

THE PROMISE CHALLENGE: A Call to Action

Will you do what it takes to close the gap between Latino youths' dreams of a bright future and the reality of their lost potential?

Identity is honored to have supported the successful growth and development of tens of thousands of individual Latino youth over 20 years. Their personal perseverance and ability to push beyond obstacles related to trauma, poverty, language isolation and fear inspires our work.

However, their individual success belies the fact that there are real and entrenched systemic barriers that continue to block their way. We, in Montgomery County, have not been able to eliminate persistent disparities in social-emotional, academic and workforce development opportunities that would allow all Latino youth to thrive in school, at work and in the community. In one of the finest school systems in the country, too many Latino youth — not only immigrant youth, but also children born and raised here — start school unprepared for kindergarten, read below grade level throughout elementary school, fail benchmark classes, experience the highest dropout rates and are not positioned to earn a living wage.

It does not have to be this way. We have proven strategies that work. An investment in Latino youths' social-emotional, academic and workforce development is a decisive investment in the future of Montgomery County. Latinos now make up 19% of the county's population and more than 32% of the public school population. Given the exponential growth of the Latino community, the time to act is NOW.

We need to come together to radically bend the trajectory of five trend lines in order to close the gap and harness the potential of Latino youth:

- 1 Social-Emotional Wellbeing
- 2 Kindergarten Readiness
- 3 On-Level Reading by 3rd Grade
- 4 High School Graduation
- 5 Work Readiness

IDENTITY PROMISES TO

Empower young people and their parents to speak up, get involved and assert their dignity and investment value.

We will lift up the voices that have been too often ignored.

Hold ourselves and others accountable to the community we are privileged to serve. Track progress on social-emotional wellbeing, kindergarten readiness, on-level reading by 3rd grade, high school graduation rates, and work readiness.

Band together with people who suffer similar wounds and partners who believe every child has potential and deserves equitable resources, supports and opportunities to succeed at school and at work.

Keep the urgency front and center. We will celebrate progress and call out complacency and foot-dragging.

WHAT'S YOUR PROMISE?

Embrace the urgency. **Demand** improvements. **Reject** the status quo.

Move resources to where they will meet the most pressing needs of Latino youth head on and be transformative. Use existing data and research to guide your decisions.

Invest strategically and adequately in those people, policies and services that can bring about meaningful and sustainable systems reform.

Share your social capital, open doors, create second chances and make equity your business.

Commit. No one in Montgomery County can afford the cost of broken promises to our children. Regardless of your span of power, keep the promise. Equity is achievable.



20 Years of Serving Latino Youth and Families

identity-youth.org

