

# CHICAGO LATINO COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT:

## Opportunities to Invest in Children and Youth



### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although the City of Chicago (Chicago) is racially and ethnically diverse, it continues to be highly segregated. Whilst many of the city's majority Latino and Black neighborhoods remain very segregated, they are undergoing rapid demographic shifts due to economic development and accompanying gentrification, as well as unaffordable housing. Chicago's Black population is steadily decreasing while its Latino population surges. Rising birth rates, more so than immigration, have made Latinos the fastest growing and youngest population in Chicago. To put this in perspective, consider recent student enrollment in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS): in the 2018-19 school year, almost half of CPS students (46.7 percent) were Latinos.

For Chicago to remain an economic powerhouse, Latinos must prosper through quality educational experiences, community programming, postsecondary and career training, and employment opportunities that provide livable wages. In other words, a college and career ready workforce will be essential to the city's future. Building a college and career ready workforce begins with meeting community residents' social, emotional and educational needs. A comprehensive needs assessment is a first step in assessing the educational needs and opportunities in a community. For this reason, EduDream was commissioned

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to conduct a needs assessment. The study begins by examining seven predominantly Latino communities: *Brighton Park, Chicago Lawn, East Side, Little Village, Pilsen, South Chicago, and West Lawn*. Data findings from the seven communities are then used to focus on three communities: **Chicago Lawn, Little Village, and South Chicago**.

Using a research lens and systematic approach that combined multiple primary and secondary data sources, the needs assessment was conducted between June 2018 and May 2019. Primary data collection included phone interviews with community leaders, an online survey of community-based organizations, and focus groups with parents and teachers. Secondary data sources were used to understand community demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. This report is a culmination of this 12-month process and synthesizes key findings that emerged from analysis of publicly available datasets and primary data.

The report begins with an overview of seven predominantly Latino communities in Chicago, highlighting trends in population and demographics, social and economic conditions, health outcomes, and crime and violence. Next, we discuss education quality and access across the spectrum of schools (i.e., public, charter and Catholic). Then, we further explore three communities through surveys, interviews and focus groups. Findings from the needs assessment address five main areas:

- ▶ Understanding Latino families
- ▶ Community Assets
- ▶ Challenges for Latino Families
- ▶ Educational Needs of Children and Youth
- ▶ Basic Needs of Children and Youth

The report concludes with recommendations to address key findings, which are highlighted below.



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## Key Findings

### POPULATION, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

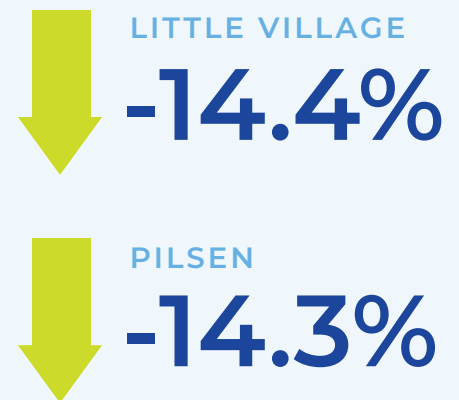
#### (Brighton Park, Chicago Lawn, East Side, Little Village, Pilsen, South Chicago, West Lawn)

- ▶ Since 2010, many of the seven communities have experienced large drops in population. The populations in Pilsen and South Chicago have decreased significantly, by almost 30 percent each.
- ▶ In 2016, Little Village and Brighton Park had the largest percentage of Latino residents (over 80 percent), while South Chicago had the smallest percentage (21 percent).
- ▶ From 2010 to 2016, Chicago Lawn has experienced the largest growth in Latino residents, while South Chicago has had the largest decrease, a drop of 25 percent.
- ▶ In 2016, South Chicago had the largest percentage of residents ages 65 and older (14 percent)
- ▶ In 2016, all seven communities had a greater proportion of school-age children than the city, with the highest percentages in Brighton Park and West Lawn, both at 27 percent.
- ▶ In 2016, South Chicago had the highest percentage of households in which grandparents were directly responsible for the grandchild (46 percent). West Lawn had the lowest rate (12 percent).
- ▶ In 2016, Little Village had the highest poverty rate, with 35 percent of individuals with incomes below the poverty level. Little Village residents also had the lowest per capita income, just above \$10,000. However, Little Village had the lowest unemployment rate, at 9.3 percent.
- ▶ In 2016, all seven communities had a higher proportion of residents with a high school diploma or less compared to the city of Chicago. Little Village and Brighton Park had the highest percentage of adults without a high school diploma (50 and 44 percent, respectively). In contrast, over 30 percent of the adult population in Pilsen hold at least an Associate degree, the highest of the seven communities.
- ▶ In 2014, six of the seven communities, (except South Chicago) had higher rates of residents without health insurance (uninsured) than the city. While 15 percent of Chicago's adult population aged 18-64 are uninsured, residents in Brighton Park and Little Village are almost twice as likely to be uninsured (27 and 26 percent, respectively).
- ▶ Of the seven communities, West Lawn had the highest percentage of index crime (i.e., serious offenses) reported in 2018 (69 percent), followed by Chicago Lawn (67 percent).

## EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

- ▶ Little Village and Pilsen have had the largest declines in public school enrollment, -14.4 and -14.3 percent respectively, since 2012-13. This is almost double the decrease in the district's overall student enrollment during the same period (-8.0 percent)
- ▶ Enrollment in traditional public schools has decreased in all seven communities since 2012-13, while charter school enrollment has increased during the same period. Overall charter school enrollment across the target communities has increased by 33 percent to total 14,655 in the 2017-18 school year.
- ▶ The largest decrease in traditional public school enrollment occurred in Pilsen and South Chicago schools. Pilsen saw a decline of more than 20 percent (approximately 2,119 fewer students enrolled in traditional public schools since 2012-13).
- ▶ In Chicago Lawn, 11 schools (or 30 percent) are under-performing, with SQRP ratings of Level 2 or Level 3 in 2017-18. The majority of schools in Little Village are performing adequately (Level 2+).
- ▶ Overall, 12 of the 27 high schools in the seven communities – for which data was available – had graduation rates below the district average. The two high schools in West Lawn had graduation rates above 80 percent.
- ▶ Only three high schools across the seven communities had college enrollment rates above 80 percent, two of which are charter schools.

Largest declines  
in public school  
enrollment:



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## COMMUNITY ASSETS (THREE FOCUS COMMUNITIES)

- ▶ Community leaders across the three focus communities were much more likely to identify community-based organizations and faith-based organizations as assets in the community.
- ▶ Parents from Little Village were more likely to mention faith-based organizations compared to parents from Chicago Lawn or South Chicago.
- ▶ In the survey of community-based organizations, community leaders reported spending the most time and resources on civic engagement/community organizing, youth development, and early childhood development and education.
- ▶ Of those who completed the CBO survey, few community leaders reported working on health issues (including mental health) or workforce development.

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## CHALLENGES FOR LATINO FAMILIES (THREE FOCUS COMMUNITIES)

- ▶ Parents in the three communities are working multiple jobs for numerous reasons, including low wages, low educational levels, and immigration status. This leaves parents few opportunities to help children with homework or to address emotional concerns.
- ▶ The current political climate and changing immigration policies have made parents fearful of completing registration forms for their children to participate in summer or after-school programming.
- ▶ Certain challenges are unique to a community, such as limited transportation options in South Chicago, low participation in early childhood education in Little Village, and affordable housing in Chicago Lawn.

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## EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH (THREE FOCUS COMMUNITIES)

- ▶ Children's need for mental health services emerged consistently in the three focus communities and across various stakeholders.
- ▶ Parents reported insufficient student support services, and believe that subsequently, children are being overidentified for special education.
- ▶ Community stakeholders reported limited recreational spaces, including green space.
- ▶ Community stakeholders acknowledged the need to support students and parents during the transition to high school; however, greater emphasis was placed on gaps in availability of high-quality out-of-school time programming for middle school children.
- ▶ Parents and community leaders, specifically those working in and with schools, reported incidents of cyberbullying in schools where staff appear unaware of these incidents.

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## BASIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH (THREE FOCUS COMMUNITIES)

- ▶ Children not only live with the stress of potential violence in their community, but many are also witnessing violence at school and at home, such as bullying and domestic violence.
- ▶ Community leaders raised concerns about residents' access to health care, including vision and dental care for children.
- ▶ Community leaders noted the impact language barriers have on children, and the need for schools to respect bilingualism and welcome dual language. However, the extent to which schools are addressing language barriers depends on the school leader.
- ▶ In all three communities, teachers reported the negative impacts of students' overuse of technological devices, specifically lack of sleep and decreased attention in the classroom.
- ▶ Although CBO survey respondents reported immigration and workforce development as important issues to prioritize, the organizations are not spending time nor resources on these issues.



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## Recommendations

*The recommendations are categorized into four areas and detail what community leaders, stakeholders, and city leaders can do to improve access to and quality of educational opportunities for Latino children and families in Chicago.*

### INCREASE COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP AMONG SERVICE PROVIDERS.

Findings from this report show that the biggest assets in each neighborhood are community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide much needed services and programming. However, many of the CBOs mentioned throughout interviews and focus groups provide services either in specific areas or for certain target populations. This has led to work happening in silos. CBOs should partner with other local organizations and trusted community members to deliver programs and launch new initiatives. Establishing collaborative relationships can lead to greater reach and impact, especially in areas that are currently being unmet: children's mental health, social and emotional learning, adult education and training, and workforce development. As one community leader stated: "We have lots of small organizations; our assets are small organizations and people." Collaboration is already happening in some communities around key issues, such as housing in Chicago Lawn and education in Little Village. Nonetheless, opportunities

exist for local organizations to strengthen collaboration and raise awareness across issues, in a more holistic manner, especially around educational needs.

While many community stakeholders were able to speak on issues such as crime, violence, and immigration for this needs assessment, very few were knowledgeable or could speak to educational assets, needs and gaps. As organizations forge new partnerships and launch initiatives, they should consider the potential impact, short- and long-term, on the educational needs of children in the communities.

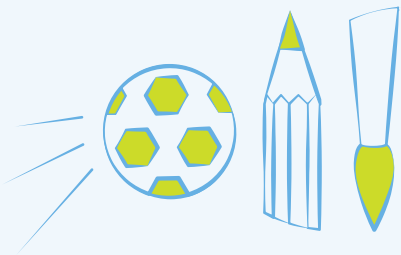


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## PROMOTE GREATER COMMUNICATION, OUTREACH, AND INFORMATION-SHARING FOR PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

A recurring theme that emerged from interviews and focus groups was the lack of awareness about educational resources and programs available within communities. Parents would like more information about available programs not only for their children, but for themselves as well. Even if there is an awareness of resources and programs, there may be misconceptions regarding educational options.

Greater communication, with culturally relevant and appropriate materials can also dispel myths about educational school options.



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## ADDRESS EDUCATIONAL NEEDS BY MEETING CHILDREN'S SOCIO-EMOTIONAL NEEDS.

The need for mental health services for children emerged consistently in all communities, across various stakeholders. Stakeholders agreed that more needs to be done to address children's social and emotional well-being at schools and through community programming. Social and emotional learning is critical to a child's development, and directly correlates to academic success. Investments in the community should consider how to integrate social emotional learning and mental health services into educational and community programs.

Combining social and emotional skills with academic and enrichment programming will create the high-quality learning experiences and environments that will set students up for success not only in the classroom, but in their community.



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## **PROVIDE ENRICHING AND ENGAGING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOLS, PARTICULARLY FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS.**

Research shows that when school-age children do not have access to extended learning opportunities, they are more likely to receive poor grades and engage in high-risk behaviors than children who participate in enriching and engaging activities supervised by adults. We also know that after school programs focusing on personal and social development have a positive impact on students' academic achievement and self-esteem<sup>1</sup>. Community stakeholders pointed to a clear need for high-quality enrichment and learning opportunities outside of schools. Parents would like to see children provided opportunities to learn in areas such as music, dance, the arts, and science.



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<sup>1</sup>Durlak, J.A., & Weissberg, R.P. (2007). The impact of afterschool programs that promote personal and social skills. Chicago, IL. Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. [www.casel.org/downloads/ASP-Full.pdf](http://www.casel.org/downloads/ASP-Full.pdf)



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**ABOUT EDUDREAM:**

Established in 2016 and based in Chicago, EduDream is a Latina-owned education consulting firm that partners with foundations, education agencies, and nonprofits working to ensure educational equity for racially and economically diverse students. We advance our mission by providing research and program evaluation, data analytics and insights, and strategic planning. EduDream is committed to empowering communities and making research and data accessible