

# The Case for Investing in America's Hispanic Young Children

## The Workforce and Customer Base of Tomorrow



*“Hispanics are the largest minority group in the country, as well as the fastest growing segment of the population. Consequently, we must ensure that our next generation of American entrepreneurs and workers are properly equipped with the education and skills needed to compete in a global business environment, and early childhood education for all children is the first step toward ensuring the business community a prosperous future.”*

— Javier Palomarez, President and CEO,  
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce



Hispanic children are the fastest growing group of children in the United States. By 2050, Hispanic children are projected to grow from one-quarter of the U.S. child population to more than one-third, which will be equal to the number of non-Hispanic White children. The overwhelming majority of Hispanic children in the U.S. today — 93 percent — were born here and are U.S. citizens.<sup>1</sup> These children will grow to become the workforce — and the customer base — of tomorrow’s economy. These children have considerable assets — strong families, bilingualism, biculturalism, facility with digital media — which are important building blocks for the future workforce. Smart, proven investments in our youngest Hispanic learners are critical to protecting our nation’s competitive edge in a global marketplace.

### We need a new generation of skilled workers

By 2020, 65 percent of jobs in the U.S. will require postsecondary education. For example, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) occupations are among the fastest growing and the vast

majority — 95 percent — require postsecondary education.<sup>2</sup> Yet only 60 percent of working age adults currently have that level of education. If current trends continue, the U.S. will face an even more serious skills gap in the future.

A comprehensive solution to the skills gap requires a focus on education much earlier in life. A high-quality early learning program lays a solid foundation for a future workforce that has the

skills employers need. Research on disadvantaged children showed those who had quality early learning were more likely to finish high school, attend college and be employed.<sup>3</sup> Early education also builds behavior traits, including critical thinking, team building and problem solving, that help children become productive employees. Cost-benefit analysis shows that preschool can return to society an average “profit” of over \$26,000 for every child served.<sup>4</sup>

Hispanic children will need particular attention, not only because they are the fastest growing demographic, but also to address disparities. Hispanic three- and four-year-olds are less likely than White children to be prepared academically for Kindergarten,<sup>5</sup> and less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to be enrolled in preschool or Head Start programs (63 percent not enrolled).<sup>6</sup>

## Corporate Leadership

**Univision Communications Inc.** partnered with Too Small to Fail and Next Generation to launch the “Pequeños y Valiosos” (Young and Valuable) campaign in February 2014. In 2015, the campaign also joined with Vroom, a Bezos Family Foundation initiative. The partnership aims to inform Hispanic parents and caregivers about the importance of engaged, language-rich parenting during a child’s first five years. The campaign further empowers adults with simple tools and prompts to transform everyday moments into brain-building moments for young children. To date the campaign has:

- Mobilized more than 40,000 parents and caregivers to complete an online or text pledge to spend a minimum 15 minutes per day talking, reading, and singing to their children—a commitment of more than 7.3 million hours;
- Reached tens of thousands of Hispanic families through more than two dozen local education-related events organized by Univision’s local affiliates across the country;
- Provided more than 200,000 families with information resources online, through social media and via text messages; and
- Amassed over 435 million audience impressions for campaign programming across Univision’s network platforms.<sup>13</sup>

The Bedtime Math Foundation, partnering with Too Small to Fail, is providing 1,500 Bedtime Math books in Spanish and English—donated by **Macmillan Publishers**—to distribute in Oakland, CA and Tulsa, OK.<sup>14</sup> The program works through trusted community messengers, such as pediatricians, to deliver information and tools encouraging parents to read, talk, sing and particularly engage in early math activities with their children.

Since 2004, the **PNC Financial Services Group, Inc.’s** bilingual initiative, PNC Grow Up Great and PNC Crezca con Éxito, has distributed more than \$90 million in grants and three million learning kits with educational materials in English and Spanish for children, their educators and parents.<sup>15</sup> PNC employees have also volunteered more than 485,000 hours.



### Building blocks for success

Most Hispanic parents of preschoolers (78 to 97 percent) engage in educational activities with their children regularly — reading, telling stories, singing, and teaching letters and numbers. Hispanic parents place a high value on education: nearly 90 percent rate a college education as “extremely important” or “very important.”<sup>7</sup> However, many Hispanic parents should realize that early interventions at home, together with high-quality early childhood programs, can help ensure that their children reach their full potential.

### Evidence-based early childhood programs promote Hispanic children’s health and help them succeed

- Recent research suggests that diverse children benefit from high-quality early childhood education

programs.<sup>8</sup> Some studies have reported especially strong benefits for Hispanic children, dual language learners and children of immigrants.<sup>9</sup> As states and cities expand preschool programs, they will benefit all children, but will be of particular benefit to Hispanic children.

- For example, in the Boston universal preschool program, benefits for Hispanic children were substantially larger than for their White peers on pre-reading, pre-math and early executive functioning skills.<sup>10</sup> While all Hispanic children benefitted from the Tulsa, OK pre-K program, those who spoke primarily Spanish at home and those whose parents were immigrants benefited more.<sup>11</sup>
- The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is a nationwide voluntary home visiting/parent mentoring program. In a study of mothers in Denver, half of whom were Mexican-American, the most high-risk mothers served by NFP had children who had better language development, behavior and executive functioning skills by age four, compared to children of similar mothers who did not receive NFP.<sup>12</sup>

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*“Empowering our community to succeed is one of the principal goals of our company’s mission, and nothing is more important than the education of our children. This is why we implement programs to empower educational attainment among Hispanics from early childhood to college readiness, to help build the workforce of tomorrow.”*

— Randy Falco, President and CEO, Univision Communications Inc.



Univision Communications Inc. - honored with the 2015 ReadyNation Business Champion for Children Award for their early education programming, including the “Pequeños y Valiosos” initiative.

## Conclusion

As business leaders, we know that we get better employees in the long-term when we prioritize high-quality early childhood education. These programs can address both children and their families, to impact at least two generations. An investment in our youngest learners is an investment in our economy.

As Hispanic children represent a substantial segment of tomorrow's workforce, it is particularly important that we act now to ensure we will have future employees who are well-prepared and job-ready.

**In an increasingly globalized economy, a bilingual/bicultural workforce is a tremendous asset for employers. Hispanic children, provided with appropriate educational experiences and support, will be an essential part of this future workforce.**

## Endnotes

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### WHO WE ARE

ReadyNation is a business leader organization working to strengthen business through better policies for children and youth. Our members educate local, state, national, and international policymakers and the media about effective investments that will help business compete in today's global marketplace by helping children get on the right track to succeed in school and in life.

We invite anyone from a business or business organization to join. There are no membership fees, financial obligations, or formal meetings. Our staff support our members to take action, making the best use of their time. Go to [www.readynation.org/join-us](http://www.readynation.org/join-us).

For a list of our funders, see our website.

ReadyNation is a membership organization of business leaders that operates under the umbrella of the nonprofit Council for a Strong America.

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