



EL BUEN PASTOR
LATINO COMMUNITY SERVICES

El Buen Pastor Latino Community Services partners with Latino families to equip children and adults to fulfill their educational and economic potential, with hope for a positive and healthy future.

We envision a society enriched by the cultural diversity of its members, where all are valued for their contributions and have the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

El Buen Pastor Latino Community Services (LCS) is a family-based agency partnering with first-generation immigrant families in the Old Town neighborhood of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Since its founding in 2006, LCS has employed two-generation solutions to bridging the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle class peers, providing space for families to equip themselves to fulfill their educational and economic potential, with hope for a positive and healthy future for each member. Because the path to high school graduation begins in infancy, LCS helps mothers discover how to prepare their babies for kindergarten. Reading well by third grade is a marker for future academic success, so LCS's Family Literacy Initiative focuses parents and children on that goal. And because the transitions to middle school and then high school are danger zones for immigrant students with low socioeconomic status, LCS helps students and parents navigate those waters. Health and well-being are critical to academic success and a positive future, so LCS provides opportunities for family members to exercise and discover new healthy eating practices. Since communities with shared values and social capital are more likely to thrive, LCS serves as both an anchor of stability and a hub of activity for families and individuals of all ages.

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the first decade of the 21st century Winston-Salem became home to a growing population of immigrants from Latin America. Many of the families who settled in the Old Town area migrated from impoverished rural regions that had little infrastructure and few educational opportunities. The poverty, illiteracy, and limited English fluency of the parents put the children from such families at great risk for academic failure. Because high school drop-outs have a lifetime of low wages and employment insecurity ahead of them, these families are at risk of being trapped in a cycle of poverty.

American history shows us that if an immigrant family achieves middle class status by the second generation, future generations of that family will remain self-sufficient, embracing the skills and values that accompany that status. Conversely, **families who live in poverty for more than two generations are likely to remain there, locked in a pattern of generational poverty, focused on the daily struggle for food and shelter.**

A typical family who participates in programs at El Buen Pastor Latino Community Services (LCS) is headed by two working adults, has several children, and lives on as little as \$15,000 a year. The income of every family who participates is below the Federal Poverty Guideline. The adults have strong family values and a great respect for education. They work long hours to provide for their children as they struggle to learn English and understand American customs, systems and institutions. The respect for education, however, does not translate into academic success for Latino youth in Forsyth County. LCS students attend North Forsyth High School (NFHS), which has a dropout rate of 26% for Latino students. Some leave school so that they can get a job to help their parents and siblings survive, or so that they can raise their own families. Some drop out because academic success was never within their reach. Whatever the reason, **by leaving school without a diploma, these young people close doors of opportunity and limit their ability to contribute fully to our community.**

Over the years, our staff has observed that the students in our program who entered kindergarten without the necessary pre-literacy skills struggle with reading throughout the early grades, and when the classroom focus shifts in fourth grade from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*, those who are not reading on grade level slip further behind. Typically we see students approach middle school unprepared academically and unwilling to do the hard work required to keep up with their cohort. Our longitudinal experience agrees with the research that shows that the path toward dropping out is one that is set years before high school.

Evidence of the problem

Currently 16% of all students in Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools (WSFCS) are Latino, and that number will increase, as 29% of current kindergarteners are Latino.

- El Buen Pastor LCS students attend NFHS where 24% of the student body is Latino.
- At NFHS the dropout rate for all students is currently 4.5%; for Latinos at NFHS that rate is 26%. System-wide, the dropout rate for Latino students is 24%.

LCS TRACKS IMPACT THROUGH ACADEMIC MARKS, GRADE PROGRESSION, AND PROGRAM ATTENDANCE

High school graduation for each child is our goal, and we pursue grade completion as an interim measure of success. To reach that goal volunteers in our after school tutoring program have helped elementary school students from low-income Latino families complete their homework assignments, improve their vocabularies, practice math facts, improve their reading skills and add to their background knowledge since 2003. In the ensuing years we have added preschool, middle school, high school and adult education programs.

Since 2007, our first year of operation as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, we have

- Prepared 100 preschoolers for kindergarten.
- Provided over 100 hours of after school tutoring annually for 60-70 elementary students.
- Provided 48 hours of summer enrichment each year to 80 students.
- Celebrated the high school graduation of 9 students.
- Involved 100 families each year in our education and healthy living programs.

Although we do not have comparative data on the elementary students' marks, we do have the endorsement of the staff and faculty of Old Town Elementary where most of our students are enrolled. Teachers report that our students enter school better prepared than their peers, have better attendance, regularly turn in their homework assignments, and exhibit better self-discipline than their peers.

Since the beginning of our parent-child education program in 2011, we have

- Provided 84 hours of parent-child classes for 40 mothers annually.
- Celebrated evidence from program evaluation showing that these mothers have embraced the concept that their children's education begins at home, and gained the confidence to actively serve as their children's first teacher.

For the 2011-12 school year, middle and high school students maintained or improved school performance:

- 12 of 16 middle school students participating in our programs maintained their marks.
- 11 of the 16 had an A or B average in their core classes.
- All 16 participating middle school students were promoted to the next grade.
- 7 of the 8 participating high school students had B or C averages in their core classes and maintained or improved their marks over the academic year.
- 2 of 2 participating twelfth graders received high school diplomas.

Over 100 families participate in our healthy living and/or family literacy initiatives each year. For the 2013-14 academic year we have the following enrollment:

60 children between 0 and 4 years	12 kindergartners
30 first, second, and third graders	28 fourth and fifth graders
20 middle school students	15 high school students
35 adult English students	32 adults in parenting classes

Our students are on the path to graduation! Our early childhood interventions and the impact our programs have on entire families increase the odds that each child will receive a diploma and that each family will break free from the poverty that has trapped them for generations.

SUCCESS IS THE RESULT OF FAMILY-INITIATED PROGRAMMING

We employ a two-generation approach to breaking the poverty cycle through education, fostering academic success for children and promoting lifelong learning for adults, because we believe that lasting change occurs when whole families work together toward a common goal.

Family Literacy Initiative

Family involvement is critical in closing the achievement gap between immigrant children of low socioeconomic status and their more affluent classmates. Our Family Literacy Initiative begins with mothers and babies. Through our *¡Listos!* parent-child education program, mothers build social networks and self-esteem while learning how to provide the language-rich environment and early-childhood experiences that promote cognitive development and enhance the social, emotional, and physical growth of their little ones. Positive Parenting lessons for the mothers and pre-literacy activities for the children establish a framework for school readiness.

The *Mas Listos* program involves the mothers of older preschoolers and elementary children in improving parenting skills, learning about the school system, and positioning themselves for their own continuing education. Preschool story hours, mother-child field trips, English classes for adults, and our bilingual family reading room encourage low-literacy parents to learn along-side their children and promote a culture of reading for pleasure.

We stress the goal of high school graduation for every student, helping parents and children understand that preparation for a diploma begins *before* kindergarten. Our bilingual preschool classes help children master their first language so that they can be better learners in their second language. Our tutoring programs and kindergarten-readiness classes are designed to help children succeed academically, as defined by the school system and as reflected in the students' report cards. We work to level the playing field for our at-risk elementary and secondary students by

- Providing reinforcement activities for the standard course of study in keeping with each grade's pacing guides
- Promoting a culture of reading for pleasure
- Offering enrichment experiences designed to add background knowledge and English fluency
- Helping middle and high school students plan strategically for graduation and higher education, addressing directly the most common factors involved in dropping out—pregnancy prevention for girls and gang awareness for boys.
- Advocating for students, when requested by parents to do so, signaling to teachers that these students have a support network that will help them succeed.

Selective Acculturation

We encourage Latino families to pursue selective acculturation by helping them learn to make informed choices as they blend the best of their new culture with the best of their culture of origin. Families are empowered as they gain the skills and knowledge that will help them help themselves **break free from poverty in this first generation** so that their children grow up to be fully-participating members of society, and so that our city can be enriched by their unique contributions to our economy and culture.

STRATEGIES ENCOMPASS RELATIONSHIPS, PLACE, AND CULTURAL VALUES

We believe that individuals can adopt new attitudes, mindsets, and behaviors; and we believe that families can change. We have seen it happen with the families who have stayed with our programs over the years.

Relationships

LCS builds on family-based relationships rather than recruit widely for new faces to attend classes. We “go deep” with our families, honoring the family structure and household schedules, involving parents as active participants in shaping their children’s future. We discovered early on that if a tutoring student’s parent was not somehow involved at LCS, the child would eventually drop out of our programs. Therefore we require that parents attend parent meetings, volunteer weekly in children’s programs, and pay a nominal fee for each child to participate. We believe that parental engagement is critical to lasting attitude-shifts and behavior-changes, and so **we employ two-generation solutions** to help adults and children find meaningful lives with hope for their family’s future.

LCS is volunteer-based. With more than 100 weekly volunteers from the greater community, and another 100 who serve at some time during the year, we are able to multiply the impact of our staff of nine part-timers.

LCS seeks out community partners. In order to best use the resources of our organization and the greater community, we collaborate with other nonprofits and agencies that share our values so that we can offer our families a variety of character-building and leadership opportunities.

Geography

LCS is place-based. In partnership with El Buen Pastor Presbyterian Church, which shares its facilities with us, our efforts are concentrated on the neighborhood surrounding the church building and the attendance district of Old Town Elementary School, which is located three blocks from our facility.

LCS works to build social connections in our neighborhood. We provide opportunities for family recreation and for community celebrations to build friendships within the Latino community to replace torn family ties. We want to impact our immediate neighborhood, so we encourage families to reach out to their neighbors and participate in school activities.

Cultural Values

LCS leadership is cross-cultural. Latinos and non-Latinos serve together on the board of directors and the staff of LCS. As they collaborate with volunteers from across the community, they blend the strengths and gifts that come from their diverse perspectives in such a way that all are transformed and all lives are enriched.

LCS is values-based. Through all of our programming and in all of our relationships with the families, we seek to embody and articulate our community values of respect, kindness, and safety for all members of the community. These values are brought to life through our commitment to

- compassion and dignity for all people
- volunteerism and community service
- healthy-living and sustainability

THE IMPACT OF LCS WILL GROW AS OLDER STUDENTS ACHIEVE SUCCESS

Our Family Literacy Initiative brings parents and children together so that students will be fluent readers by third grade. We plan to build on that success with a program called **Mindful Transitions** to keep students engaged in their academic pursuits during the social and academic transitions that take place during the time period from fourth through ninth grades, and to help parents discover how to maintain positive relationships with their adolescents while positioning themselves for positive futures.

Growth Mindset Strategy

In our current work with parents of young children we focus on the practice of positive parenting, addressing head-on the pervasive attitudes that a child who doesn't learn quickly is "stupid" and one who exhibits immature behavior is "bad". We have seen this negative approach reappear during the preteen years, as both generations—adults and children—use such labels for students. By coaching students and their parents to adopt a *growth mindset* rather than a *fixed mindset* (*Mindset, The New Psychology of Success*, Carol Dweck, 2006), we will arm both generations with positive shifts in attitude that will facilitate academic success in secondary school for these students who are at high-risk of dropping out. People with a growth mindset believe that their academic abilities can be developed through learning, and thus will put effort into improving their grades. Adopting a growth mindset allows students—and parents—to rise above their failures by learning from them.

The growth mindset will put the students on track to graduate from high school with their parents as their allies, and will give parents new attitudes about their own abilities and potential, empowering them to make thoughtful choices about their adult education and economic security.

Social Networks

In addition to the increased self-efficacy and motivation that accompany the shift to a growth mindset, Mindful Transitions will increase social connections among both students and adults, addressing the isolation that is often felt by poor immigrants and their children. Children growing up in poverty "... have fewer and less-supportive networks than their more affluent counterparts do; live in neighborhoods that are lower in social capital; and, as adolescents, are more likely to rely on peers than on adults for social and emotional support...., Low-SES children form more stress-ridden attachments with parents, teachers, and adult caregivers and have difficulty establishing rewarding friendships with children their own age...., Poor children often feel isolated and unloved, feelings that kick off a downward spiral of unhappy life events....," (*Teaching with Poverty in Mind*, Eric Jensen, 2009). We have seen that the issues of socialization and social status that are commonly found among families who live in generational poverty are magnified by the additional stresses that accompany immigration.

According to Guadalupe Espinoza and Jana Juvonen of UCLA, studies indicate that conformity to peers is especially important among Latino teens, who tend to adopt more collectivistic values than the individualistic goals typical of white students. They suggest that Latino youth are more sensitive than their non-Hispanic classmates to social context when making the transition to middle school. This agrees with our observations in our work with immigrant families. Because most of these Latino adults never experienced adolescence themselves, they have socialization and social status struggles of their own, which are compounded by low social capital in the community. Many of the women whose children participate in our programs feel isolated and fearful of community interactions; and they lack the self-esteem necessary to prepare for economic self-sufficiency, improved employment, or entrepreneurship.

Mindful Transition

Our Mindful Transitions program will engage both generations using multiple strategies. For students we will address the acquisition of soft skills and academic skills, and will teach:

- Emotional IQ and positive peer relationship models
- The character traits that give at-risk students the boost they need to overcome the achievement gap: grit, self-control, zest, social intelligence, gratitude, optimism, curiosity (as identified by researcher Angela Duckworth)

- Growth mindset, using the *Brainology* curriculum to teach neuroscience and study skills
- How academic skills relate to workplace skills

The program for parents will include developing a skill-building/educational plan for each adult and will teach:

- The emotional and social needs of adolescents and adults
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study findings
- Growth mindset

Together, parents and students will:

- Use the common language of “growth mindset” for communication about academics and their futures
- Learn that absenteeism is the factor most strongly predictive of failure to graduate
- Participate in “guidance counseling” sessions with a staff member or volunteer mentor twice annually
- Explore and agree on the appropriate use of social media for youth

El Buen Pastor Latino Community Services is uniquely positioned to partner with low-income first-generation immigrant families so that they are equipped to pursue their dreams, finding academic success and fulfilling their economic potential.