



Immigrant Students and Higher Education

Access to Information

THE ISSUE:

How are information and services about K-12 and higher education best delivered to immigrant students and their families?

Immigrant families often do not communicate and engage with schools in the same ways as native-born families. In many cases, immigrants have grown up in a culture where they are expected to defer educational authority to teachers and school systems. In some cases, community-based organizations or places of worship are a more effective option for communicating with immigrant families than are schools themselves.

Minnesota should evaluate and explore both school- and community-based efforts to deliver information and services to immigrant families and students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Develop a statewide online “higher education platform” that all students must complete before graduating from high school.

In a higher education plan, students could detail what they hope to do after high school graduation, compile the materials necessary for college and scholarship applications, and outline a strategy to achieve their goals. The platform could:

- Provide access to high school transcripts and standardized test scores.
- Allow students to create a portfolio of their best work.
- Automate the application process to Minnesota colleges and universities.
- Link students to a database of available scholarships and college access programming.
- Link students to online advisors and mentors.

Increase and improve the mentoring and advising available to immigrant students by tapping into nontraditional but trusted community resources.

- Encourage colleges and universities to create programs through which immigrant college students serve immigrant high school students in accessing higher education.
- Encourage immigrant college and university students to mentor and advise immigrant high school students, including by participating in programs through their college and universities.
- Create a network of mentors and advisors who assist immigrant students in navigating the college process.
- Create a new position within school districts that is responsible for coordinating resources available to immigrant students.

This issue brief is based on the Citizens League’s report *Educating Minnesota’s Immigrant Students* (2009). The report is available at www.citizensleague.org or by calling 651-293-0575. See related issue briefs on Culture, Cost, Language Preparation and Meeting Minnesota’s Workforce Needs.