate taxes represented just 7.4 percent of federal revenue, down from 32 percent in 1952. However, the problem will be one that will not be unique to Kentucky. This same taxpayer revolt will likely take place everywhere in the nation wherever there are high concentrations of poor, uneducated Hispanics who add tremendously to the costs of public services.

A majority of the surveyed school districts (65 districts or 48%) indicated they offer English as a Second Language (ESL) for Hispanic students. This is an expensive program. U.S. English, Inc. (2008) wrote, “Kentucky is finding out that multilingualism is expensive. Jefferson County Public Schools – which provides 65 ESL teachers and dozens of bilingual assistants, spends about \$5 million a year on ESL students. Bowling Green spends about \$500,000 a year on its ESL population on every thing from bilingual dictionaries to bilingual teachers”. As the numbers of Hispanic students increase, local and/or state funds will be needed to pay for the increased costs of this program. English is the key to Hispanics escaping from poverty and this is a fundamental program for bringing Hispanics into American society. We know the work of teaching English to new immigrants is best done by the public schools, as has happened with previous immigrant groups. However, the size of the current Hispanic immigration is larger than for past immigrant groups, and this is a very poor and undereducated group of people. Many Hispanics are high school dropouts. Reyes, Scribner, Scribner, and Paredes (1999) indicate that school dropouts are 70-80 percent more likely to end up on public assistance or be placed in prison than individuals who complete their high school education. There is not only an educational need to keep Hispanics in school, it is clear that there are

economic needs as well. Having a cheap source of immediate labor may be terribly expensive in terms of paying for the social and medical services that are required by poor, unskilled workers and their families. The big question is who and how will we pay for the educational, medical and social costs of having a rising pool of Hispanic immigrant workers.

There are educational questions pertaining to Hispanics that need to be answered. How can the schools deal with the Hispanic dropout rate? It has been and is likely to continue to be an issue for Kentucky, and to date, no one has found the answer. The highest reported Hispanic dropout rate in Kentucky was 50% in our study. This must stop. Education is a proven and effective means of getting people out of poverty. Barrow and Rouse (2006) state that policies that increase education among the low-skilled, who are disproportionately African American and Hispanic, have a good possibility of increasing economic well-being and reducing inequality. In the meantime, the Federal Lunch Program will experience huge increases in the number of Hispanic students that will qualify for free/reduced breakfasts and lunches. In addition, the costs of all federal school poverty programs will skyrocket. Someone will have to pay for the increased costs of all the programs for disadvantaged students. This is not a short-term situation and will continue into the near future. The challenge will be for all levels of government to figure out how to pay for the increased costs of educating poor students who do not speak English. In addition, a high school diploma is no longer enough to guarantee a living wage. It could be a sound investment for the United States to provide a financial support system to permit Hispanics to attend American colleges and

universities. Financing Hispanic schooling is a sound investment in uplifting Hispanics as members of our society who need a helping hand in obtaining an education.

At some point, someone will have to pay for the needed services if **our** American society will **continue** as a democratic society. This will require a major shift in government policies toward the poor in America. The poor will need to become a real financial priority, not just **another empty promise** conveniently forgotten when corporate America **lobbyists** influence American politicians. **The needs of all our people must** become a priority for all levels of government. **This may be expensive on the front end, but could be invaluable as our entire population is uplifted through education and a chance to live the American Dream. Money spent on education is typically better spent than money spent to build more prisons or pay for more welfare services.**

The majority of Kentucky school districts responded that the academic scholarship of Hispanic students is average (49 percent). Hispanic students were rated as having good academic scholarship in 44 Kentucky school districts (43 percent). This is a sign of encouragement for the Commonwealth. The task of keeping Hispanic students in school and **having them graduate** will **be dependent** on how well Hispanic students like school **and** see the value of staying in school and graduating. Obviously, many Hispanic students are doing well in the public schools of Kentucky. They are learning English and their scholarship is either average or good (combined total of 92 percent). This is a good **base** for Kentucky public schools to build on.

**Another educational issue brought to light in this study involves the small number of Hispanic teachers currently teaching in Kentucky public schools.** It will be a challenge to find the teacher role models that are needed by Hispanic students. This study located

191 Hispanic faculty members in the Commonwealth with a range from zero to 41 Hispanic teachers in a single Kentucky school district. Having 191 Kentucky Hispanic teachers was actually more than these researchers predicted, however, many more are needed to teach and serve as role models for the thousands of Hispanic students in Kentucky. We need to change some of the negative attitudes that were reported by The New Century Foundation (2006) where only 36 percent of Mexicans say they hold a positive view of Americans. Seventy-three percent of the Mexicans in that study said Americans are racist, and only 16 percent felt Americans are honest. Even more disturbing, only 34 percent of Mexicans eligible for U.S. citizenship actually become citizens. This represents the lowest figure for any national group in the United States. This all must change. Hispanics need to think of Americans in a more positive light and want to become American citizens. It has been a long-standing task of American public schools to provide the quality of citizens our nation needs and expects. Good citizens have positive attitudes about our great state and nation; however, the challenge facing us will require a complete change in our state and national educational priorities. For Kentucky, it is a challenge that needs the immediate attention of our governor and legislature. The poorest of the poor cannot be left to drop out and have negative feelings about the rest of American society.

Our survey found that the majority (7,264 of the 12,386) of Hispanic students are located in eight urban Kentucky school districts. The rest of the Hispanic students are evenly distributed among small towns and rural school districts. Once again, the financial strain that this may place on city governments will be substantial. It will be a challenge for urban areas to keep their heads above water without drowning in the financial needs

of their newest poor additions to their communities. The eight urban districts **must** have a strategic plan in place to deal with the educational and social needs **of Hispanic students.** This will require exceptional urban leaders who can demonstrate that they can be trusted to do their best on behalf of the Hispanic newcomers. We also found that 98 percent of the school districts in Kentucky identified themselves as being average to poor in wealth. That would indicate that they would face a struggle to fund and provide for the needs of Hispanic **students who enroll in Kentucky schools.**

The last question revealed a beacon of hope for the people of Kentucky. We asked about the level of multicultural training for school personnel. The majority (71 percent) of the responding school districts indicated they have provided multicultural training for their school district personnel. Twenty-nine percent of school districts (29%) have not trained their personnel. This demonstrates the **majority of Kentucky** public schools are planning, care about their charge to students, and **are** meeting the needs of Hispanic children. The public schools may be well ahead of **other** state **agencies** in being able to **accommodate** the influx of Hispanic students. The public schools provide a beacon of hope for Hispanics who have come to Kentucky to live, work, and have their children attend school. Kentucky school districts deserve a well-earned pat-on-the-back for their efforts to educate Hispanic students.

**Recommendations for Further Study:**

1. Which subject areas and grade levels are Hispanic teachers teaching in Kentucky?

2. What level of teacher **certification** do Hispanic teachers possess?

(Elementary, Middle, or High School)

4. How many Hispanic administrators are there in the Commonwealth of Kentucky?

**Where are they located? (Urban, small town, or rural) What is their assigned school level**

**(Elementary, Middle, or High School)?**

7. How many Hispanic school counselors are there in the Commonwealth of Kentucky?

**Where are they located and what is their school level assignment?**

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**Appendix B:  
Letter to Superintendents**

April 1, 2007

Dear Superintendent:

The enclosed survey has been designed to gather information about Hispanic education from Kentucky School Superintendents. This is information that we plan to collect and compile to add to the information that is currently available concerning Hispanic education in the Commonwealth.

Please give us a few minutes of your valuable time to complete the survey. A self-addressed, stamped envelope has been enclosed for your convenience in returning the survey. Please assist us by returning your survey by April 27<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Dr. Victor Balletero  
Associate Professor

Dr. Sam Wright  
Assistant Professor

