

***When Girls Don't Graduate,  
We All Fail:***

**A Call to Improve High School  
Graduation Rates for Girls**

*Title IX and Access to Education for  
Pregnant & Parenting Students*

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## ***What to Expect***

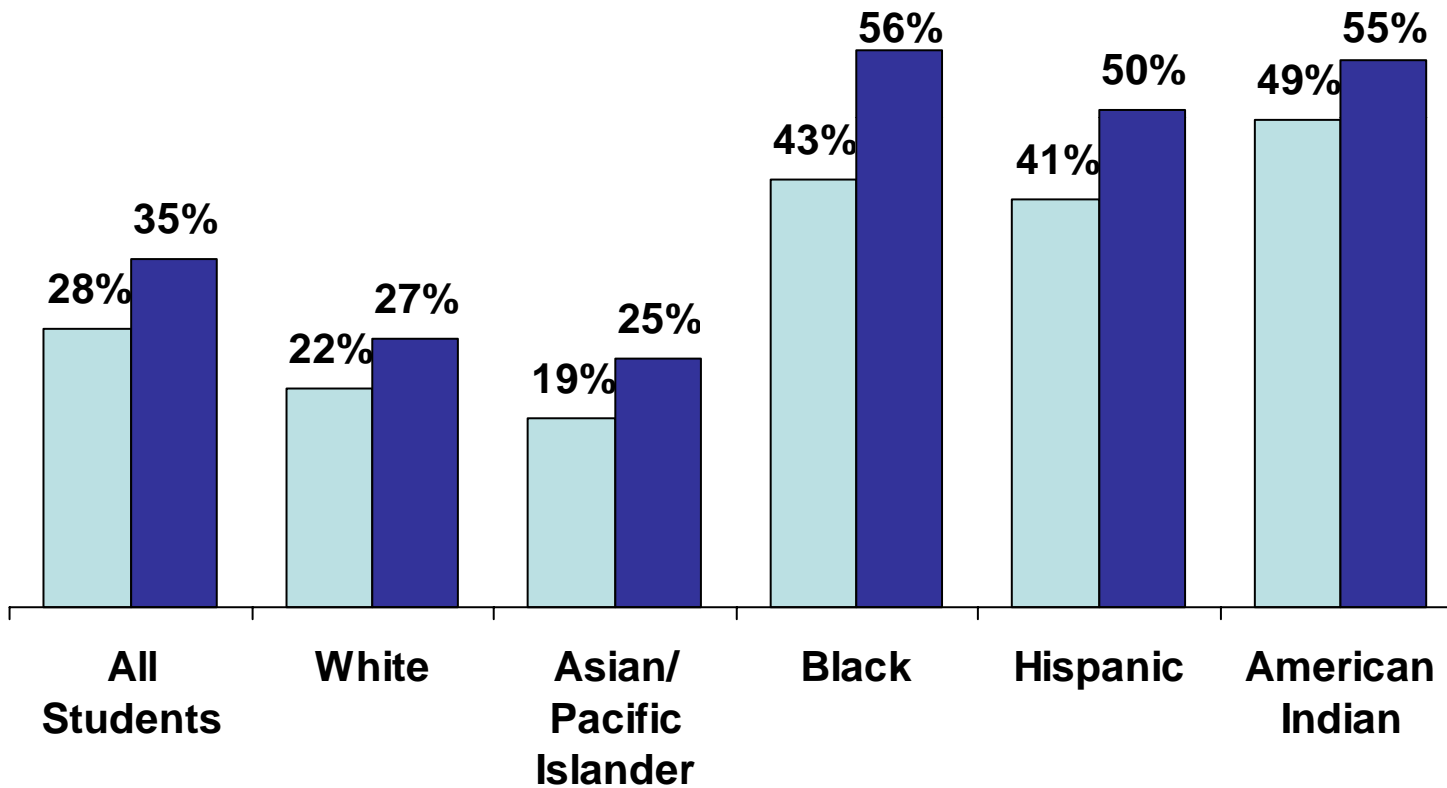
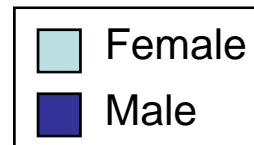
- **Girls and the Dropout Crisis**
- **Pregnant and Parenting Students**
- **What is Title IX and why does it matter?**
- ***Listening to Latinas***

# **Girls and the Dropout Crisis**

- One in four girls does not graduate from high school on time with a standard diploma
- Rates are worse for girls of color:
  - Latinas: 41%
  - Black: 43%
  - Native American/Alaskan Native: 49%

# Dropout by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Est. % Dropouts for Class of 2005-06



# **Grad Rates for the Seven Largest Minnesota School Districts, 2005-06**

- Anoka-Hennepin: 76.3%
- St. Paul: 63%
- Minneapolis: 51.8%
- Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan: 86.6%
- Osseo: 80.2%
- South Washington: 82.7%
- Rochester: 74.6%

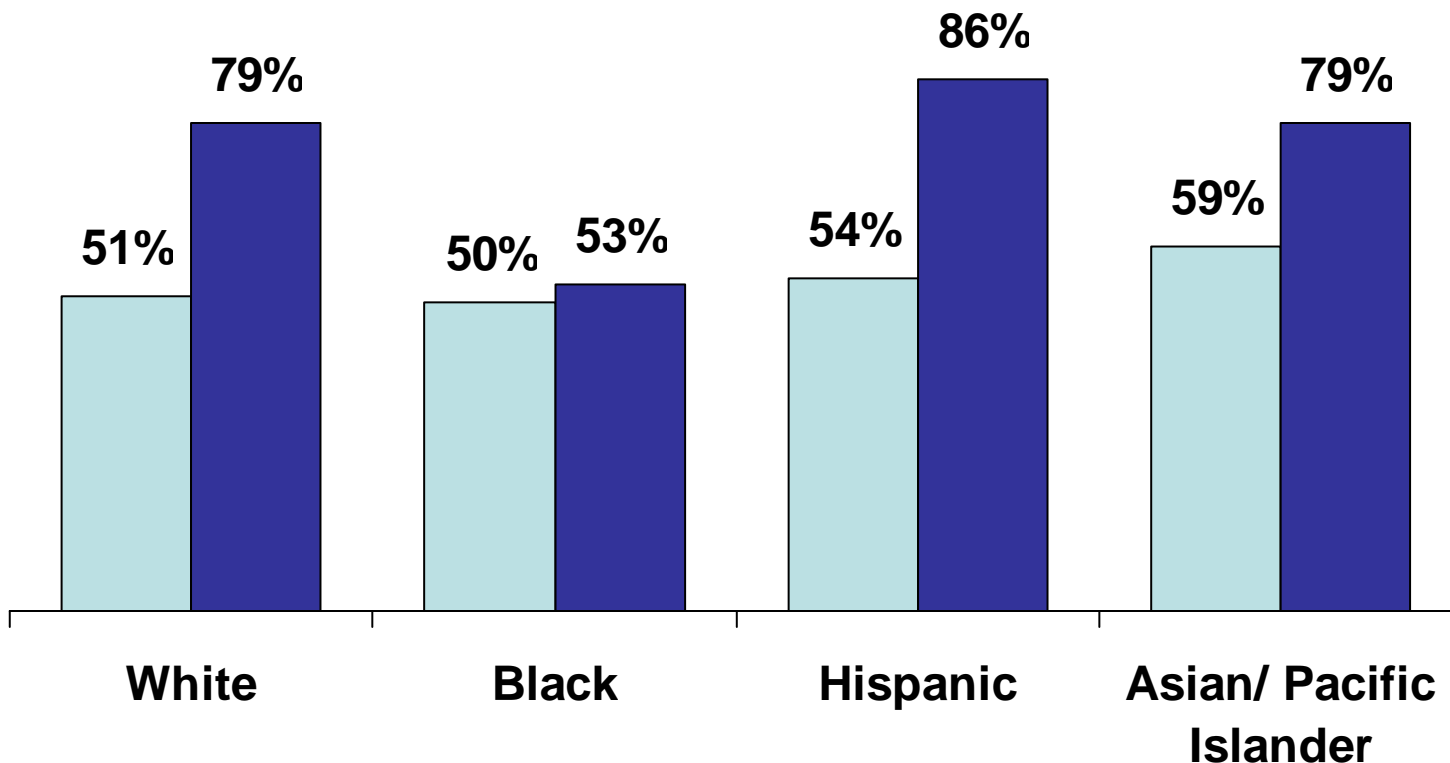
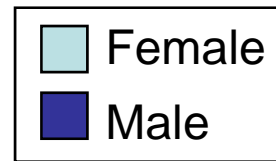
# Minnesota Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2005-06

	Male (%)	Female (%)
All	77.2	83.2
American Indian/Alaska Native	35	46.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	67	77.6
Hispanic	30.4	47
Black (not Hispanic)	42.1	45.5*
White (not Hispanic)	81.1	85.3

**Keeping girls in school  
is critical to their future  
economic security and  
that of their families.**

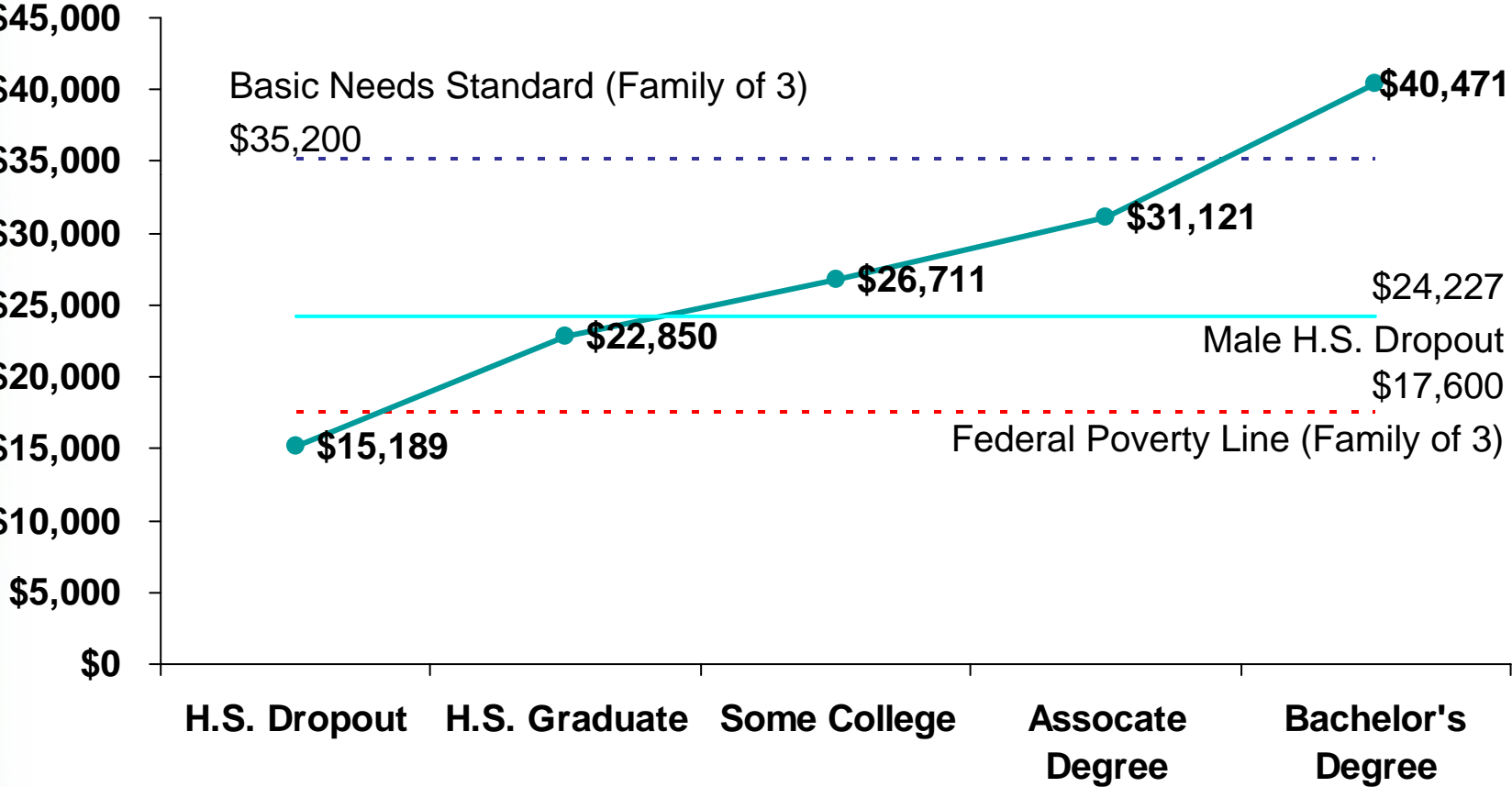
# Female Employment Lower Across Racial/Ethnic Groups

Employment Rate Among H.S. Dropouts  
(Aged 25-64)



# Low Earnings

Median Annual Earnings for Adult Women

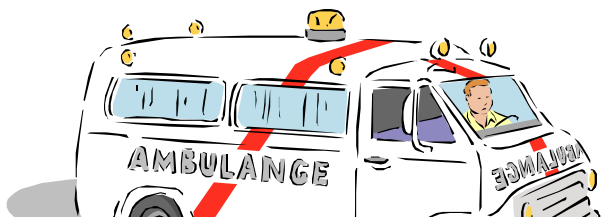
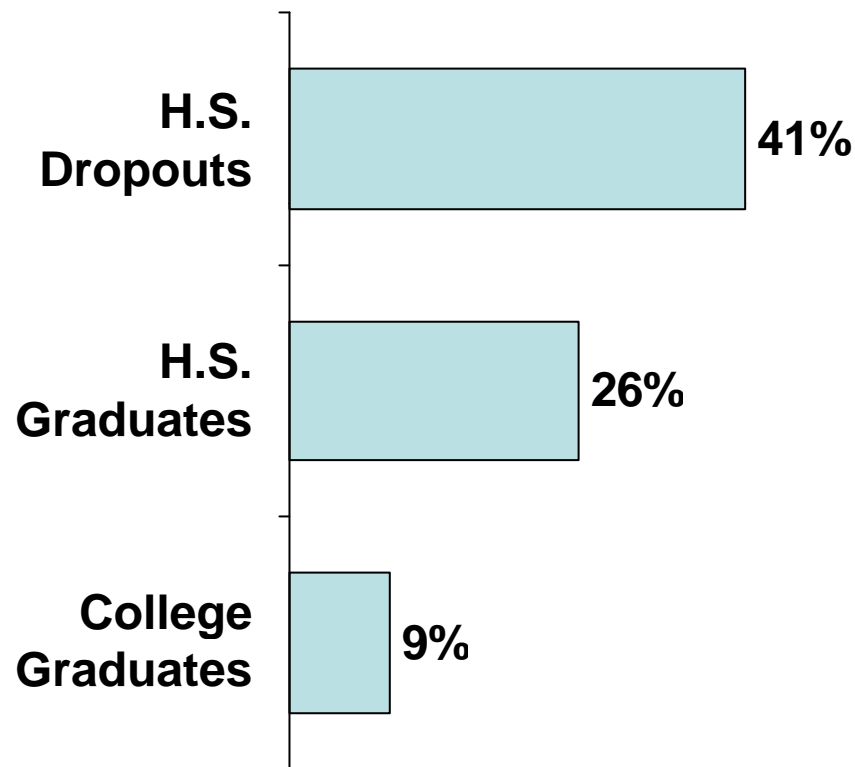


# Higher Health Risks

Higher rates of:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Cancer
- Smoking
- Obesity
- Heavy drinking
- Mortality

## % Uninsured



# **Teenage Pregnancy**

- **Some female dropouts are more likely to become pregnant as teenagers than females who stay in school.**

# **Generational Cycle of Dropout**

- Children of high school dropouts more likely than other children to drop out themselves.
- Children of female dropouts are particularly at risk of dropping out.

# **Keeping Girls in School Benefits Society.**

- Maximize the potential contribution of each individual to community life
- Improve U.S.'s global competitiveness, productivity, national prosperity
- Public role of education in American society: promotes values of fairness and equality of opportunity for all
- Enhanced tax revenues
- Savings in public support programs

# **Why Do Students Drop Out?**

**Risk Factors Fall Into 3 Main Categories:**

**Student &  
Family  
Characteristics**

**Student  
Attitudes  
Toward &  
Experiences at  
School**

**School  
Characteristics**

***Gender Matters!***

# **Why Do Students Drop Out?**

## Student and Family Characteristics

- **Low socioeconomic status**
- **Single parent family**
- **Low level of parental involvement**
- **Race or ethnicity**

# **Why Do Students Drop Out?**

## **School Characteristics**

- Public school**
- Low average socioeconomic status of school community**
- High levels of minority student enrollment**
- High number of students disciplined or held back**
- Perception that discipline policy is unfair**

# Why Do Students Drop Out?

## Student Attitudes Towards and Experiences at School

- Being disciplined at school
- Poor grades
- Irrelevant coursework
- Lack of future educational plans
- Negative peer perceptions
- Being held back
- Frequently changing schools
- Absenteeism
- Feeling unsafe at school
- Working during school year
- *Becoming pregnant, taking on parenting responsibilities*

# **Which factors may be bigger issues for girls than for boys?**

- Missing too many days of school and not being able to keep up with schoolwork
- Sexual harassment
- For some girls, academic reasons and disciplinary reasons
- Growing up in a single-mother family
- Pregnancy and parenting responsibilities

# **Pregnancy and Parenting**

- One-third of female dropouts say that becoming a parent was a major factor in their decisions to leave school.
- Those who left school to care for a family member or child were “most likely to say they would have worked harder if their schools had demanded more of them and provided the necessary support.”

# **Barriers faced by pregnant and parenting students**

- Insufficient time to recover post-partum
- Not allowed to make up work missed
- Not allowed to receive student recognition
- No child care, transportation
- Steered into alternative programs that are not rigorous and do not keep them on track for graduation

# **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972**

- Prohibits any federally funded education program or activity from engaging in sex discrimination
- Broad: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”
- Protects students, faculty and staff

## **Title IX:**

# **What institutions are covered?**

- Follow the federal funding. Applies to:
  - Most elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities;
  - Programs and activities affiliated with schools that receive federal funds (like internships or school-to-work programs); and
  - Federally funded education programs run by other entities such as libraries, prisons, and museums.

# **Title IX applies to *all* aspects of education programs.**

- Admissions and recruitment – with certain exceptions
- Housing and facilities
- Courses and educational activities
- Career guidance and counseling
- Student financial aid
- Student health and insurance benefits
- Athletics – schools must offer male and female students equal opportunities to play sports and must treat male and female athletes equally
- Sexual harassment – schools must ensure that sexual harassment is not part of the education program or activity
- Pregnancy and parenting or marital status
- Employment – protects employees who work at covered institutions from employment discrimination, including

# **Title IX Enforcement**

- Dept. of Ed.'s Office for Civil Rights is primary agency charged with enforcement
- Promulgated regulations in 1975 as part of that enforcement authority
- Power to take away federal funding if school refuses to comply
- Private right of individuals to sue and seek money damages

# **Title IX – School Obligations**

- Recipients of federal funding must take a variety of steps to prevent and address sex discrimination, including (at a minimum):
  - Designate Title IX coordinator to ensure compliance with Title IX and investigate complaints
  - Adopt and publish grievance procedures for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints
  - Implement and disseminate a policy that prohibits sex-based discrimination

## **Title IX on Pregnancy, Parenting, Marital Status**

- **Basic non-discrimination principle** – schools cannot discriminate on the basis of pregnancy and must treat pregnancy *and all related conditions* like any other temporary disability.
- Also creates some requirements specific to pregnant and parenting students.

# **Title IX Regulations on the Treatment of P/P Students**

- Equal access to school and extracurricular activities.
- Special programs or schools for pregnant and parenting students must be *voluntary*.
- Doctor's note can be required for school activities only if the school requires a doctor's note from all students with conditions requiring medical care.
- Absences due to pregnancy or childbirth must be excused for as long as is deemed medically necessary by the student's doctor.
- Special services for temporarily disabled must be provided for pregnant students.

# **North Carolina law provides additional protections.**

## **N.C.G.S.A. § 115C-375.5**

- A student's absences due to the illness or medical appointment of her child during school hours must be excused if she is the custodial parent.**
- Homework and make-up work shall be made available to pregnant and parenting students during absences and, to the extent necessary, a homebound teacher shall be assigned.**

**What can we do  
to keep pregnant and  
parenting students  
in school?**

# **Recommendations**

- Ensure compliance with Title IX
- Individualized graduation plans
- Excused absences for illness or medical appointments of student's child
- Flexibility in scheduling
- Access to social services and health care
- Pregnancy prevention efforts
- Goal-setting and guidance, encouragement
- On-site child care, transportation assistance
- "Parenting" classes teaching range of life skills
- Home instruction during maternity leave
- Outreach to dropouts

# **What NWLC is doing**

- Enforcement of Title IX
- Public education about legal requirements for schools and protections for students
- Advocacy for legislation aimed at improving grad rates for at-risk groups
- Additional research on barriers faced by girls and interventions that can keep girls in school, e.g. *Listening to Latinas*

# ***Listening to Latinas: Barriers to High School Graduation***

- Partnership with MALDEF
- Goals:
  - Take qualitative look at educational experiences of Latinas.
  - Gather stories illustrating challenges Latinas face in U.S. schools.
  - Identify steps that can be taken to improve Latinas' graduation rates.

# ***Listening to Latinas: Barriers to High School Graduation***

## **Methodology:**

- Surveyed 335 young Latinas across U.S.
- Follow-up interviews with 21 girls
- Focus groups with 26 girls
- Surveyed 45 counselors, teachers, and program staff who work with Latinas
- Follow-up interviews with 15 of those adults

# ***Listening to Latinas: Barriers to High School Graduation***

## **Findings:**

- High aspirations across the board.
- Of those surveyed:
  - 98% want to graduate from high school
  - 80% want to graduate from college
- Many doubt will be able to reach their goals, which can impact engagement in school and lead them to drop out.

## ***Listening to Latinas:***

# **Why do so many doubt their ability to succeed?**

- Some factors common to many Latino girls *and* boys, such as:
  - Poverty and schools with limited resources
  - Barriers to parental involvement
  - Immigration status issues
  - Limited English proficiency issues

# ***Listening to Latinas: Barriers to High School Graduation***

- Some factors affect Latinas differently or uniquely, such as:
  - Discrimination at school based on their ethnicity *and* gender
    - By teachers and fellow students
    - Subtle and blatant forms
    - Examples

## ***Listening to Latinas:***

### **Factors Impacting Latinas (cont.)**

- Stereotypes of Latinas
  - “Submissive” or only caretakers
  - Shape others’ expectations of them and their own expectations
  - Lack of positive academic and career role models to counter
  - Examples

## ***Listening to Latinas:***

### **Factors Impacting Latinas (cont.)**

- Teen pregnancy and parenting
  - Highest teen pregnancy and birth rates.
    - Reflects and reinforces barriers they face
  - 53% of Latinas get pregnant at least once before the age of 20.
  - Pregnancy and parenting responsibilities can be huge barriers to graduating from high school.

## ***Listening to Latinas:***

### **Factors Impacting Latinas (cont.)**

- Other family caretaking responsibilities (e.g. for siblings, elderly relatives) may fall more heavily on Latinas than on their brothers
  - Can cause them to miss school repeatedly, making it more likely they will fall behind.
  - Hampers their ability to get involved in after-school activities or sports, which could impact engagement in school.

# ***Listening to Latinas: Barriers to High School Graduation***

- **Recommendations:** Schools and policymakers must focus greater attention on, for example:
  - Goal-setting and guidance on how to reach goals; connecting students with role models and mentors
  - Ensuring schools are free of discrimination and stereotypes; students must not be “tracked” based on race, gender, or status as an ELL or PPS

## ***Listening to Latinas:*** **Recommendations (cont.)**

- Providing students with comprehensive sex education to help prevent teen pregnancy
- Providing better support for pregnant and parenting students
- Making it easier for Latino parents to get involved in their children's education
- Creating a “college-going culture” in all middle and high schools

## ***Listening to Latinas:*** **Recommendations (cont.)**

- Expanding and replicating successful programs to reach more students
- Improving access to family supports such as child care, so teen parents can focus on school and Latina moms will not have to rely on their daughters to care for siblings
- Make higher ed funding more accessible
- Expand educational opportunities for Latino parents (e.g. ESL and GED programs)

# ***Listening to Latinas:*** **What now?**

- We plan to (among other things):
  - Continue encouraging US Dept of Ed to step up enforcement of civil rights laws
  - Continue working with schools directly to help them correct violations, comply with law, and address challenges Latinas face
  - Advocate for legislative proposals to keep at-risk students in school
  - Public education/outreach: Make sure policymakers have sophisticated understanding of particular barriers facing young Latinas

## **For more information:**

- Reports and fact sheets:  
[www.nwlc.org/dropout](http://www.nwlc.org/dropout)  
[www.nwlc.org/listening](http://www.nwlc.org/listening)
- Join the NWLC network & get updates  
[action.nwlc.org](http://action.nwlc.org)



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