



# Building Culturally Responsive Learning Communities through Political and Civic Engagement

## SUMMARY

The Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute (PR/HYLI) experience integrates Latinx students into a community of learners by providing culturally responsive learning experiences that culminate in civic engagement. This integrative process affirms students' life experiences, linguistic diversity, and their cultures — who they are.

### *Imagine 200 Latinx high school students*

taking on the roles of New York State Assembly members and debating live bills in the Assembly Chamber. Also, imagine those same students — many of them English language learners — taking on the roles of governor, Assembly speaker, Senate majority leader, Senate minority leader and Sergeant at Arms. Finally, envision members of the NYS Assembly as guests to the one-day Mock Assembly totally run by Latinx high school students from schools across New York State.

The Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute is just this — a program that prepares Latinx students from across New York to become actors in the NYS Assembly, for a day, where they debate and pass live bills. The program incorporates culturally responsive pedagogies to ensure that students' linguistic and cultural identities are given their rightful attention during the training sessions. To prepare for this Institute, more than 300 high school students from across the state participate in a minimum of 30 hours of training that includes: understanding how NYS government works, learning about how a bill becomes a law,

**Gladys I. Cruz, Ph.D., is the district superintendent and CEO for Questar III BOCES. Along, with her leadership team, Cruz provides leadership to 23 local school districts and oversees the delivery of more than 275 programs and services across New York State. Her education experience ranges from K-12 schools to universities in New York State and Puerto Rico. Cruz holds a Ph.D. and a master's in curriculum and instruction as well as a master's degree in bilingual education.**

**Theresa Longhi is a NYSUT member and an ESL/ENL teacher in her 20th year at Ichabod Crane Central School District in upstate New York. She holds a bachelor's in psychology and master's degrees in TESOL and literacy, all from the University at Albany. She has taught ENL K-12 but has a special fondness for working with 9-12th graders. Longhi places great emphasis on incorporating story into her classroom, where she establishes and maintains strong family/school connections and networks.**

**José M. Meléndez, Ph.D. is a resource specialist for the Hudson Valley Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network. He offers schools and districts in the Hudson Valley region technical assistance, professional development and classroom support in the education of English language learners. His education career spans more than 25 years. He holds a master's degree in reading and language/bilingual education from Boston University and a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from SUNY Albany.**

**Gladys I. Cruz, Questar III BOCES**  
**Theresa Longhi, Ichabod Crane Teachers Association**  
**José M. Meléndez, Hudson Valley Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network**

doing research and debate of bills selected for the Institute, learning how to advocate for causes affecting the Latinx community, and delving into specific bills that affect the Latinx community.

### **Concept of Culture**

There is widespread consensus that the culture of any social group consists of visible and invisible traits. Artifacts, behaviors, diet, and customs would be considered some of the visible dimensions of a culture. In contrast, deeply held values, beliefs, and attitudes would be examples of its invisible domain (Hall, 1976). Hall likens culture to an iceberg, with the invisible aspects being akin to the submerged portion of the iceberg. The strength of this image is that it brings attention to the vast invisible elements of culture and avoids reducing peoples' heritages to *facts, faces and fiestas*.

One possible limitation of the iceberg analogy is its depiction of culture as a static entity. Culture is not only the particular way we act and create in specific social contexts, but also how we live and experience these activities (Williams, 1961). As such, culture is a dynamically lived experience that

changes and evolves over time. More importantly, it is the substance of individual and collective identity (Cummins & Taylor, 2011).

Here, we adopt the view of culture, particularly students' and teachers' cultures, as dynamically lived experience. At the same time, we acknowledge both its visible and invisible dimensions. This stance permits approaching students from different cultures as multifaceted individuals, who come into our schools and classrooms with a rich and complex array of experiences. This helps us to affirm who they are and to facilitate a healthy integration to their new culture as they develop their academic identities.

### **Culture Encounters and Acculturation**

New York State P-12 systems continue to become more linguistically and culturally diverse. This diversity in P-12 systems requires a serious consideration of acculturation processes and changes in our teaching approaches. We take acculturation to be the changes in personal and social identity that happen when culturally diverse peoples and groups come in contact (Berry, 1997). Individuals experience

New York State P-12 systems continue to become more linguistically and culturally diverse. This diversity in P-12 systems requires a serious consideration of acculturation processes and changes in our teaching approaches.

Stories, games and group work activities are excellent ways to bridge the cultural divide between home and the classroom and school communities.

two types of changes when exposed to another culture: overt and deep (Berry, 1997). At the surface level, acculturation may entail changes in behavior, eating habits, clothing styles and new speech patterns, or even a new language, among others. At a deeper level, there are transformations in the sense of self-identity, accompanied by a great deal of acculturative stress. This tension can manifest itself in the form of strong emotional output, including anxiety and depression.

Berry identified four possible outcomes to the identity formation process of acculturation for newcomers and other minorities. (1) They can assimilate and abandon their native culture. (2) They can reject the new culture, cling to their past and remain separated. (3) In extreme cases they reject both their heritage culture and the new culture, remaining marginalized. For example, they can join a sub-cultural group (e.g. a gang). Or (4), they can integrate into the receiving culture, while maintaining their heritage (integrative acculturation).

Acculturation and its possible outcomes take place on two levels: the societal and the academic (Douglas-Brown, 2014). We have little control of what happens in the larger social context (Berry, 1997; Douglas-Brown, 2014). However, we have a great deal of control and influence over our

schools and classrooms and their learning community dynamics. We can facilitate students' mutual engagement in academic work, joint enterprise and access to a shared repertoire of resources and practices (Douglas-Brown, 2014; Wenger, 1998). To do this in a way that helps diverse students engage academically, we also affirm and validate who they are and enable them to invest their identities in learning. In this way, our classrooms can become mediating spaces for diverse students' integrative acculturation and their development of academic identities (Cummins & Taylor, 2011).

As we foster these academic communities in our schools and classrooms, we adopt a culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy that is more than just tying lessons to facts, faces and fiestas. It is also important to take advantage of how students learn at home and in their communities, that is, their *cultural learning styles*. These are the ways that families, including mothers, fathers, grandparents and other community members, teach life skills and foundational knowledge to children in different cultural groups (Hammond, 2014). Hammond has suggested that, in order to make curricula, lessons and learning culturally responsive, it helps to "storify," "gamify," and make learning social. If we make space for these learning modalities in our teaching and

curricula, we cast a wide cross-cultural net. This is due to the fact that these are common cultural patterns and traditions that cut across ethnic and social groups: African-American, Latinx, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islanders, and many working-class communities, among others (Hammond, 2014). These groups engage in key tasks collectively (agriculture, child rearing, and physical labor). They learn socially, and therefore stories, games and group work are excellent ways to bridge the cultural divide between home and the classroom and school communities.

In addition to collaboration, games and narrative, there is another important dimension that teachers may want to consider. It entails connecting classroom learning to issues and experiences that are personally and collectively relevant to students, their communities and society: the social action dimension. This dimension has been described in the related literature as the highest level of culturally relevant and inclusive pedagogy (Banks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). In the following section we present a detailed account of how the Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute (from here on referred to as the Institute) actualizes the tenets of culturally responsive and relevant education discussed so far.

### **The Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute Experience**

The Institute experience incorporates all of the elements of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, especially the social action dimension. The goals of the Institute's program are to develop students' leadership skills; promote their civic engagement; generate opportunities for students to interact with positive adult role models; create partnerships and conversations among educators, business leaders, and students; and foster students' understanding of the NYS legislative process. The program operates in three distinct phases:

Phase I: Training in Regional Delegations

Phase II: Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute in Albany

Phase III: Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute Follow-Up.

### **Phase I Training Modules**

- Team-building
- Leadership
- PR/HYLI History
- Communication and Public Speaking
- How a Bill Becomes Law
- Parliamentary Procedures
- Analysis and Study of Bills
- Culture
- Advocacy and Community Issues
- Scholarship Essay Writing
- Debating – Party Affiliations
- Specialty Roles and Practice Sessions
- Decorum for the Institute

Each phase is aligned with the New York State Social Studies Framework, the Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards, and is designed to prepare students to be college and career ready.

The Institute recruitment process is open to all interested Hispanic juniors and seniors from high schools across NYS. The regional application includes an essay on a topic of high cultural relevance, which students can write in Spanish or English. Past essay topics have included art as a tool for

social and political change and the role of key Hispanic leaders in the advancement of the Latino community.

Regional Delegation Trainer/Leaders review applications and select participants, based on the content and quality of students' essay responses, letters of recommendation from mentors, educators, and counselors, and a high school transcript.

Students' applications are considered holistically to benefit students who are highly motivated, produce application essays of high quality, or are highly recommended. This flexibility in the selection process is especially beneficial to English language learners. This is another way the Institute acknowledges and values students' prior knowledge, experience, language and learning.

## **Phase I: Training in Regional Delegations**

Phase I consists of a minimum of 30 hours of regional training delivered by approximately 25 New York State certified teachers across the state.

Training modules — available online at [www.prhyli.org](http://www.prhyli.org) — offer educators activities and resources to incorporate these topics into the trainings carried out statewide in preparation for the Institute. Furthermore, the training modules present activities that offer students culturally relevant experiences that can be incorporated into classroom practices.

## **Figure 1**

### **Module 5 — How a Bill Becomes a Law**

The module How a Bill Becomes a Law provides students an opportunity to understand the different responsibilities of Federal and State Government and how an idea becomes a bill and ultimately a law.

#### **Learning Vignette**

Introduce students to the lawmaking process by asking students to think about things that bother them, things that they feel there should be a law against. Give students time to think in silence (30 seconds or more time depending on your students) and ask that they raise their hands once they have an idea or thought for sharing. Using popcorn style brainstorming, solicit their thoughts, asking: Why is there a need for a law on that? Do not offer judgement; just seek clarification. After everyone who is willing to share has done so, ask the group if anyone is aware that many laws come to be because a person (just like them) felt like they do at the moment. This activity can be followed by deeper exploration of how a bill becomes a law. Ask students how an idea/thought can make it all the way to becoming a law. Pause for sharing. Distribute reading material on how a bill becomes a law and after students have enough time to read the material ask that they turn to a partner and share what they have learned.

For example, instead of lecturing students on how a bill becomes a law, the manual offers suggested activities to engage students in collaborative teams that research, prepare and present this topic to their peers (see Figures 1 and 2).

The activities align with the NYS Next Generation English Language Arts Standards emphasis on academic literacy across the curriculum. They provide students opportunities to work individually, as pairs and collaboratively, thus exposing them to different learning modalities. The bills selected for the program address issues that impact the Latino community, making them relevant to this student population. In the past, legislative bills and advocacy issues have focused on bilingual education, police brutality, immigrant rights, equal pay, college access for undocumented students, and home language translation rights of parents, among many others.

In small collaborative groups students engage in research to identify evidence to support their claims, for and against the bills, forcing them to examine research that presents different perspectives on the issues at hand which impact the Latino community. Participants also engage extensively in role play and debate in small and whole group formats, honing their dialogue and discussion skills. Students develop

a sense of responsibility toward the Latino community and give voice to the voiceless as they participate in the program. In some cases, students report that their political ambitions are further developed through their participation in the program.

When asked about their favorite part of the sessions and how they were going to use what they learned, student responses underscored how the program allowed them to build their literate selves and acculturate into the academic and civic realms. One

**Figure 2**

### **Module 7 — Analysis and Study of Bills**

This module allows students to delve deeply into the chosen bills and understand the diverse views that surround each bill. This module also allows students to research a bill and consider its purpose, implications, consequences, accuracy, relevance, and fairness, thus developing their critical thinking skills. Students prepare to debate bills using claims that are supported by evidence backed by research.

#### **Learning Vignette**

Provide students with the text of selected bills, divide students in groups of 5 or 6 students, and assign each group a bill. Please note that bills selected are meaningful to the Latino community given that they deal with issues impacting the Latino community. For example, a bill that allows undocumented students to receive state funding to support their college tuition. Have students do a close reading of the bill text, research articles looking for arguments for and against the bill and evaluate each argument based on the claims, reasoning, and evidence presented. Teams will research additional articles to clarify or corroborate conflicting information. Team members will investigate the issues in depth and prepare their arguments for debate. Students will then debate the bills roleplaying a mock assembly following parliamentary procedure.

This culturally relevant practice facilitates students' acculturative integration into the academic life and American culture while honoring their heritage and interests.

student commented, "I want to do everything I can to create a better future for minorities and the generations to come." Another said, "Coming into this, I never questioned how laws or bills were made or passed. Now that I understand this, I will have more ideas on ways I can improve my community."

The training sessions also create a space for students' home language. Groups and individual students work on bills, advocacy and community issues, projects and cultural productions in their preferred languages. The Institute provides bilingual versions of the bills and analysis instruments, while providing participants with the option to write and respond in Spanish and English. Students can also present their arguments during debate in the language of their choice. This culturally relevant practice facilitates students' acculturative integration into the academic life and American culture while honoring their heritage and interests.

The Institute training module activities also acculturate participants to mainstream academic demands. For example, during the regional training phase, participants engage in individual research and study of bills at home. They also review their homework individually during training sessions prior to the group work on bills. In addition, students work individually on an essay writing project focused on an annual Institute theme. Seniors have the

opportunity to submit their essays for the annual scholarship contest. The scholarship is a strong motivation for personal individual success and recognition. At the same time, the essay provides a space for students' voices and identities.

## **Phase II: Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute in Albany**

In any given year, up to 400 students across the state participate in the regional Institute training Phase I. Due to space and budgetary constraints, the Institute grant provides for 200 students to be selected for the March weekend Institute in Albany each year. The selection process developed with delegation leaders/trainers is very rigorous.

### **Saturday**

Saturday activities begin with a series of opening remarks by keynote speakers. These speakers are selected for the power of their life story to inspire students and the cultural and social relevance of their work, example and message. Keynote speakers have included labor leader Dolores Huerta, singer and activist Taína Asili, Rhodes Scholar and author Wes Moore and Marvel Comics writer Edgardo Miranda Rodríguez, among others. The core of the day's activities and workshops focuses on building a cohesive team – one Institute. Activities throughout the day focus on a central theme each year. Themes have

included the role of the arts in advancing Latino aspirations, non-violent political leadership, and advocacy. Activities, team building sessions, creative and artistic hands-on projects and student-developed presentations also reflect students' cultural experiences and are based on issues relevant to them and the Latino/Hispanic community.

### **Sunday**

The main activity on Sunday is the mock Assembly session, held in the New York State Assembly chambers. This is the culmination of all the preparatory work of Phase I. Debate activities in the mock assembly are also collaborative in nature, as students take on the role of Assembly members and their counsels. Debaters present arguments for and against each bill, depending on the stance of the Assembly member each represents. Arguments during the debates are text-based and support the appropriate NYS learning standards. Sunday activities culminate with a student delegate recognition dinner. During this event, seniors who submit winning essays are awarded scholarships. All delegates have an opportunity to network, dine and socialize with public officials and business leaders in a formal setting.

### **Monday**

Students participate in workshops that address the theme of the Institute and or areas of interest to Latinx youth.

After the workshops, students visit their respective legislators to discuss issues that affect the Hispanic/Latinx community in their schools, local communities and across New York State. Additionally, they may discuss with legislators bills that were debated during the mock assembly or other legislative initiatives.

### **Phase III: Hispanic Youth**

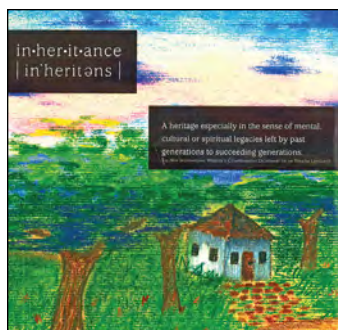
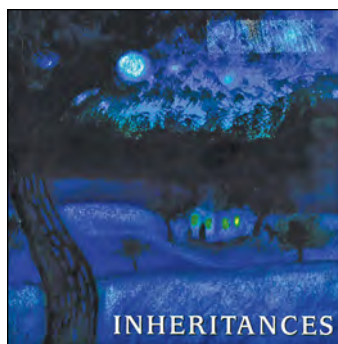
#### **Leadership Institute Follow-Up**

Student delegates participate in a follow up activity upon completion of the Institute. Some delegations offer their region's students a reunion/evaluation session where they come together with their parents and alumni to reflect on the entire Institute experience and how it has impacted them. Local legislators are also invited to the event. Many local delegates continue to develop their leadership skills when they return the following year as volunteers to share their experience.

*Student mock assembly*







*Legacies, a student anthology published by Institute participants in collaboration with the ELL community.*

## **Beyond The Institute: The Classroom and Institute Connection**

There is a strong connection between the Institute and the classroom. It promotes integrative acculturation and definitely has an impact on school culture. My students sometimes call me Ms. L, or Maestra. These experiences exemplify how classrooms and schools can connect with the Institute to extend its work and prepare students for participation in it. With an 11 year history of participation, I see that recruitment and retention are the strongest motivators for Central High School (CHS) Latinx students. Middle school students know that the Institute is a critical part of their high school experience. The younger generation has watched their siblings and cousins return from the Institute changed in ways they cannot quite name. The younger students know and understand that their time will come to participate in this life-changing experience. When I ask my students what the Institute has given them, no one is quick to answer. There is always a long and very thoughtful pause. The words “connection,” “empowerment,” “hope” and “strength” are often mentioned.

## **Academics and the Institute at CHS**

Students at CHS established what they call Institute PREP, after-school sessions that Institute participants initiated three years ago spearheaded by Ana

Cruz, an Institute alumnus. During Institute PREP, students organize into teams after school and research the bills, prepare their presentations and practice their debates. My role is to be a facilitator and a resource. Institute PREP occurs at least once a week throughout Phase I trainings and increases in frequency and duration as the weekend Institute approaches.

Reading is a key foundation for ELLs and Institute participants. Everyone is expected to read at length across a wide range of texts. I use metacognitive strategies to ensure that students are monitoring their comprehension and engagement with the text.

Students are graded on responses to text, identification of unknown vocabulary, self to text and self to world connections, and summary and synthesis. My goal is to help students become critical readers and thinkers of the information placed before them. “The experience of navigating tough text on tough issues as a team builds community . . .” it empowers and helps inform their decisions. By the time the ELA Regents or the Institute bill analysis roll around, students know they can navigate any text. No topic is closed to them.

Another way the Institute intersects with CHS students’ development of literate and academic selves is through *Legacies*. This is a student anthology that was begun in 2007 as a collaborative effort between the Illustration class

at the high school and the ELL community. Through student narratives and illustrations, ELL students' lives and stories, including those of Institute participants, are depicted with sensitivity and great care by their peers. Students meet at least twice with their illustrator, mostly native speakers, to discuss their vision for their story. To CHS illustrators' credit, they have responded with great empathy, compassion and professionalism. When students finish reading the book, we gather as a group and vote on the cover. Once the books are printed, there is a book-signing event to which teachers, staff and parents are invited. The book is also available for viewing during Senior Recognition Night. A powerful element of *Legacies* is that authors take their books home and read them to their siblings and parents. This act affirms and validates families shared experiences and histories.

Of special note is the story by Maria Cruz, an Institute alumnus. The theme was "Ten years from now..." Maria wrote about the Institute and how she planned to give back. Her illustrator conferenced with Maria and asked her about Institute. Maria explained what the Institute was and what she had gained from it. Her illustrator crafted a beautiful drawing with Maria standing on stage in front of a large audience with a colorful banner overhead that read: The Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership. The impact that the Institute had on Maria, especially as it relates to her civic

and social engagement, cannot be minimized. She returned to CHS after the Institute ready to make her mark and use her voice. When given the opportunity to march for immigrant rights, she joined a local march and came armed with a poster that quoted her favorite artist, Fridha Kahlo. "Pies, para que los quiero, si tengo alas para volar?" (*Feet, what need have I of you, if I have wings to fly?*) When I pointed out that the march was not school sponsored, and she was under no obligation to attend, Maria leveled her gaze at her teacher and said "I will be there Ms. L. I know it's not for school, but I NEED to be there. Those who can do something, must do something!" Before the Institute, Maria was a shy and reserved student who would not have participated in a political march. She did not, in her words, see how "politics related to me, or to my family."

### **The Institute and the Social Action Dimension at CHS**

SALA Latina and the Alumni Panel are two further examples of the impact of the Institute in participants' school life, specifically in the domain of social action and engagement. The Alumni Panel occurs in November and is attended by CHS alumni who return to talk with underclassmen about their experience in college and beyond. With the exception of one participant, the last three panels have been composed entirely of Institute alumni.

SALA Latina/International Student Organization was founded by an Institute alumnus and is the first Latinx/International club in CHS history. The club is open to all students at CHS who wish to learn more about and celebrate Latino and other world cultures. When students return from the Institute the question often asked is “What are we going to do to bring the Institute in house?” Four years ago, Julie had an immediate response. She began collecting signatures and crafting a mission statement. She coordinated speakers and recruited students for monthly meetings. She met with administration to introduce her idea and rationale. She was tenacious, motivated and inspired. Her passion for her culture and her desire to have a legacy that honored that culture was contagious and inspiring. Over the last three years, SALA Latina/I.S.O. has instituted a scholarship for college-bound ELL’s. The application and criteria were crafted by former SALA President and PR/HYLI alumnus Carmen Cruz. SALA has sponsored a Mariachi Night at the Community Theatre, held raffles for Hurricane and Earthquake Relief for Mexico and Puerto Rico, traveled to New York City, and distributed Valentine’s Day cards to every staff member and student at Central High School (650 students and staff). SALA/I.S.O engages in social service and engaged action. Many of our prior and present members are Institute alumni or

participants. This past July, two members of SALA, Julian Rivera and Elisa Lopez (former Institute alumni) painted the flags of each international student, both past and present, on the ceiling tiles of their ENL classroom. Elisa wanted a quote to sum up her feelings about her place at CHS. After searching for the perfect quote, I asked her what she wanted to say, in her own words. Elisa replied, “Everyone is welcome here regardless of skin color, ethnicity, gender, nationality or religion. We are all the same. We are all family.” She painted a large globe of the world on the central tile, then wrote her quote on each side of the globe. She surrounded the center tile with 18 hand-painted tiles from around the world. She then painted an additional 27 miniature flags on the center tile, flanked by the name SALA/I.S.O.

### **Program Outcomes and Evaluation**

Each year an outside independent evaluator assesses the Institute program using both qualitative and quantitative data from various sources to provide a comprehensive description of the implementation of the program, participant perceptions and program outcomes. Among the data-gathering tools used are student, trainer and chaperone surveys, direct observation, and interviews. All three phases of the program are evaluated annually.

The outside independent evaluator ascertains whether the following are achieved:

1. Meeting the established participation target of 200 students.
2. Attendance and participation levels of students at local trainings.
3. The effectiveness of the three phases of the program.
4. The quality of the performance during the Mock Assembly, other Institute events and any work produced by students.
5. The participants' perceptions regarding the goals of the Angelo Del Toro Institute program.

### Phase I: 2017 Evaluation Summary

During the 2017 year, more than 90 percent of participating students indicated that they “learned a lot” about what makes a good leader during their delegation’s regional trainings. The vast majority of students also felt they learned a lot about how to develop an argument for or against a bill, how a bill becomes a law, and the role of a New York State assembly member. When students were asked to provide an overall rating of their delegation’s regional trainings on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), 94 percent of the students gave the trainings either a “4” or “5.”

Our trainers and chaperones reported on student learning:



*“They learned that they have a voice and that there are many opportunities for them to express such a voice. That even one person can produce change.”*

*“The program provided students with the skills and confidence to speak up more for what they believe in and to be proud of their heritage.”*

*“They learned how to cooperate on a grand scale, the basics of the legislative process, and the importance of being an advocate for a particular viewpoint.”*

Students’ comments further illustrated their satisfaction with the regional trainings. In particular, students discussed how much they enjoyed building and debating arguments. Students also enjoyed networking and meeting new people and learning about bills and the legislative process. Students reported that the regional trainings helped them improve their public

**Cultural activity at SUNY Albany.**

speaking skills, gave them more confidence to advocate for their beliefs, and prepared them to participate in the mock assembly when they arrived in Albany. When asked how the trainings could be improved, several students suggested more team-building activities, more opportunities for student-to-student interaction, and more time practicing for the mock assembly. Here are a few student quotes about their experience with the program:

*“I will take what I learned to promote activism within the Latino community and raise awareness of ways to get involved in our local governments.”*

*“I might change my career choice now because I learned that my community needs a voice and I wish to provide that.”*

*“I am going to advocate for the voiceless.”*

*“This experience helped me find my voice and gain confidence in what I have to say.”*

## **Phase II: Evaluation Summary**

During 2017, students and adults felt that the events of the weekend Institute were successful in meeting the short-term outcomes of the Institute. More than 90 percent of students and adults agreed that the Institute helped students better understand the legislative process, helped them develop or enhance their abilities, such as their

communication skills, and provided them with connections that will help them achieve their college and career goals. For more details on program outcomes, visit [www.prhyla.org](http://www.prhyla.org).

## **Phase III: Evaluation Summary**

Following each year’s Institute in Albany, delegations hold a variety of post-Institute activities that can range from a formal reunion where students share their reflections to developing social media forums for students to stay connected. The delegation leaders also participate in a statewide debriefing session and are expected to continue to work to provide opportunities for students to further develop leadership potential.

Student reunion events are typically held a month or two following the Institute event in Albany. All Institute student participants are invited to attend and to celebrate their hard work and accomplishments and to share their experiences. Delegations also invite parents, school staff and chaperones. The events are led by the delegation leaders and may include visits from local members of the New York State Assembly.

The following reflection by a delegate summarizes Phase III: “The Institute is an amazing program and something I wouldn’t pass up if I had the opportunity to do it all over again. It immerses you in your culture and helps you advocate for your rights.” Parents who attend

have also indicated how they have seen their children change. At one event a parent indicated that she never thought she would have conversations about politics with her teenage daughter.

## Conclusion

The above accounts about the Institute and its place in our school community illustrate how diverse students can integrate into their new culture through learning communities that mediate their growth as academic and literate selves and validate and affirm their heritage. There is no better way to express the integrative power of the Institute experience. Students who have participated in the Institute program stay connected — the students continue to be part of a network long after the program ends. One may say that long-term relationships and friendships often happen among students in high school, however, the transformative impact of this program goes beyond any general experience from high school. One will find many volunteers, teachers and chaperones in the program each year who are former Institute alumni. The students who go through this program develop a long-term commitment to the Latinx community and stay connected and involved with the program.

---

## REFERENCES

- Banks, A.J. (2001). Approaches to multicultural curriculum reform. In A.J. Banks and C.A. McGee Banks (Eds.) *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 233-258). Danvers: John Wiley and Sons.
- Berry, J.W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46(1), 5-68.
- Cummins, J., Hu, S., Markus, P., & Montero, M.K. (2015). Identity texts and academic achievement: Connecting the dots in multilingual school contexts. *TESOL Quarterly: A Journal for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages and of Standard English as a Second Dialect*, 49(3), 555-581.
- Cummins, J., & Taylor, S.K. (2011). Second language writing practices, identity, and the academic achievement of children from marginalized social groups: A comprehensive view. *Writing and Pedagogy*, 3(2). 181-188.
- Douglas-Brown, H. (2014). *Principles of language learning and teaching: A course in 2nd language acquisition*. White Plains: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Hall, E.T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. New York: Anchor Books Doubleday.
- Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84, 74-84.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.
- PR/HYLI Training Manual (2017). Retrieved from [http://prhyli.org/pdf/prhyli\\_manual\\_2017.pdf](http://prhyli.org/pdf/prhyli_manual_2017.pdf).
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, R. (1961). *The long revolution*. London: Chatto and Windus.