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El comunicado de prensa en español esta [aquí](#)

New UCLA Brief Sheds Light on Immigration Enforcement's Devastating Impacts on Latinx Students

Collaboration between three UCLA research centers underscores harm to students' academic outcomes

LOS ANGELES – A [new research brief](#) from UCLA's Latino Policy and Politics Institute, Center for the Transformation of Schools, and Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles examines the harmful impact of immigration enforcement actions on Latinx children of undocumented immigrants. Building on a 2017-18 survey finding that two-thirds of those surveyed reported a negative impact of immigration enforcement in their schools, the new brief, [The Impact of a Broken Immigration System on U.S. Students and Schools](#) updates the analysis, spotlighting the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms that ensure the well-being of all students, regardless of their parents' immigration status.

"With all of the hysteria about the 'crisis at the border,' attention has shifted away from the decades-long problem of a broken immigration system that is having a catastrophic effect on the children caught in the middle," said Patricia Gándara, UCLA education professor, principal investigator and co-author (with Jongyeon Ee) of an initial [2018 study](#) and subsequent book, [Schools Under Siege: The Impact of Immigration Enforcement on Educational Equity](#). "This brief is an attempt to shed light on these schoolchildren across the country--90% of whom are U.S. Citizens--who fear for their families' safety because of immigration enforcement actions that simultaneously compromise their educational trajectories."

Latinx children of undocumented immigrants comprise 28% of public preK-12 students and attend primarily Title I schools already struggling to serve their families and communities. Gándara and Ee's 2018 study surveyed 5,400 educators, administrators, and other school staff nationwide to assess their perception of the impact of immigration policies on teaching and learning in their schools. Survey participants represented more than 730 school sites and 24 school districts in 12 states, including Arizona, California, Indiana, New Jersey, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, and others. Districts that serve a high percentage of English language learner students were prioritized in the selection process. The

majority of participants hailed from California (44%) and Arizona (11%), where a significant percentage of Latinx immigrant families reside. Overall, two out of three survey respondents observed a negative impact of immigration enforcement in their schools.

The new brief, led by UCLA education professor and Center for the Transformation of Schools Co-Faculty Director Lucrecia Santibañez, details results from the 2018 survey **and updates those findings with new data from more recent studies**. A broad range of academic indicators were explored including: academic achievement, attendance, grade retention, and dropout rates. Other indicators assessed include instances of bullying, feelings of safety at school, school climate and engagement, and impacts on educators themselves.

Key among the findings:

Impact on Academic Performance:

- 61% of survey respondents observed an impact on academic performance due to heightened fears about their families' safety and immigration status.
- **Escalated arrests of immigrants have been correlated to a 9% average decline in English Language Arts scores for Latinx English Language Learners.**

Student Attendance, Grade Retention and Dropout Rates:

- **Fear of immigration raids in students' neighborhoods leads to high rates of absenteeism** (observed by 58% of survey respondents); children feared their parents would be deported or detained while they attended school.
- **Immigration enforcement increased the probability of repeating a grade by 14% children of "unlikely unauthorized immigrants" who are 6-13 years old and the likelihood of dropping out by 18% for those who are 14-17 years old.**

Bullying and School Safety:

- Nearly half of survey respondents observed an increase in incidents of bullying of immigrant students.
- **The fear of deportation impacted students' sense of safety while at school.** 85% of survey respondents reported students expressing concerns and fears they could be deported by ICE agents while on school grounds, with 44% perceiving the impacts as "extensive."

Impact on School Climate and Engagement:

- The effects of immigration enforcement rippled throughout the entire school community. 67% observed indirect effects on other students, sharing that both peers and teachers showed concern for students directly impacted by enforcement actions.
- 51% reported that parents expressed concerns about arrest and deportation, and sought advice from school staff; about half of respondents reported a decrease in parental involvement immediately after immigration activities.
- **Students impacted by enforcement were less likely to engage in extracurricular activities that bring students together around shared interests and create a positive and inviting school climate.**

Impact on Educators:

- **Teachers reported experiencing heightened anxiety due to anti-immigrant sentiments and policies.** They shared feeling responsible for creating a safe environment for all students, resulting in secondhand trauma.
- **Latinx teachers, in particular, were more likely to take on additional responsibilities,** such as translating and advocating for their students.

“Our broken immigration system breeds uncertainty and fear among Latinx students, their friends and peers, teachers, and ultimately, entire school communities,” Santibañez said. “If we want future generations of Latinx students—who make up over one-quarter of students in our public schools—to show up to school, work hard and aspire to go to college, we need to give them the certainty that any other student has: to live without fear that on any given day, they could come home to realize that their loved one was deported without them even having the chance to say goodbye.”

The brief urges policymakers to support all students in our schools by instituting safeguards that shield school-age children from immigration enforcement actions, and by creating an environment where education remains a priority over fear.

Key recommendations include:

- Urge Congress to pass comprehensive Immigration Reform that provides pathways to citizenship and permanent legal status, ensuring the stability and well-being of immigrant families and children.
- Offer [“Know Your Rights”](#) guidance to immigrant families
- Invest in community schools that offer wraparound services;
- Recruit community liaisons to establish trusting relationships with undocumented parents;
- Partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) that specialize in culturally and linguistically appropriate social services;
- Hire more counselors and school support staff from immigrant backgrounds, who speak the home language of the students and their families, to support teachers;
- Improve diversity in the teaching profession by retaining and recruiting more Latinx teachers; and
- Provide professional development in trauma-informed and culturally responsive teaching methods that support immigrant students' well-being.

[The Impact of a Broken Immigration System on U.S. Students and Schools](#) is a project of UCLA’s Latino Policy and Politics Institute, Center for the Transformation of Schools, and Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles. The brief can be found online [here](#).

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