



Center for Public Education



Research Brief
COVID-19-Related School
Support for Hispanic/Latino
Students and Families

AN **nsba** PUBLICATION

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The Role of School Boards

We do not have to look far to see the impacts that the pandemic has had on our schools and communities over the past two years. We have seen school closures, new and exacerbated academic challenges, the spread of the virus, impacts on local businesses, and the deaths of loved ones, to name a few. We have seen successes, too, including vaccines becoming more readily available, strides in device and internet access, growing supports for social and emotional wellness, and more. Still, we are also facing new challenges in providing information, resources, and support to communities that are the most in need.

Recognizing this, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) is proud to be working with the National Alliance for Hispanic Health (NAHH) in support of the Vacunas CVN Network, a national network for community-based services in 38 cities to deliver trusted and science-based information on COVID-19 prevention and to reduce barriers and increase Hispanic/Latino community access to vaccination. School boards have been endeavoring to help students and parents and to ensure safe and healthy learning environments. As school board member Tanya Franklin Ortiz pointed out,

“It was vital for us to do everything we could to remove barriers to vaccinations by providing access to accurate information through social media, word of mouth, and bilingual text messages and by establishing school-based vaccinations clinics with extended hours throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District.”

School boards are empowered to be the governance body for a school district. They are uniquely positioned to support students and communities through challenging times through their vision and leadership. In their governance role, boards serve as ambassadors for their districts, embracing their role in providing accurate information and impactful supports to their communities. Boards also have the unique opportunity to collaborate with outside organizations to help provide resources and assistance to meet the specific needs of their communities.

To help school boards and district leaders support Hispanic/Latino communities in their COVID-19 outreach and vaccination efforts, we compiled this research brief to provide actionable information and best practices. In this research brief, we follow Congress and the federal government in using the terms Hispanics and Latinos. The data used in this brief are from the Department of Education, the Census Bureau, the Congressional Research Service (CRS), the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), research organizations (e.g., Pew Research Center), and nonprofit organizations that serve Hispanic/Latino communities.

Hispanic/Latino Students in Public Schools

Public schools have seen a substantial increase in the enrollment of Hispanic/Latino students due to demographic changes in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the population of Hispanic/Latino students has grown from 6 million in 1995 to 13.6 million in 2017. The NCES projects that this population will keep growing and, by the fall of 2029, will reach 14 million, approximately 28 percent of public school enrollment.

Geographically, most Hispanic/Latino students attend public schools in urban areas, but rural areas have seen a substantial increase in the enrollment of this racial/ethnic group. In 2020, more than half of the K-12 student population was Hispanic/Latino in New Mexico (63%), California (55%), and Texas (53%). Nearly



half of the student population was Hispanic/Latino in Arizona (45%) and Nevada (43%). About one in three students was Hispanic/Latino in Florida (35%), Colorado (34%), and New Jersey (31%).

Approximately one in three Hispanic/Latino students was enrolled in public schools that were predominantly Hispanic in the [2017-2018](#) school year (SY). In SY [2018-19](#), at least one in two Hispanic/Latino students attended schools where half of the students or more shared their race or ethnicity. Spanish is the most common home language spoken by English learners (ELs) or English Language Learners (ELLs). In [SY 2017–18](#), ELs who speak Spanish made up nearly 75 percent of all English learners.

COVID-19 Challenges for Hispanic/Latino Families

“Hispanic health is often shaped by factors such as language/cultural barriers, lack of access to preventive care, and the lack of health insurance” ([HHS, 2021](#)). In 2019, the Census Bureau [reported](#) that half of Hispanics/Latinos did not have private insurance coverage; in contrast, only one in four non-Hispanic whites did not have insurance coverage. The CDC has [cited](#) some of the leading causes of illness and death among Hispanics and Latinos, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Hispanics/Latinos have the highest uninsured rates of any racial or ethnic group within the United States ([HHS, 2021](#)).

More than 175,000 children in the U.S. have lost a parent or a grandparent to COVID-19. [Researchers](#) found that Hispanic/Latino children were almost twice as likely as white children to experience this loss.

According to the [Pew Research Center](#), half of Hispanics/Latinos reported that someone close to them has been hospitalized or died from COVID-19, and the rate of COVID-19-associated hospitalizations is 2.8 times higher for Hispanics/Latinos than non-Hispanic whites.

COVID-19 has taken a personal and financial toll on Hispanic/Latino families. Many Hispanic/Latino parents work in essential services industries as defined by the [CDC](#), such as first responders, grocery store workers, and workers in food manufacturing and agriculture. Hispanics/Latinos have been more likely to contract COVID-19 due to higher employment rates in essential services. At the same time, Hispanic/Latino families also have experienced some of the steepest [job losses](#) due to business closures caused by the pandemic.

Language and literacy barriers make it difficult for Hispanic/Latino families to receive timely and accurate information and resources about COVID-19 vaccines. While bilingual services are often available in areas with large Hispanic/Latino communities, Spanish-language information and resources about COVID-19-related health issues are still limited, particularly in areas with small Hispanic/Latino communities. Compared with non-Hispanics, Hispanics are 56 percent more likely to use social media as the primary source of information on COVID-19, according to a [Nielsen study](#) (2020). Unfortunately, [researchers](#) found that nearly one in two Hispanics/Latinos has received inaccurate information about the vaccine on Facebook (53%) and messaging apps (43%) such as WhatsApp and WeChat. While social media has become an important channel to receive information and opinions, Hispanic/Latino parents need reliable and accurate knowledge and support about why, when, where, and how to get the vaccine.

Logistical barriers, such as a lack of internet access to find and schedule appointments, gaps in access to transportation, distance to the nearest vaccination site, and lack of convenient appointment times, also challenge Hispanic/Latino families’ access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Work obligations and immigration concerns are often [cited](#) as challenges that Hispanic/Latino parents

are facing in terms of getting COVID-19 vaccines. According to Kaiser Health News (KHN), nearly two-thirds of unvaccinated Hispanic/Latino adults reported that they were very or somewhat concerned about side effects of the vaccine that may make them miss work. In [Arizona](#) and [California](#), UnidosUS (October, 2021) reported that among Hispanic/Latino parents with unvaccinated children, about half were concerned that they may have to miss work for vaccine appointments, deal with side effects of the vaccine, or pay a co-pay/fees; about one-third were concerned about issues (e.g., immigration consequences, proof of government identification) that may potentially impact their children getting vaccinated.

Due to the lack of clear information, Hispanic/Latino parents, like many parents in the U.S., worry about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines for their children.

According to UnidosUS (October 2021) — a national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization — most Hispanic/Latino parents planned to get their children under 12 vaccinated once it became available, but they were uncertain about the vaccine’s safety and side effects. In Florida and Texas, 75 percent of Hispanic/Latino parents with unvaccinated children of any age cited safety and side effects as a top concern about getting their children vaccinated. It should be noted that in November 2021, the CDC approved a COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11.

COVID-19-Related School Support for Hispanic/Latino Students and Families

The voices of parents are important when school leaders make decisions about their children’s education, health, and safety. According to [UnidosUS](#), given their experience with the COVID-19 vaccination process, Hispanic/Latino parents support approaches that would reduce barriers and increase access to vaccines. In Arizona, California, Florida, and Texas, around half of Hispanic/Latino parents think ideas such as flexible hours at vaccine locations and vaccination at schools can make getting vaccinated easier in their communities (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of Hispanic/Latino Parents in Arizona, California, Florida, and Texas, by Ideas That Can Make Getting Vaccinated Easier in Their Communities: 2021

Idea That Can Make Getting Vaccinated Easier	Arizona	California	Florida	Texas
More flexible hours at vaccine locations	53%	64%	59%	56%
Make COVID-19 vaccine available along with other routine vaccines	52%	60%	55%	50%
Hold vaccination clinics on-site at work	52%	60%	52%	42%
Vaccinations at schools, daycares, and children’s sports events	49%	59%	54%	48%
Provide transportation to vaccination locations	54%	58%	47%	45%
Remove ID requirements so children and parents can get vaccines without fear of immigration problems	46%	56%	52%	43%
Financial assistance for parents to replace lost income when taking time off work for vaccinations or to deal with side effects	49%	63%	55%	44%

[Source: Latino Parents’ Concerns Over Vaccine Access for Children | UnidosUS](#)



COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS

VACCINE - VACUNA
IMPFSTOFF - VACCIN



30ml Injection

COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS

VACCINE - VACUNA
IMPFSTOFF - VACCIN



30ml Injection

COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS

VACCINE - VACUNA
IMPFSTOFF - VACCIN



30ml Injection

Recently, the [CDC](#) recommended “six ways that schools can promote COVID-19 vaccines.”

Based on the action steps suggested by the CDC, school boards and leaders should consider the following strategies to meet the needs of Hispanic/Latino parents, support COVID-19 vaccine uptake, and improve health literacy among staff, students, and families in the community.

- **Provide bilingual services at school-located vaccination (SLV) clinics.** School leaders may consider a familiar and convenient location as well as provide flexible hours for eligible teachers and students to get vaccinated, while also potentially serving other eligible groups in the surrounding community, including family members of students. It also is important to include bilingual advertisements for these clinics throughout the community.
- **Partner on COVID-19 vaccine-related activities in Hispanic/Latino communities.** School districts can partner with local health departments, municipal governments, and local healthcare providers, as well as local businesses, churches, sports teams, community-based organizations, and media companies. Specifically, school leaders can collaborate with promotoras/promotores (i.e., community health workers), who are uniquely positioned to provide much-needed COVID-19 education and outreach in Latino communities, particularly in areas with disparities in vaccination rates ([Cáceres et al., 2022](#)).
- **Provide Spanish-speaking school staff with resources for answering general COVID-19 vaccination questions.** School districts may consider workshops or training sessions for Spanish-speaking school staff to increase their awareness of the COVID-19-related resources and use data to understand disparities and needs. To encourage participation, district leaders may also consider offering incentives and streamlining participation processes where possible.
- **Provide timely, accurate COVID-19-related information, and elevate trusted community voices.** The [CDC](#), as well as some national organizations (e.g., [NLC](#), [UnidosUS](#), [Salud America!](#)), reported that “Right now, families in your school community may be wading through a lot of information—and misinformation—to make decisions about COVID-19 vaccinations.” To empower students, teachers, and parents with relevant knowledge and timely, accurate information, some school districts that serve a high percentage of Hispanic/Latino students have developed a bilingual section on their website and social media to disseminate COVID-related data and research. To ensure every student has access to the vaccine, school districts should inform parents through a school’s communication channels about the dates and places of COVID-19 vaccination events or ongoing clinics. Additionally, they should send out electronic sign-up links for parents to register their child and/or themselves for a COVID-19 vaccination appointment. To inform students and parents of the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines, districts may consider [CDC-recommended strategies](#), such as to display age-appropriate COVID-19 vaccine educational posters around the school building and in classrooms, invite students to wear their COVID-19 vaccination stickers to school, and encourage teachers and staff to share their COVID-19 vaccination stories on social media and/or through school.
- **Promote well-child visits for routine health needs. Many children and adolescents have missed their annual wellness visits or checkups during the pandemic.** Hispanic/Latino parents [reported](#) struggling with child care responsibilities during COVID-19 as schools and child care facilities closed. School districts may take this opportunity to help Hispanic/Latino families to complete their children’s annual checkups, and at the same time, to address behavior and mental health concerns and development needs that arose during the pandemic.
- **Make COVID-19 a teachable moment.** Hispanic/Latino students often play a unique role in their families — they are bilingual; they can be interpreters and messengers. The CDC suggests that discussions and lessons about COVID-19 and vaccination can be incorporated into many subjects in age-appropriate, meaningful ways. Therefore, school districts may consider ways to include content related to COVID-19 and vaccine science, as well as critical media literacy, into their curriculum.

Post-Pandemic School Support for a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to everyone, particularly Hispanic/Latino parents caught in child care and the [homework gaps](#). It is significant to note that during the pandemic, the percentage of Hispanic/Latino students who received in-person instruction at school was much lower than their non-Hispanic white peers (45% vs. 74%). The [CRS](#) data show that at least three in four Hispanic/Latino students had to learn online, and compared with their white peers, more Hispanic/Latino students could not access technology (i.e., device and/or internet) for education at home (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of Students Who Received Education In Person and/or Online, and Computer and Internet Availability in Households, by Selected Race/Ethnicity: April 28 through May 24, 2021

	Received In-Person Instruction at School	Received Virtual/ Online Instruction	Device Always Available for Educational Purposes	Internet Always Available for Educational Purposes
Hispanic/Latino	45%	78%	79%	74%
Non-Hispanic White	74%	60%	82%	82%
U.S.	63%	68%	81%	80%

Note: These categories are not mutually exclusive. A household’s respondent could select any that apply, meaning that in the last seven days, a child or children living in the household and enrolled in school could have received education by multiple delivery methods. Source: [R46883 \(congress.gov\)](#)

Physical, mental, and financial challenges due to the pandemic made many Hispanic/Latino parents feel inadequate to help with their children’s education at home. The Economic Policy Institute ([EPI](#)) found that in 2021, only one in six Hispanic/Latino workers (15.2%) were able to telework due to COVID, compared with one in four white workers (25.9%). Additionally, Hispanics/Latinos were less likely to have jobs that offered paid sick leave or family leave ([BLS](#), 2019).

Data from the [Pew Research Center](#) show that a majority of Hispanic/Latino parents of K-12 students are concerned that their children have fallen behind in school as a result of disruptions caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Like many other parents in America, Hispanic/Latino parents look forward to safe and healthy learning environments for their children in school. In 2021, [UnidosUS](#) reported that most Hispanic/Latino parents — [Arizona](#) (72%), [California](#) (76%), [Florida](#) (72%), and [Texas](#) (65%) — supported school policies that require all students and school staff get vaccinated to attend school in person.

In conclusion, every school district is unique in terms of its structures, demographics, resources, and challenges, and there is no “one size fits all” approach to solve all COVID-19-related issues. As the [CDC](#) points out, “Which actions school districts decide to take will depend on state and local policies, health service infrastructure, and available resources.”

To engage Hispanic/Latino families and increase their access to COVID-19 vaccines, school districts should identify the specific needs of their parents, actively seek collaboration with their communities, and develop innovative district-level approaches.



COVID-19-Related Best Practices of School Districts

1. Hold school-located vaccination (SLV) clinics (Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD))

LAUSD is the second-largest school district in the nation. In 2021, the district enrolled more than 640,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Nearly three in four students (73.4%) are Hispanic/Latino. To ensure all students are able to have a safe and healthy in-person learning environment, LAUSD requires students 12 and older who attend school in-person to be in compliance with the vaccine requirement by the start of the Fall 2022 semester.

According to the **CDC**, a school-located vaccination clinic (SLV) is administered on school grounds via temporary clinics. The clinics are primarily designed to vaccinate enrolled students and held before, during, or after school or when schools are not in session. It is a collaboration between public health departments, schools, and/or other private sector entities.

In the 2021 CDC's guidance on "[How Schools Can Support COVID-19 Vaccination](#)," the LAUSD's practice of SLV clinics is highlighted as a success story: "*The Los Angeles Unified School District partnered with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to hold 250 SLV clinics across the district using their school-based health centers or **mobile clinics** to reach COVID-19 vaccine eligible middle and high school students before the summer of 2021. [Visit the LAUSD website for an example of how to communicate with families.](#)*"

Tanya Ortiz Franklin, LAUSD board member (District 7), **recorded** her personal experience of visiting one of the district's SLV clinics. *She also said, "Schools are the heart and hub of communities, and building mutual trust is something that educators and school-site staff members work for each and every day. When it comes to vaccine outreach in Latinx communities, this trust is unique to schools and should be utilized to the fullest extent so that all scholars have the opportunity to learn and thrive in safe, healthy learning environments."*

2. Launch an information campaign (Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD))

In Michigan, nearly 98 percent of DPSCD's **53,406** students are students of color, including 14 percent Hispanic/Latino. "[Experiences with present-day and historical racism have contributed to many families' distrust in health care institutions and in the safety of COVID-19 vaccines](#)" (Greene et al., 2021). The district and its staff have worked hard to serve as trusted sources of information in the Detroit community. To help build confidence in COVID-19 vaccines, the DPSCD launched an information campaign for teachers, staff, parents, and eligible students. Through the **Teens for Vaccines** campaign, student ambassadors have shared their experiences receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. School nurses called over 10,000 homes to have conversations with parents, sharing information about COVID-19 vaccines and answering questions. The DPSCD also partnered with a local radio station to share information with the broader community.

3. Identify the needs of the Hispanic/Latino community (Orange County Public Schools (OCPS))

The OCPS (Florida) system is an urban district of over 206,000 students; 43 percent of students are Hispanic/Latino. To meet the unique needs of its community, the district identified areas that lacked access to transportation to vaccination clinic sites and ensured that Spanish-speaking providers staffed all clinics. Additionally, the school system coordinated with food distribution sites across the district to co-locate vaccination sites. Clinic hours coincided with the schedules of students and parents; clinics would open prior to dismissal to promote vaccination among students and remain open through the evening to vaccinate parents and community members.

4. Have a “no wrong door” approach (New York City Public Schools (NYCPS))

New York City Public Schools is the nation’s largest school system. In SY 2019-20, the district enrolled [1,033,669](#) students and 41 percent were Hispanic/Latino. In 2021, the [NYC government](#) launched a \$1.3 million multimedia campaign to promote adolescent vaccination so that eligible students had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated. Ads were translated into 13 languages and run on TV, radio, digital channels, newspapers, subways, and posters at neighborhood businesses. Additionally, NYCPS school leaders stressed the importance of regular multichannel communications to parents and students through school bulletins, newsletters, texts, phone calls, door-to-door outreach, summer meal programs, sports physicals, and back-to-school events. Even when SLV efforts were intended to reach students, school officials also emphasized the importance of using every opportunity to offer vaccines to families and community members.

5. ESL-focused vaccine clinic (Newcomer Academy in Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS))

In Kentucky, JCPS has an [English as a Second Language \(ESL\) Newcomer Academy](#). The academy provides a welcoming and respectful environment that meets the unique linguistic, academic, and social/emotional needs of sixth- through 10th-grade English learners (ELs). These students typically are in their first year of instruction in a U.S. school. They are usually at the beginning levels of English proficiency and may have had limited or interrupted educational experiences in their native countries.

On Saturday mornings, the Newcomer Academy became another one of the school district’s vaccine clinics, where attendees could get their first, second, or booster COVID-19 shot or their flu vaccine. By [Feb. 12, 2022](#), more than 200 adults and children received shots at this Newcomer Vaccine Clinic. Unlike other district clinics, the Newcomer vaccine clinic targeted students and families where English is a second language (ESL). Sign-in forms were in several languages, including Spanish, Somali, Arabic, and French. Interpreters were provided to help attendees communicate through the process. JCPS leaders believe that having the clinic at Newcomer, providing interpreters and forms in multiple languages, and not requiring insurance can remove many barriers that may stop a family from vaccinating.

Other Relevant Resources for School Boards

1. Toolkits from federal agencies and national organizations

- [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services — Resources About COVID-19 Vaccinations for Children Ages 5+](#).

Note: The resource types include campaign ads, informational content (e.g., School Communities Toolkits, Frequently Asked Questions from Parents/Guardians About COVID-19 and the Vaccines), posters and flyers, social media, videos, etc.

- [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\)](#)

Note: The CDC’s VFC program offers vaccines at no cost to eligible children through health care providers enrolled in the program. Vaccinating on time means healthier children, families, and communities.

- [Kaiser Permanente — COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Toolkit](#).

Note: This toolkit is meant to adapt to the unique needs, capacity, and context of communities and organizations. It offers a framework for measuring vaccine equity along with metrics and indices to assess impact. The core of the toolkit offers a suite of equity-enabling opportunities that can be activated to enhance current vaccine administration approaches.

- [Toolkit for Schools and School Partners | National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants \(NRC-RIM\) \(nrcrim.org\)](#)

Note: The National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants (NRC-RIM) is funded by the CDC and the International Organization for Migration. The NRC-RIM has resources, fact sheets, and best practices to support school districts to help newcomer students and parents, such as providing COVID-19 vaccine campaign and education materials in more than 40 languages with easy-to-use, customizable templates.

2. Resources about hosting COVID vaccination clinics at school

- [Guide to Hosting COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics at School | WECANDOTHIS.HHS.GOV](#)
- [School-Located Vaccination Clinics: Best Practices for School Districts | CDC](#)
- [Rural Health Clinic Vaccine Confidence \(RHCVC\) Program | Official web site of the U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration \(hrsa.gov\)](#)

Note: The Rural Health Clinic Vaccine Confidence (RHCVC) Program supports vaccine outreach in rural communities, such as education and outreach efforts around vaccine benefits and safety, providing information to rural residents about how and where to get vaccinated.

3. Hispanic health resources for parents, families, and education leaders

- [The National Alliance for Hispanic Health \(NAHH\)](#)

Note: The NAHH provides services to more than 15 million Hispanics throughout the United States every year through its work and resources.

- [What You Need to Know /Lo Que Necesita Saber](#)

Note: The NAHH provides COVID-19 awareness and preventative information in English and en Español.

- [National Hispanic Family Health Helpline](#)

Note: The Helpline provides free, reliable, and confidential health information in Spanish and English. It is staffed by bilingual health promotion advisors available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern time. 1-866-783-2645 (1-866-Su Familia)

4. Information on relevant funding

- [Using American Rescue Plan and Other Pandemic Relief Funds to Provide Incentives to Students to Get the COVID-19 Vaccination](#) Frequently Asked Questions, from U.S. Department of Education
- [Use of Funds for COVID-19 Vaccinations and Testing](#) Frequently Asked Questions Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund and Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, from U.S. Department of Education
- [U.S. Department of Education Posts State Plans for Use of American Rescue Plan Funds to Support Students and the Safe and Sustained Reopening of Schools | U.S. Department of Education](#)
- [HHS Provides \\$66.5 Million to Expand Community-Based Outreach Efforts to Increase COVID-19 Vaccinations | HHS.gov](#)

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ABOUT NSBA

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) is the leading advocate for public education. For 80 years, we have been leading the effort to support and enhance public education. We are

succeeding in creating the best possible environment in which students can realize their dreams.

NSBA is a federation of 49 state associations and the U.S. territory of the Virgin Islands, representing their more than 90,000 school board officials. These local officials govern more than 13,600 local school districts serving more than 50 million public school students. Working with and through our state associations, and serving as their Washington, D.C., office, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board governance.

We believe public education is America's most vital institution. It is a civil right necessary to the dignity and freedom of the American people, and all children deserve equal access to an education that allows them to reach their potential.

In pursuit of these beliefs, NSBA and our members will continue to lead the national conversation about public education, advocate for public policies that ensure all students everywhere have access to a great public education where they live, create a better understanding of the importance of school boards and the benefits of local governance, and enhance the effectiveness of school boards.