

May 2017

Thank you for your request for **help in identifying promising and culturally-relevant practices and academic instruction that focus on the transition of Hispanic and Native American students from middle to high school**. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research-based education questions. **Please note that REL Southwest has not done an evaluation of the resources themselves, but offers this list to you for your information only. In addition, REL Southwest included resources that were not specific to Hispanic or Native American students because of their relevance to the question and the lack of resources specific to these groups.**

BACKGROUND

Sizable achievement gaps separate New Mexico's Hispanic and Native American students from other student groups on the state's standardized assessment.¹ These achievement gaps contribute to New Mexico's high percentage of low-performing schools (77 percent in 2010).² To support ongoing efforts to address these critical needs, the New Mexico Achievement Gap Research Alliance seeks to use data and evidence to identify and understand factors that facilitate or impede progress in reducing achievement gaps among subpopulations of K–12 students in New Mexico. The following question was converted to an Ask A REL question from the New Mexico Achievement Gap Research Alliance's research agenda.

Following an established REL Southwest protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive briefs on effective practices used with Hispanic and Native American students. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, educational databases, and general Internet searches using Google and Bing. See the methods section at the end of this Ask A REL for additional information on how we identified the following sources.

QUESTION

What is known about promising practices in academic instruction and culturally relevant practices in transitioning Hispanic and Native American students from middle school to high school?

¹ Childress, M. (2010, February 4). Hispanic education act targets achievement gap. *The New Mexico Independent*.

² Usher, A. (2011). *Update with 2009-10 data and five-year trends: How many schools have not made adequate yearly progress?* Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=357>.

SOURCES

Borman, G. D., Grigg, J., Rozek, C., & Hanselman, P. (2015). The sustained effects of a brief self-affirmation intervention on students' academic outcomes across middle and high school. *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness*.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED562534>.

From the abstract: "This article proposes closing the academic performance gaps between African American and Latino students and their White counterparts particularly in the line of research that concerns the idea of "stereotype threat." Stereotype threat is predicated on the notion that people often fear behaving in a way that fits the negative cultural image associated with a group stereotype, thereby marking them as inferior. If an intervention reduces stereotype threat and general anxiety before a test and boosts performance on that test, then that seemingly "small win" can reduce an individual's fear of fulfilling negative stereotypes and improve future performance in evaluative situations. The intervention proposed was a self-affirmation writing exercise developed by Geoffrey Cohen and his colleagues (Cohen et al., 2006). The outcome suggested that apparently subtle mindset interventions that spark small but early alterations in trajectory can have long-term effects that endure across several years and across key schooling transitions. Tables and figures are appended."

Corsello, M., Sharma, A., & Jerabek, A. (2015). Successful transition to high school: A randomized controlled trial of the BARR model with 9th grade students. *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED557930>.

From the abstract: "Ninth grade is a pivotal year for students. Numerous studies find that academic performance in 9th grade often sets the student's trajectory throughout the high school years, as well as the probability of graduation. The Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR) model is a comprehensive approach that addresses developmental, academic, and school environment challenges in the 9th grade year. This paper presents the results of a one-year randomized controlled trial that tested the effectiveness of the BARR model in a large suburban high school. The results demonstrated that students in the BARR experimental group earned significantly more credits in core classes ($F(4,516) = 24.21, p < 0.001$) and demonstrated significantly more growth from fall to spring in NWEA mathematics ($F(4,470) = 388.12, p < 0.001$) and reading scores ($F(4,490) = 251.84, p < 0.001$) when compared to students in the control group. BARR is unique in that it is a socio-emotional model that produces significant academic results and increases student success in the critical 9th grade year."

DeLamar, S. & Brown, C. G. (2016). Supporting transition of at-risk students through a freshman orientation model. *Journal of At-Risk Issues, Vol. 19(2)*, 32-39.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1117592>.

From the abstract: "This study examines the issues surrounding middle school students' transitions to high school and the degree to which freshman orientation models can help them. The attendance, discipline, report card grades, and end-of-course exams of 60 students who participated in a freshman orientation were compared to those of 150 students who were invited to participate in the program but did not. Students who

participated experienced gains in science end-of-course state exams; increases in math, science, and English course grades; and positive changes in discipline and attendance data. Parents of program participants shared that, overall, the program helped their children make a smooth transition to high school.”

Ellerbrock, C. R., Abbas, B., & DiCicco, M. (2014). Developmentally responsive teacher practices across the middle-to-high-school transition. *Journal of Research in Education, Vol. 24*(1), 17-37. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1098230>.

From the abstract: “In this year-long qualitative multi-site case study, researchers identified how eighth and ninth-grade teacher practices may support students' basic and developmental needs across the middle-to-high-school transition. Data were collected throughout 2009, including individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations, and artifact data of 23 participants. Findings suggest relational and academic teacher practices may help to meet students' needs across the transition but these practices were not consistent from one school site to the other and the responsiveness of these practices also varied across sites. Practices consistent with the warm demanding teaching stance may have promise for supporting students' needs during this period of schooling.”

Ellerbrock, C. R., & Kiefer, S. M. (2014). Supporting young adolescents' middle-to-high-school transition by creating a ninth grade community of care: Implications for middle grades educators. *Middle School Journal, 45*(3), 3-10. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1026644>.

From the abstract: “The middle-to-high-school transition and the first year of high school are critical periods in students' lives. According to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), ‘The passage of students from the middle grades to high school is the most difficult transition point in education’ (2002, p. 24). Although there are many different types of grade configurations, most students make the transition into high school between eighth and ninth grade. Regardless of grade configuration, many incoming high school students are deciding whether to stay or leave school during the first weeks of the school year (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999). In this article, authors discuss the importance of middle-to-high school transitions and highlight the importance of collaboration between middle and high school teachers as essential for healthy adolescent development beyond the middle grades.”

Hopwood, B., Hay, I., & Dymont, J. (2016). The transition from primary to secondary school: Teachers' perspectives. *Australian Educational Researcher, Vol. 43*(3), 289-307. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1103280>.

From the abstract: “The transition from primary school to secondary school has long been recognized as one of the most challenging times in a young adolescent students' education, particularly in regard to their academic achievement. Research evidence from the last 30 years has identified a consistent pattern in students' academic achievement across transition, suggesting that student achievement stalls or even declines in the first year of secondary school. The focus of this research was to identify teachers' perceptions of the best practices to prepare students for a successful

transition to secondary school. The findings were based on 12 one-on-one interviews with primary (Year 6) and secondary (Year 7) teachers. Teachers' responses were analysed qualitatively through a process of thematic analysis. Findings from the research identified three key methods which primary and secondary school teachers believed were essential for facilitating successful transition experiences for students: curriculum continuity and awareness, communication between primary and secondary schools, and adequate teacher support.”

Johnson, V. L., Simon, P., & Mun, E.-Y. (2014). A peer-led high school transition program increases graduation rates among Latino males. *Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 107(3), 186-196. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1031007>.

From the abstract: “The authors investigated the impact of a manualized high school transition program, the Peer Group Connection (PGC) program, on the graduation rate at a low-income, Mid-Atlantic high school. The program utilized 12th-grade student peer leaders to create a supportive environment for incoming ninth-grade students. Results of a randomized control trial demonstrated that male students who participated in the program during Grade 9 were significantly more likely to graduate from high school within 4 years than male students in the control group (81% vs. 63%). Findings suggest that peers can be effective in delivering a school-based, social emotional learning intervention and that it is possible to intervene in Grade 9 to influence the probability of high school graduation.”

López, F. A., Schram, J., & Heilig, J. V. (2013). A story within a story: Culturally responsive schooling and American Indian and Alaska Native achievement in the National Indian Education Study. *American Journal of Education*, 119(4), 513-538. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1018646>.

From the abstract: “There have been numerous calls to increase quantitative studies examining the role of culturally responsive schooling (CRS) on American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) achievement. The National Indian Education Study (NIES) is the only large-scale study focused on (AIAN) students’ cultural experiences within the context of schools. Given that NIES also includes achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), it has the potential to inform and guide policy directed specifically toward AIAN students. To examine ways NIES might potentially inform policy, the present study examined the degree to which AIAN student experiences as reflected in NIES are associated with achievement on NAEP. We then examined NIES against a CRS framework and found that NIES could inform policy to the detriment of AIAN students.”

Mac Iver, M. A., Epstein, J. L., Sheldon, S. B., & Fonseca, E. (2015). Engaging families to support students’ transition to high school: Evidence from the field. *High School Journal*, Vol. 99(1), 27-45. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1083231>.

From the abstract: “This exploratory study addresses the challenge of declining family engagement at the critical transition to high school. We use data from a survey of schools to examine whether and how middle grades and high schools engage families when their students transition to high school. Findings indicate that there is a significant

negative relationship between the proportion of students who struggle during the first year of high school and the quality of high school outreach to families in the transition period, even after school poverty level is controlled. The study also shows that, even among a group of schools actively implementing a systematic approach to engage families, considerable work remains to enable educators to engage families during the critical transition to high school in ways that help improve student outcomes in the ninth grade.”

ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES TO CONSULT

We also searched for appropriate organizations and resources that may be useful. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves but offer this list for reference only.

Abbott, S. E., & Templeton, K. (2013). Ninth grade counts: Using summer bridge programs to strengthen the high school transition. *Great Schools Partnership*. <http://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/resources/ninth-grade-counts/>.

Excerpt from website: “Ninth Grade Counts was created to help high schools identify weaknesses in their ninth-grade programs, and then develop a purposeful, proactive plan to strengthen this critical educational transition. Focusing on a selection of effective strategies and practices, the three-part guide equips districts and schools with a comprehensive, step-by-step process they can use to build a high-impact ninth-grade action plan.” NOTE: This source was not peer-reviewed.

Lara, J. & Harford, S. (2011). Middle-to-high school transition for English language learners: Promising school-based practices. *JLara Educational Consulting*. <http://www.edweek.org/media/final-middletohighschool.pdf>.

From the introduction: “This paper examines the nexus among three current areas of concern for secondary educators and policymakers: restructuring high schools into small learning communities (SLCs); supporting the transition of students into the ninth grade; and instructing English language learners (ELLs). Research in these three separate areas has become increasingly abundant and relevant as national educational policy focus has shifted toward high school improvement. ELLs are enrolled in large numbers in urban schools, which have lately been the recipients of high school reform initiatives. Yet, despite the abundant presence of ELLs in these schools, little information is available on how the distinctive linguistic, academic, and social needs to ELLs have been considered in high school reform policies and programmatic initiatives. The purpose of this report is to highlight high school practices that are effectively helping ELL students transition from the middle school to the high school level. It summarizes descriptive information gathered from seven high schools located in various urban districts across the country.” NOTE: This source was not peer-reviewed.

U.S. Department of Education, White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education. (2015). *School environment listening sessions: Final report*. Washington, DC. <http://sites.ed.gov/whiaiane/files/2015/10/school-environment-listening-sessions-final-report.pdf>.

From the executive summary: “To improve education for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students, tribal leaders, educators, and Native youth called upon WHIAIANE to collect information on school environment experiences — from teachers, parents, community members, and the students themselves. Tribal leaders and tribal communities wanted members of the initiative to hear about the challenges these students face in gaining high-quality education, with a focus on the quality of their school environments. To meet this need, WHIAIANE, in collaboration with OCR, worked with tribal leaders and communities to design and execute a series of nationwide listening sessions regarding the school environments of AI/AN students. In October and November 2014, nine gatherings were held in seven states from New York to California to Alaska. These sessions drew over 1,000 attendees in total and allowed WHIAIANE and OCR to gather information from all stakeholders in AI/AN education. WHIAIANE acted as a listener, allowing students and others to speak openly about their school environments.” NOTE: This source was not peer-reviewed.

METHODS

Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Searches

Latino, Native American, Hispanic, culture, high school, middle school, transition, academic instruction, practices, and education.

Search of Databases and Websites

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES) website (<http://www.ies.ed.gov>) and IES sources: Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Research (NCER), What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)
- ERIC database (www.eric.ed.gov)
- Google Scholar (scholar.google.com)
- Google (www.google.com)
- Bing (www.bing.com)

Criteria for Inclusion

REL Southwest selected resources that provide research on (1) Hispanic and (2) Native American students. When REL Southwest staff reviewed resources, we considered – among other things – three factors:

1. Date of Publication: The most current information (primarily published from 2011 to the present) is included.
2. Source and Funder of the Report/Brief/Article: Priority was given to publications written in relevant, peer-reviewed journals or reports or produced by well-known research organizations.
3. Methodology: sources include reported studies, literature reviews and policy reports.

Ask A REL is a service provided by a collaborative of the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES). This response was prepared by REL Southwest under contract ED-IES-12-C-0012 with IES. The content of this document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.