

DBU | NHCLC
Faith & Education
COALITION



**An Early Learning Movement
to Advance Hispanic School Readiness**

12T PATHWAY 2
TOMORROW

Executive Summary Overview

The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference is engaged with the gatekeepers of 40,000+ Hispanic Evangelical churches in America. Education is a core initiative for the NHCLC and is a priority for Hispanics in America. Pew Research identified “Education” as one of the top three priorities for the Hispanic community in a report in February 2017.

The last ten years have seen major success in the NHCLC’s program to thwart the high school drop-out rate. The Education Sunday program was launched to help Hispanic churches discover their role in support of students in their communities and their churches. K-12 education, high school graduation, and transition to college were elements included in the Education Sunday program. The successful program linked pastors, parents, students, church members and school districts together for academic progress. Resources were provided in English and Spanish. Thousands of Hispanic churches signed-up for the program and impacted their communities.

One of the most significant findings of the program included a gap with respect to young children. The NHCLC Education program lacked attention to this segment of the church. While concern is consistently raised with regards to this gap for pre-k students, recent developments surfaced new partners and English/Spanish resources that can make a difference for the Hispanic community.

In April 23rd, 2019 UnidosUS reported that by 2027, 30% of public schools will be filled with Latino students. At the same time, another report suggests that 65% of Latino kids do not attend preschool or kindergarten. Another gap regarding learning states that in general, a 15-25 percentage point gap exists for Latino children relative to their white peers. (Salud America research review on building support for Latino Families). While these statistics are alarming, the NHCLC has a track record of bringing about change in its’ national church network. For this we are thankful and we are confident there is hope for our young children.

A significant strategy involves the NHCLC working with parents, caregivers, pastors, church leaders, and community leaders to equip young children with the tools and knowledge needed to be successful in their schooling years. As an initial phase to move the needle on this data point, the NHCLC, in partnership with providers of a resource called Vroom, is positioned to create a movement to benefit all young children in our community. With an initial education on brain development for NHCLC leadership, the Vroom tool can be implemented with key resources accessed for various levels of our membership. Parents, caregivers, pastors, and church leaders receive daily, weekly tips to help prepare young learners for school and support understanding of brain development. The Vroom solution is ideal for our community because it is available in English and Spanish, at no cost to families, and accessible through web and mobile options.

We have an opportunity to change the narrative as we did with the drop-out crisis we faced in the past. A significant finding is that church leaders can make a difference in their churches and that difference crosses over into the community for benefit of all. Vroom has the potential to be the ignition we need to form the basis of support for Latino churches and their communities and begin to see progress on school readiness for our children.

Part 1: The Solution

The Challenge

A problem exists with respect to the preparation and equipping of Latino children prior to their Kindergarten experience and it has only become clearer that early learning opportunities are critical for long-term student success:

- UnidosUS states that 40% of Latino children live in a childcare desert with few preschools (April 23, 2019).
- An NBC news report in November 2017 states that 42% of Latino children attend Kindergarten unprepared and face obstacles that have long term impact in their academic experiences.
- Another report states that “by age 2, Latino kids score less than their counterpart white kids with less ability to reason and remember tasks, less verbal and communication skills, and less ability to identify letters, numbers, and shapes.” (Salud America research review on building support for Latino Families).

Latino kids are not positioned to leverage positive and beneficial academic experiences comparable to their peers. Latino families, churches, and communities need resources and help in order to get their young learners ready for kindergarten and prepare them to perform on par with their counterparts.

A significant number of mainstream evangelical churches employ full-time children’s or preschool minister’s/directors to guide spiritual and academic programming for their local church with outreach opportunities to bless their local communities. This is a wonderful gift to families of young children and an opportunity that they are provided. The Hispanic evangelical community, though, is very different. While there are a strong number of “mega churches” that also hire full-time children and/or preschool ministers, this is, for the most part, unique in our community and not standard practice and not a resource that is readily available across the country.

It is important to note that approximately 70% of all Hispanic pastors are bi-vocational meaning they have another full-time job and do church work after fulfilling the responsibilities of a full-time secular role. Those churches with part-time pastors do not

employ children or preschool directors. Whatever is done for young children with respect to ministry is generally accomplished by volunteers with little to no training to minister to young children.

This context signals a crisis and must be overcome to develop a solution for children of Latino heritage to ensure they are Kindergarten ready and able to succeed in a school environment.

The Solution

The NHCLC solution to this crisis involves the development of an early learning movement to equip parents, caregivers, pastors, and church leaders with the necessary tools to prepare our early learners for kindergarten. Utilizing a church-based solution targeting church leaders, church families, and pastors, analogous to the movement created by NHCLC to thwart the Latino drop-out crisis, we will develop messaging and mobilize our constituency to participate in the early learning and preparation movement. Denominational leaders, bishops, district and associational leaders will be engaged to highlight the need and the tool for our community in English and Spanish.

NHCLC will use [Vroom](#) as the pivotal tool to launch in its communities and a platform to educate our families about brain development and prioritization of school readiness. Vroom is a set of tools and resources designed to inspire families to turn everyday moments into “brain building moments” by layering activities that are essential to healthy brain development onto existing routines. Developed by the Bezos Family Foundation, Vroom offers a variety of tools available to download for free, as well as a mobile app that provides easy access to daily “brain building” activities. It is evidence-based and tested by early childhood experts, neuroscientists, parents, and community leaders, as well as the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Whether its mealtime or bath time, or a playdate at the park, there are thousands of ways to nurture a growing child’s mind. The tool even receives a 5-star rating on Common Sense Media.

The first five years of a child’s life is when they develop the foundation for all future learning. The tagline for Vroom is “you already have what it takes” and this resonates deeply with our community to make it an aligned opportunity for our need. Vroom tips can be implemented by parents, but also caregivers such as grandparents or older siblings who are often primary caregivers for young children in the Evangelical community. Further, the tool’s opportunity to remain in the home while improving brain building activities and developing an educational priority, rather than taking the child to an external center, is the first step in preparing the student for a school environment in the years to come.

The NHCLC has a best practice template with the Education Sunday initiative. The early learning movement will become the foundational program for the Education Sunday

initiative in 2019. Through this channel, the Education Sunday initiative will leverage its successes, best practices, and messaging to churches, families, and communities to include a focus on early learning and k-12.

For maximum impact, the NHCLC leadership will be trained on the “Mind in the Making” curriculum and Vroom platform to support a “train the trainer” model enabling the content to appropriately transfer throughout its broader community. Leadership, including pastors, will learn the necessary components for brain development and school readiness in order to further educate and inform those in their respective communities.

The NHCLC will utilize its comprehensive messaging platforms to communicate the need, opportunity, and solution to gatekeepers and church constituencies across the country. The Faith and Education Coalition (FEC) charged with driving the Education Sunday program will utilize its messaging platforms to share need, opportunity, and solution as well. Included in the FEC program is the Education Sunday roll-out emphasized during the first Sunday of September 2019.

Anticipated Outcomes

The primary benefactors of this solution are children birth to 4 years old, though this solution blesses the entire strategic community chain to include parents, caregivers, schools, pastors, and family members in the short term. In the long-term, the intellectual capacity of these young children is strengthened along with the benefits to the entire family unit. We expect they will:

1. Experience academic and professional successes, and
2. Become examples for future young children and their parents.

A key Biblical scripture encourages leaders to raise their children to be ambassadors for Christ. Children experiencing academic successes can be postured to be the best ambassadors for Christ going forward. Another outcome is the change in narrative regarding Hispanic pre-k children.

They will become known as the most “school ready” children in their communities.

At the outset of this initiative, NHCLC will utilize a pre-survey to establish baseline data and set goals for impact. We will monitor traction of the Vroom tool, as well as sustained usage over time by region, tracked against the communications and event activities undertaken by the specific congregations to determine best practices. We will also survey our families over time to determine impact on the mindset toward school readiness, steps they are taking to improve their child’s specific readiness, and satisfaction with the tool, in addition to

quantitative measures such as childcare, Pre-K and Kindergarten enrollment, literacy rates, and immunization rates.

We acknowledge, however, that significant outcomes toward school readiness will be long-term and require additional efforts with broader community support – such as immunization drives, pre-natal care, literacy programming and more. Our prediction is that this tool and set of resources will meet the community’s needs at the immediate moment and spur an interest in longer term engagement moving forward.

Evidence of Success

When deployed thoughtfully and authentically, Vroom works! A dear friend, Synovia Moss, with the Clinic and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) at the Medical College of Wisconsin, has not only field-tested the use of Vroom with diverse families in the Milwaukee area, but also built a community-based strategy for continued engagement and sustainable impact. When interviewed, she talked about the ease of use, availability in English, Spanish, practical application for parents, and positive responses by parents engaging Vroom. Vroom’s previously developed materials were utilized to promote its adaption with parents and community groups making the distribution process less onerous and providing a blueprint for implementation in other communities, such as NHCLC.

According to Synovia Moss, over 300 organizations have partnered to deploy Vroom in the Milwaukee area since it was introduced only a few years ago. In addition, she was able to partner with approximately 200 churches for workshops with a goal of training 300 childcare centers. While Hispanic Evangelical churches are the focus of our targeted strategy, it is clear to see how churches will move to share these resources with neighbors and communities around their churches and homes to only expand the potential for impact.

Another beta test occurred with both male and female parents, a grandparent, and an education executive related to young Latino children in Texas. In addition to parents, grandparents were introduced to the concept. With regards to process, each participant was sent a link for Vroom. They were asked to review the website and/or to register their infant. They were asked to give a practical word or assessment with regards to their willingness and desire to utilize the technology to the benefit of their young children. The follow-up responses were extremely positive and very encouraging. These leaders are key to a launch effort within the Hispanic community. Without their “affirmation,” it would be difficult to gain momentum. The test was strategic for the launch with a potential for cascading impact.

Included in the beta test were the following:

- Rolando Rodriguez' wife Angie, (grandmother to Victoria Escamilla) and her mother Sarah Escamilla participated. Rolando is the Director for the Office of Hispanic Work in Texas. He relates directly to 1200+ Hispanic Baptist congregations. Victoria is about 12 months old. Her grandmother and mom both reviewed Vroom. They were very excited about the potential impact on Victoria. Sarah (Victoria's mom was quick to see the value of the program.)
- Christine Villalobos is the wife of a key Hispanic pastor in the DFW area. Christine tested Vroom for their two-year-old. Christine stated, "What's great about vroom is it gives ideas with details for parents to have meaningful, bonding, and learning sessions with the child day to day that are realistic and achievable."
- Fabian Ramirez reviewed Vroom for his preschooler. He shared excitement about the level of academic readiness it provided for his preschooler. He also appreciated the fact that it is available in Spanish. This way, his parents could participate and provide academic support as well.
- Girien Salazar, Director of the Faith and Education Coalition of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference hosted at Dallas Baptist University reviewed the benefits of Vroom. Girien did a thorough review and had discussions with Synovia regarding introductions, application, and impact on local communities. Synovia also shared about the need to involve churches.

Every individual utilizing, and/or reviewing the resource found it to be exciting and practical for implementation with their loved ones. These voluntary reports and feedback encourage the NHCLC to move forward with implementation for its churches and communities.

Part 2: Implementation Plan

Vision for Impact

The NHCLC goal is to secure deployment of the early learning movement in all 42,000 Hispanic Evangelical churches in America in the next 2 years. This plan is best deployed with the launch of a movement focused on equipping young children through our broad channels of churches, parents, and church leaders.

The Vroom early learning project launch begins with multiple presentations, introductions, and messaging through the NHCLC and FEC platforms to include:

- NHCLC and FEC Websites
- Articles in NHCLCNow Enews and FEC enews
- NHCLC social media including FB and twitter
- NHCLC presentations in 25+ chapters across the country
- Inclusion in all chapter fb and social media, and

- Inclusion in annual NHCLC board conference call.

Presentations will be made for chapter education associates, the annual NHCLC board meeting which includes 120+ denomination leaders and gatekeepers, presentation at the NHCLC Justice Summit in DC, links and introductions into the Education Sunday project by Girien Salazar. Introduction will be provided to the quarterly LAC webinar for the FEC team of advocates, and the National Hispanic Education Summit in Dallas, Texas. Additional presentations will be made at 25+ quarterly chapter meetings, NHCLC monthly management conference calls, and the semi-annual Scholars conference call. A presentation of collateral will be shared with the scholars roundtable fb page. Additional presentations will be made to the NHCLC Executive committee, Hispanic senior adult camp, Hispanic fellowship president meeting (with 40 divisions in Texas), women's ministry events (Bea Mesquias, Yvette Santana, Sandra Cisneros, Brenda Rincones), and presentations to the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas as well as the Assembly of God National Council meeting in Orlando, Florida,

The tactical goal is to launch the movement with massive messaging in all venues. Once initial messages are sent, they are duplicated throughout the country. Churches and individuals will be able to sign up on all websites and during presentations. Parents will adopt the use of Vroom and then share their successes with their family and neighbors. This is precisely how we were able to change the narrative related to high school dropouts. Once the messaging begins, it continues. Synovia Moss indicated that the measurement of impact can be challenging due to the Vroom system. However, there are options to review statewide impact after presentations are made. The Education Sunday project saw 4,000 to 8,000 churches sign up from 50 states for different years. This project targets church and individual family responses. There is reason to believe that individual families, churches, and family members will be subscribing to Vroom. Nevertheless, we plan to build momentum each year as the project is introduced and testimonies of successes are shared.

The NHCLC development team provides resources for the Education Sunday Campaign. Vroom will be integrated into campaign development after the first year.

Ideal Conditions

The ideal for integration of Vroom to benefit young children is to emulate the Education Sunday Campaign design. This design works with Hispanic churches. They anticipate the introduction of additional resources. The highway of communication based upon the NHCLC/FEC platforms are in place and ready for distribution of this much needed content. The ideal situation involves Chapter Directors and their education associates to become passionate about equipping pre-k children and their parents.

Obstacles include hesitancy to change, need for trusted local testimonials about the Vroom impact, competition for pulpit and church programs. The NHCLC practice is to be patient and consistent with messaging till churches, pastors, parents, and church leaders adopt the new resource. It would be ideal for a couple of pastors per NHCLC chapter to adopt the use of this resource.

Regional Focus

NHCLC has membership across the country and a few states with more robust communities. We seek to focus on these opportunities as early target states for broad implementation of the strategy, to test the implementation activities and monitor traction for establishment of best practices. These states include:

- Arizona
- California
- Connecticut
- Georgia
- Florida
- Minnesota
- New Mexico
- North Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Washington State

Engagement

The stakeholders and partners for this initiative include:

- Dallas Baptist University
- The Faith and Education Coalition
- Hispanic Baptist Convention
- NHCLC state chapters
- Vroom
- Synovia Moss (Senior Advisor and Engagement Consultant)

Timeline, Key Action Steps & Milestones

The most critical and time sensitive actions related to this project include strategy and tactical involvement of the NHCLC communications team, the FEC director, and NHCLC Chapter directors. Their alignment leads to immediate prioritization for websites, social media, and conference call and/or in person presentations to chapters and at

denominational meetings. Once the messaging is deployed it cascades forward across the country multiple times for impact.

The roll-out begins as soon as funds are appropriated to launch the early learning campaign. Our goal is to see the roll-out occur in July and August of 2019 and especially for Education Sunday.

The NHCLC communications team is on hold and awaiting direction for deployment of a messaging strategy. The most labor intense work involves the communications team and chapter directors. Fortunately, material is ready to go as provided by Vroom website with unique adjustments tailored to the needs and desires of our unique community.

It is critical to move forward with messaging during July through Education Sunday (First Sunday in September). Launch success is based on July and August efforts.

Timeline Planning Guide

Month	Activities
July 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept and Collateral introduced on NHCLC and FEC Websites. • Faith and Education Coalition team includes as key part for National Education Sunday Campaign. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning and writing efforts developed and calendared for August 2019 to September 2020. ○ Briefing meetings with NHCLC Executive team for alignment of communications and chapter coordination assignments.
August 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles included in NHCLC Enews and FEC Newsletter (monthly starting August 2019) • NHCLC and FEC Social Media (FB) and twitter messaging released. • Announcement and introduction during Monthly Management Call including 25 State Directors. • Introduced during weekly NHCLC staff call. • Presentation during quarterly Faith and Education Coalition Conference Call. • Women’s Ministry Conference Call (Mesquias, Santana, Rincones, and Cisneros) • Introduction at Annual Assembly God Convention/Board meeting in Florida.
September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter presentations across the USA (September 2019-September 2020) • Chapter social media blitz chapter owned fb pages.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation to Hispanic Senior Adult Camp attendees at Leakey, Texas.
October 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction at National NHCLC Education Summit, Dallas, Texas
May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation during NHCLC Annual Board meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. National leaders will give testimony of Vroom’s impact upon their families and congregations. • Presentation to 25 Chapter Education Coordinators.
June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation to 40 divisional Hispanic Fellowship leaders in Texas.
Fall 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referenced as part of Educational Justice during NHCLC Justice Summit.

Metrics for Success

- A. Thanks to the communications team for their consistent efforts to measure results of campaigns such as this project. The comms team is assessing impact on a monthly basis by identifying the number of “clicks” per link for all promotional collateral. Participants will click on a predetermined link to discover and utilize the Vroom system. Verbal presentations will send interested parties to the NHCLC and FEC websites. They will click on prepared links for more information and utilization. The comms team can update reports and number of clicks following presentations that are written, verbal, or those generated through social media.
- B. With 25 NHCLC chapters across the country, an initial target for participants is estimated to be approximately 100/chapter or a total of 2500. The goal is to align this project with the National Education Sunday Campaign in order to enrich both projects with the results from each effort.
- C. Selected participants will provide a testimony on appropriate websites and through e-newsletters.
- D. Key leaders whose families utilize Vroom will have an opportunity to give testimony of its impact upon their loved ones during key national events.
- E. Executive committee receives quarterly updates regarding metrics and receives recommendations to revise action plan to enhance results for the Executive Director of the Faith and Education Coalition of the NHCLC.

Budget

A launch project of this magnitude requires ongoing funding for training and development, activation of the tool in communities across the country, integration of learning skills throughout the congregation messaging, and lastly assessment and evaluation for improvement. With the support of P2T's \$15,000 grant to initiate the project, the NHCLC now seeks to fund an annual need of \$250,000 for training, programming, staff management, and travel. Fortunately, the development team is supportive and includes this project as part of the Education Sunday Campaign resources to begin activities immediately and get the project started as we secure additional funding for the long-term endeavor.

About the NHCLC and the Faith and Education Coalition

NHCLC/Conela is the largest Hispanic Christian organization serving millions of Evangelicals, 40,118 U.S. churches, and more than 500,000 churches across the globe. Seeking to reconcile evangelist Billy Graham's message of salvation with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s march of prophetic activism, the NHCLC/Conela emphasizes "7 Directives" of Life, Family, Compassionate Evangelism, Stewardship, Justice, Education and Youth. For additional information, visit www.nhclc.org