

SCHOOLING FOR US-CITIZEN STUDENTS IN MEXICO

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We summarize what we know from research about schooling for US-citizen students in Mexico and offer three recommendations to collaborate with Mexican institutions for improvement.

Demographics

- Since 2009, **more Mexican immigrants are leaving** than coming to the United States, including voluntary returns and deportations
- This has led to a rapid increase in the number of US-born-citizen children in Mexico
- Between 2010 and 2015, the number of US citizens in Mexican schools grew by 29%
- Projecting from the 2015 Mexican Census, there are currently about **600,000 US-citizen students** from preschool to high school in Mexico
- Though concentrated in municipalities in Northern and Central states in Mexico, US-citizen students are dispersed throughout the country
- The portions of US-citizen children are higher in elementary than high school

School Access

- School attainment in Mexico has increased steadily in recent decades
- Schooling is compulsory for children ages 3 to 17 years, yet **only half of youth in Mexico complete high school**
- Historic bureaucratic requirements make it difficult for foreign-born students to enroll
- 2015 legislation (i.e., *Acuerdo Secretarial 286*) establishes open enrollment for all, yet **many schools still ask** for authorization (i.e., *la apostilla*) on foreign birth certificates

School Quality

- The quality of schooling in Mexico is stratified by social class, language, race, and region
- US-citizen students in Mexico are **more likely than their peers to attend a rural school**
- Rural schools have shorter days, fewer resources, and teachers with less preparation
- On average, **students in rural schools perform substantially lower** on academic tests (more than a full standard deviation) than those in urban or private schools
- Teachers report a lack of preparation and resources to meet the language, cultural, and curricular needs of US-citizen students in Mexico

Policy Recommendations

- 1) **Revive bi-national partnership programs in education to improve schooling for US-citizen students in Mexico.** The US-Mexico Binational Commission, established through the US State Department in 1981, provides a precedent and framework for this.
- 2) **Foster partnerships between US and Mexican local educational agencies to improve school access and quality for US-citizen students in Mexico.** Local education agencies between countries should work together to communicate student information, share curricular resources in English and Spanish, and prepare teachers to facilitate transitions.
- 3) **Enhance research investments in collaboration with Mexican institutions to understand and improve schooling for US-citizen students in Mexico.** US and Mexican agencies should work together to address timely questions—e.g., achievement disparities between US-citizen students and their Mexican peers; curricular alignment between countries; aspirations of US-citizen students in Mexico to return to the US; how to prepare teachers in Mexico to meet the educational needs of US-citizen students.