

Some Implications for Child Welfare Training from our Study of Special Education & Child Welfare Outcomes for Immigrant and Non-immigrant Children

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To date, the status of immigrant children and students has been described from the perspective of one system or in relation to one community or intervention. Seldom is a broad, cross-system examination of immigrant children created to more fully describe how these children are faring in our public systems. This study is intended to describe the status of a statewide population of immigrant students in Minnesota over the course of one academic year by examining public school and child welfare data.

Description of the Study

- The data that are used to create this profile of immigrant students come from a study of homeless students in Minnesota during the same school year.
- This provides the opportunity to explore the degree to which immigrant students are affected by homelessness, compared to non-immigrant students in the state. In this context, homelessness is examined as just one of a set of outcomes (albeit, a negative outcome) that will help us develop a broader understanding of this important population of Minnesota students.

Purpose of the Study

- To learn more about whether, and the degree to which, immigrant students are disproportionately more or less likely to receive special education, be labeled with certain types of disabilities, receive free or reduced price meals,

experience disruptive changes to their education (including school moves and homelessness), or become involved with child welfare.

- These findings are expected to inform state and local policies and child welfare practice as they relate to these two systems and assist in the description of student status in specific counties and school districts.

Some Preliminary Implications:

NOTE: The implications shown below have come from both a review of the literature and from analysis of data from the MN-LINK data base for the 2005-06 school year for all schools in Minnesota.

- ***Practice should be culturally appropriate:*** The characteristics of child welfare involvement vary among different ethnic groups. Asian-Americans are disproportionately low in child neglect and have more cases in physical abuse; European Americans are disproportionately charged with sexual abuse.
- ***Differences in child welfare involvement among immigrants:*** Some groups have more cases in child welfare than others due to different reasons. (E.g.: Latinos have more cases in child welfare in Minnesota in comparison to other immigrant groups.) Social workers need to know these differences, understand the reasons behind them, and have appropriate interventions.
- ***Practice should be based on diversity within cultures:*** The child welfare involvement varies within different Asian communities. One should not generalize to the whole Asian population.
- ***Immigrant or non-immigrant matters:*** Immigrant students are often more mobile than non-immigrant students (35.9% of immigrants moved within a year in comparison to 15.9% of non-immigrant students). Immigrant children are three times more likely to live in poverty than non-immigrant children.
- ***Length of time residing in U.S. is also an important factor:*** Newcomers are often not familiar with the child protection system and have different child rearing practices.
- ***Pay attention to gender:*** More female children (58%) than male children (43%) are involved in child welfare; more male (68%) than female students (32%) are participating in special education.
- ***Misinformation and discrimination towards special education among immigrants:*** Latino and Somali immigrants tend to decline special education service even though their children are evaluated as needing special education.