

Faculty in the School of Education at Indiana University Southeast designed and facilitated a five-year project to develop a network of k-12 teachers, administrators and staff, University faculty and non-English speaking parents to serve the needs of English Learners in eight schools across three counties. This report presents some of the stories of how and why this network improves student outcomes and provides a solid base for future program development.

Network Capacity Building for English Learners' Success

A qualitative look at mechanisms
for program success



APPLIED RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

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The Applied Research and Education Center (AREC) is an outreach project of Indiana University (IU) Southeast. The AREC provides research, consulting and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations, government agencies and local businesses. The student staff enhances classroom learning through applied research projects as it actively engages every stage of each community-based project. The AREC combines learning, teaching and doing to support and empower community organizations in the IU Southeast service region.

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“It empowered teachers...It gave English as a Second Language a name and a place.”

Introduction

The Indiana University (IU) Southeast New Neighbors Network Capacity Building for English Learners’ Success Program¹ developed a network that includes IU Southeast School of Education faculty, IU Southeast education students, three school districts, eight local schools, and ELL parents. The purpose of the initiative was to build capacity for the development and utilization of best practices in the area of English as a Second Language (ESL), also referred to as English as a New Language (ENL). The New Neighbors project recognizes that students’ school experiences are the products of the systems that generate the activities and interactions of the school day, including: teacher training and education, the varied roles of all school personnel, and the interactions between students, teachers, and parents. To best serve the English Learner (EL) student population, New Neighbors addresses multiple aspects of the system and increases the capacity of the network of individuals and programs that comprise the social-educational system so that it might better support EL education. The network philosophy encourages and facilitates communication and support among the eight participating schools, the IU Southeast School of Education (SOE), and the parents of ELs.

New Neighbors includes ESL/ENL licensing; professional development (PD) for educators, professional support staff, administrators, and School of Education faculty; programs to sensitize all school staff to the experiences of ELs at schools involved; and the development of family/school partnerships and literacy programs that empower parents as active participants in their children’s education.

New Neighbors has substantial quantitative data measuring the impact of their programs. This report is a qualitative evaluation intended to provide additional depth to our understanding of the mechanisms by which the systemic approach to network development effectively builds capacity to improve ELs learning outcomes. The Applied Research and Education Center (AREC) interviewed three administrators individually and conducted two group interviews with parents, one group interview with ENL specialists, and one group interview with IU Southeast School of Education faculty.

Both individual and group interviews consistently support the value of the New Neighbors network approach to capacity building. Teachers and administrators across participating

¹ We use the term “New Neighbors” to refer to the Network Capacity Building for English Learners’ Success program as well as all other programs and services provided by Dr. Magdalena Herdoiza-Estevéz and her team.

schools share strong positive views about the value of the emerging network to effectively meeting the needs of their schools' growing EL populations. IU Southeast School of Education faculty members recognize the importance of inclusion of ENL strategies throughout Education curricula and find the New Neighbors PD opportunities helpful in developing ideas for such inclusion. Parents of ELs are grateful to have help in learning how to navigate a very different culture of parent involvement in school than what they were accustomed to in their home countries. Participation with New Neighbors gave parents someone to talk to who understood their experience, helped them learn to effectively support their children, meet academic tasks and expectations, use school translation services, and empowered them to become active participants in their children's education. Individual and group interview respondents also provide constructive feedback that can be used in program development and improvement.

Community Context and Program Overview

School Districts and Community Change

New Neighbors operates in school districts experiencing significant demographic changes that place new demands on school personnel to address the needs of EL students. ELs come from a variety of countries and cultures, but Spanish speaking immigrants account for the largest share of the growth in the EL student population over the last decade in the Southern Indiana communities served by New Neighbors. The New Neighbors Network includes schools in Floyd, Clark and Jackson Counties and the School of Education at IU Southeast, located in Floyd County and serving nine southern Indiana counties (Figure 1).

Between 2000 and 2010 Clark County's Latino population grew 197% and diffused throughout larger portions of the Greater Clark County School District (Figure 2). New Neighbors provided services to Parkwood Elementary, Jonathan Jennings Elementary, River Valley Middle School and Charlestown High School (Figure 2), with Parkwood elementary serving the greatest concentration of Latino students.

Floyd County's Latino population grew 155% from 2000 to 2010 and diffused from a heavy concentration in one census tract to a broader presence throughout New Albany (Figure 3). New Neighbors provided services to Fairmont Elementary, Scribner Middle School and New Albany High School to support the needed expansion of services in New Albany Schools.

At the County level, Clark County saw the greatest overall growth in the Latino population, but Jackson County experienced significant concentrated growth in the Latino population that has fundamentally shifted the demographics of participating Jackson Elementary (Figure 4). The rapid growth of the Latino population in Southern Indiana created demand for extensive ENL services and new approaches to engaging a growing EL parent population.

Program Overview

Full figures on New Neighbors program participation and quantitative indicators of impact can be found in their quantitative and qualitative annual program evaluations. To summarize, New Neighbors provided a range of Professional Development (PD) opportunities that raised awareness of EL student experiences and issues, shared strategies for working with ELs and meeting their full range of needs, and provided resources for teaching these students. New Neighbors provided PD through a Six Saturday series² to 72 teachers and Staff; specialized PD to 246 school staff and administrators; targeted PD to 114 teachers; individualized PD coaching to 30 teachers and staff and conducted school-wide PD programs that reached approximately 180 teachers and staff. In addition, 82 percent of IU Southeast College of Education faculty participated in New Neighbors PD programs designed to help faculty integrate ENL education and strategies into the curriculum for undergraduate and graduate Education students.

In Indiana, there are currently 384 teachers with ENL licensure.³ Of these, 44 obtained their license through the New Neighbors program, not including the 8 teachers from the network who became ENL-licensed in Kentucky⁴. The goal for the five years of the grant was 30 ENL licensed teachers; New Neighbors surpassed their goal by 70 percent.

New Neighbors designed a parent component to help parents navigate the U.S. education system and to encourage parent participation with the schools in building effective support systems to ensure their children's success. The main goal of the parent/literacy learning program was to help immigrant and Latino parents become leaders and partners in the educational success of their children. From 2010 to 2011, the Family Literacy Program impacted 264 families in eight network schools. During the 2011-2012 school year, more than 350 parents worked together with teachers to support student success.

² Informally known by participants as "the Six Packs"

³ Indiana Department of Education: http://mustang.doe.state.in.us/TEACH/teach_subject.cfm

⁴ The final number provided by New Neighbors in September 2013 is 58 program completers.

Methods

New Neighbors provided the AREC with an outline of their assessment strategy, including the questions they wanted answered through individual and group interviews. The AREC research team added and reworked questions for consistency and to ensure that we elicited constructive feedback that would assist New Neighbors in evaluating their programs and planning future endeavors.

Once the interview guides were established and the evaluation design was approved through the IU Southeast Institutional Review Board, New Neighbors staff sent a recruitment letter explaining that the AREC would contact them to evaluate the program. The letter indicated that their voluntary participation in the evaluation would be helpful to New Neighbors as they assess their work and develop new programs. One week after the letters went out, AREC staff made telephone and/or email contact with potential respondents to begin the effort to establish dates, times and participant lists for individual and group interviews. AREC facilitated four focus groups lasting 75-105 minutes and conducted three individual interviews with administrators, all of which lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

Our qualitative findings are not intended to provide a set of objective measures of program impact. New Neighbors has a full slate of quantitative figures that indicate improvements in student outcomes during the period in which New Neighbors provided professional development and family literacy and engagement services. The individual and group interviews provide an opportunity for program participants to tell us what they think is behind those numbers and how they think New Neighbors' programs achieved their outcomes.

The sample design and time commitment required to participate undoubtedly limited our sample. In this context, participants are likely to be those who have positive feelings about the program. While the research team recognizes a potential positive bias among participants, we do not interpret lack of participation as either positive or negative. All those involved in the New Neighbors program are busy individuals. We had only a small number of families and IU Southeast faculty participants, compared to the high number of parents served. Responses on the value of the Six-Saturday professional development series were gathered only from those ENL teachers and school administrators who participated in the qualitative evaluation and had attended the program. We heard significant positive feedback from those we interviewed including positive comments about how many other teachers attended these sessions; however, without their direct input we cannot fully address the value of the PD programs to classroom

teachers that are not ENL specialists or school administrators. Our findings include discussion of that piece of the network capacity building effort.

ENL specialists responded quickly to our requests. Seven participants attended the group interview and talked for 105 minutes. The focus group took place at the AREC from 4:15 to 6:00 on a week night. IU Southeast Faculty responded in a timely fashion. We had four faculty members attend the group interview, which took place on a Friday afternoon in a conference room in the University Center.

AREC called parents and used a bilingual research assistant for both calls and group facilitation. Nine parents indicated they would participate and four showed up. The group met from 5:00 to 6:15 on a weekday evening at their children's school. The second parent group also responded quickly, met on a week night, went from 5:00 to about 6:15 and included 4 respondents. We conducted both groups in Spanish.

The AREC team tried to plan a group interview for administrators, but their varied and busy schedules made scheduling impossible. The research team shifted strategy and conducted three individual interviews with administrators (two from elementary schools and one from a participating high school). Administrators were very responsive to our requests and scheduled our meetings in a timely fashion.

All interviews were audio recorded and focus groups were also video recorded to aid in the transcription of group dialogue. We had technical difficulties with one administrator interview but had written notes to add to our data set. Research staff transcribed all interviews using a transcription machine and word processing software. Based on research questions, interview guides and themes that emerged in the conversations, the research team developed a coding instrument. Each transcribed individual or group interview was coded by two research staff and coding was assessed for inter-coder reliability that confirmed consistent use of established codes.

Findings

The New Neighbors program increased the capacity of participating schools to respond to the needs of their growing ELL populations. The success of the program is attributable to the value of a network approach in serving emerging needs, the systemic approach to the socio-

educational context, and to creating lasting change through integrating EL concerns in the training and ongoing education of teachers.

Building a Network and Providing Resources to Serve Changing Needs

Despite the growing need for primary and secondary school teachers to be prepared to have ELs in their classrooms, professional development resources are not readily available to these teachers or even to University faculty who train future teachers. The resources exist, but have not been fully integrated into teacher training curricula and tend to be used only by those who specialize in EL education. With the dramatic growth of the Latino population in new destinations that have historically served less diverse populations, school systems find themselves ill-equipped to serve EL students.⁵ The sheer size of the Latino population in many schools is well beyond what a few dedicated staff can handle without a more systemic approach.

In regions of the country where an ENL specialization might have been of little use 10 years ago, teachers are seeing the need to pursue training and certification so the schools have specialists to help lead the way. The network approach builds capacity to create a community of new ENL professionals and aware administrators who can observe emerging models in their area, access needed resources, share information and develop community around the challenges they face.

The New Neighbors programs brought together teachers tasked with developing expertise to meet emerging EL needs. Among educators and administrators, all participants shared an appreciation of the importance of observing other programs in the area in order to think more creatively about how to meet their own schools' needs. A high school administrator commented on his visit to the Newcomers' Academy in Louisville, which provides immigrant youth with a two year program of language acquisition and cultural transition before sending them into mainstream classrooms. The program is a model. The administrator is working to figure out how to create a similar experience for the ELs in his school. His goal is to implement a cluster approach where ELs have the ENL most qualified teachers and dedicated time with other ELs in their grade level as they progress through the levels of language acquisition leading to full integration in the English language school day. The approach will build community among

⁵ Latino immigrants have historically settled in a few established locations in the Southwest, Texas, Florida and New York. However, over the last 10-15 years, Latino immigrants have settled in a broad range of new destinations, including a variety of both urban and rural Midwestern locations. In a relatively short time, the demographics of these new destinations changed dramatically. As noted in the community overview, New Neighbors seeks to meet the needs of communities facing this rapid demographic shift.

students with similar experiences while also building confidence before expecting their full integration into all-English classrooms.

Administrators, ENL specialists, and IU Southeast faculty commented on the value of observing other schools and programs that are addressing ELs' needs, "And New Neighbors helped us to go to other schools that had programs going to see how they were working." Watching others exposes educators and administrators to new ideas, sparks conversations about how to adapt program strategies to different environments, and provides all participants with comfort in knowing more about what others are doing to address their common challenges.

One teacher, coming from a school that saw a 35% increase in the EL student population in the last five years, commented that "Without New Neighbors I would probably have done what the rest of these ESL teachers at my school did and would've left after 2 years." The comment speaks to the importance of a network for providing resources and other forms of support to a new group of specialists who can often feel isolated in their individual schools.

The relationships created through participation in PD workshops and conferences provide a pool of available resources. Administrators, educators and parents all commented on the value of the resources and the importance of knowing what was available and who to call.

I think just having access to just those contacts is invaluable and I think we all can do a better job of utilizing those resources and those contacts and so forth but it's nice to know they're always there. I have never once hesitated if I had a question about something to call up at IUS and say "what do you think about this?" ...they could at least point me in the right direction. So that's big. —Elementary School Administrator

It just seems like more than anything they've [New Neighbors] always been a good resource to go to when in need.—Elementary Administrator

But the network is not just about observing other models or about teachers and administrators being able to call New Neighbors staff. An effective network means other schools and regional colleagues become part of a problem-solving and information sharing community.

I would say overall the experience of New Neighbors has been extremely positive in the sense that any time you collaborate with a group outside of your school that has worked with other schools that are dealing with the same challenges you are, it does shed a lot of light on what's out

there and it offers; not only opens lines of communication, but it offers insight it offers networking it offers just a lot....[U]nfortunately there's not a whole bunch of schools[experiencing the same level of demographic change]...there's a select few, and it's nice to have those select few on speed dial –Elementary School Administrator

One IU Southeast faculty member who has worked on EL education for some time expressed the importance of the network in broadening the professional development resources available to area teachers,

The biggest thing is getting the professional development for our teachers and schools so I mean I am not the only person that deals with those kids and they know that they have strategies that they've learned. I mean I am still a contact person but I am not their only resource anymore.

Another participant added,

Yes. I would agree with that too. It brought the ESL to the forefront of the classrooms by giving teachers more ownership ...and by giving them professional development in the classes and the training and the knowledge. Because we are just one person and it's hard to go around and after a while they get tired of hearing us talk but when you enable other teachers to go take a class that [they] can take for credit and raise the professionalism of it; it gave English as a Second Language a name and a place.

The resources provided to ENL specialists and classroom teachers working in the public schools are essential. Teachers still have to stretch the resources—making copies from one workbook, but they are pleased to have materials. An administrator commented, “I think the resources are just great. I mean the books are just wonderful.” The same administrator later commented that her school will need to find private sources of funding to support future updates to their materials. For some, their comments suggest that the bulk of the resources their school has were provided by New Neighbors. In other words, before New Neighbors, they had very few materials.

One teacher shared a story about the value of bilingual books in encouraging reading in either the first language or English while supporting students' English language acquisition:

We had a second grader, I mean with no [English] language and New Neighbors had given us some books that were bilingual, they were English and Spanish fairy tales. And they were just Scholastic little books, but I had a girl who was reading them in Spanish, taking them home and reading them in second grade and then trying to sound everything out in English.

Not all of these materials were strictly language instruction. In a few different places, teachers mentioned the importance of helping EL students keep up in Math classes:

I know I made sure that if we had money a lot of it was on math materials, not just on English language materials, because my kids, they know that they need to work on English, but they still need to learn the math concepts because they can't get left behind just because they don't understand what the teacher is saying. So sometimes I'm teaching them math concepts with some of those materials, just so they are on board with some of their classmates, who are English speakers.... It wasn't necessarily using the money for language, but it was about keeping them up with their classmates even while they were learning language.

The teachers raise an important point about their role in the education of EL students. Many of these students are undergoing significant cultural transition, learning English and adjusting to school while also trying to keep pace with their classmates, and the process is not a linear progression. In order for ELs to keep pace across subjects, they have to be able to learn new concepts in a language they fully understand while simultaneously learning a new language in which to communicate those concepts. New Neighbors provided the funding necessary to increase resources for multilingual instruction across both language and math subject areas.

The physical resources provided by New Neighbors were essential, but were likely more useful because they were part of a larger set of strategies, “We’ve got a lot of materials from the New Neighbors program and they’ve done the family nights and they’ve also done the ‘Six Pack’ class. I think just about all of our teachers in our school have done it.” The pairing of new resources with PD ensured that teachers knew what kinds of resources were available, how they might use those resources, and who they could ask for help when they hit a wall.

We’ve gotten a wealth of materials as a result of participating in the grant and you know there have been opportunities for the teachers to participate in professional development and or to receive credit or receive stipends and I think everyone that wanted to participate in something has been able to.

The approach to teachers was two-fold: 1) provide all teachers with the opportunity to better understand the experiences and needs of EL students and 2) increase the number of personnel in the schools certified in ENL/ESL instruction. In order to ensure that teachers have ongoing

support for their EL efforts, New Neighbors also targeted administrators whose buy-in and understanding of EL students is essential to effective leadership on ELL issues in the schools.

New Neighbors made professional development available and they facilitated participation by fully funding conferences and workshops and covering other costs related to staff participation. Administrators appreciated the financial support for professional development. A couple of them mentioned that simple scholarships would not have been enough. New Neighbors ensured that schools could pay substitutes so that teachers could participate in particular PD events. For schools to receive that kind of benefit without having to figure out how to pay for it is essential at a time when budgets are tight and there is no room to accommodate emerging needs.

One ELL specialist commented on the impact of PD opportunities for her as well as others:

But I think it is a success also for our teachers that have had the professional development, (points around the table) the “six pack” class, the opportunity of the ENL endorsement...Because not only do they go on and pursue and get it but are also able to go back to their colleagues and say “Oh look, this is what I picked up in class.” And share.

Several other teachers and administrators commented on the strategy of having teachers who complete PD programs become resources for other teachers. Administrators definitely favored having high levels of participation in PD opportunities but for things like the TESOL conference in Boston, where only a few could attend, the schools were able to generate widespread benefits from these opportunities by having participants share their learning with others. This learning and sharing develops the capacity of the network to continue to share ideas and provide needed resources to one another—an example of how the network approach produces sustainable capacity development.

When asked about specific impacts on understanding the needs of EL students and designing classroom activities to meet those needs, one administrator responded:

One of the things that I think that really became a heightened awareness for us was vocabulary, and vocabulary development and how critical that is and how we have to teach kids strategies to determine words they don't know...Children who have a second language as well as kids [in] poverty, which we have a pretty high percentage, I mean they really have a vocabulary deficit when they enter school. And as they go through it just becomes more prominent.

And lots of times, things we take for granted that they would, that we think that they would know, they wouldn't know. That we kinda felt were simple words. We obviously know, when we introduce a word like calculate, that that's probably not going to be in their normal vocabulary, but we're going to spend some time teaching it. But we don't anticipate something that happened a few weeks ago. Someone was reading a book for Dr. Seuss week, about a clown, and kids, they didn't know what a clown was. These were seven year olds; I mean we just didn't anticipate it. So I think that's one thing that really has become an area of focus as a result of some of the training is just the vocabulary piece and how critical it is for our students.

Interviewer: And how do you all work on that?

Administrator: Well, we do a lot of different things. I mean we are trying, depending on the level of kids, but we are devoting time to vocabulary words in the classrooms every day. We do a lot of word work. With kind of an old board block, carry over thing. We also have a vocabulary word of the week that we do for our school. And we change the word every week. We try to encourage the kids to listen to anyone using that word. We introduce it on Friday, and we talk about it every morning and afternoon on the announcements. And some of the kids write sentences using the word that we can read. We kind of just have things on their level. Um in our older, in our fourth and fifth grade class, with our older kids, they do a lot of work with just root words. Latin roots, to help kids see the structure of words and how you can determine words. And of course we teach them to use context clues to use text features; I mean all of those kinds of things, we are very deliberate about it.

Of course teachers know vocabulary is important, but recognizing that some groups of students will need more work at school on vocabulary than other groups of students is essential. The administrator's story indicates the ways that PD workshops raise awareness about which areas of learning will be stumbling blocks for EL students, but it also points to the fact that other groups of students may also benefit from the strategies that most help EL students. Teachers involved in the more intensive and deliberate approach to language development can share their experiences with network partners who may also employ the strategies and can help them build and improve on their efforts.

A Systemic Approach to the Socio-Educational Context

New Neighbors understood that children's experiences are shaped by more than just their interactions with teachers. New Neighbors reached out to all school staff, helping them understand how EL children experience the school day and where there might be trouble spots. For example, the school cafeteria can be daunting for a child who cannot read any of the signs, does not understand what people are saying, the food that is served, and has never been in a cafeteria. New Neighbors provided cultural awareness and sensitivity training, but also some basic language instruction particular to various contexts. Main office staff, school bus drivers, food services personnel, school nurses, the full range of professional staff and parents were all part of New Neighbors' systemic approach to the socio-educational context of EL student experiences. The body of programs provided by New Neighbors increases cultural awareness on the part of educators, staff and parents, and supports a more empathic and intercultural approach to understanding an increasingly diverse student population and community.

The American school system expects parental involvement and teachers and administrators, for better or worse, often interpret lack of involvement on the part of parents to mean that parents do not care about their children's education. When language is a barrier to communication and cultural differences are misunderstood by both parents and teachers, the potential for this negative interpretation is even greater.

An elementary school administrator explained the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in developing the parent/school relationship:

Schools in Mexico are very different than the way we function in schools in the United States. And so then through our parent education piece we've really tried to do a lot of work with that. An example is ...we have been told that in Mexico, it's really that the parents don't go into the schools. They really aren't encouraged to come into the schools. It's really, the parents expect the professionals to do the jobs of educating the kids; they don't understand that we expect them to come here. And that we think if they don't come to our school to talk to teachers at conferences or to participate in family literacy nights and those kinds of things, ya know then we have this perception of, ya know they're not interested, they don't care, whatever.

And so we've really had to work with the parents and we've had to work with that through ourselves to make sure that we don't write people off and think they don't care, but to understand that they don't know that our expectations are different. And we pay a

lot of attention to that anyway, because I think a lot of times at schools you hear us, all educators, and I'm not proud of this, but when parents aren't involved, we automatically assume they don't care. And the more you work with poverty kids, the more you work with kids from different cultures, you have to understand those cultures, to understand why those parents might not be here. And it really doesn't have anything to do with them not caring. They really do care.

New Neighbors worked on both sides of this issue by sensitizing teachers in training and current teachers on cultural differences and intercultural communication (particularly between the U.S. and many Latin American cultures) and by teaching Latino parents about the expectations and norms around literacy and school engagement in the U.S.

In addition to direct work with parents, the New Neighbors program supported improved communication and relationships between the schools and parents by providing targeted PD to the full range of staff and working with schools on ensuring that translation was available and utilized in efforts to communicate with parents. An administrator noted, "I think the parents would respond very positively to the opportunities they've had as a result of this program. And I'm not sure that we would've known to do this on our own without the guidance of [New Neighbors] kind of helping us."

In schools with widespread participation, the results are noticeable, "A lot of teachers and staff from this school participated in that ['six pack' classes on Saturdays] for several years...I saw big impact of participation in that." This principal went on to say that one-on-one coaching in the school was also particularly helpful to her staff. "I've seen a big change. I've seen a lot of people in this building involved; it's some pretty intensive work." Those schools that engaged fully with trainings for all staff recognized the value of the systems approach over simply having training for the ENL specialists.

Raising cultural awareness and improving communication were necessary, but not enough to make parents empowered partners in shaping their children's educational experience. Many, if not most, of the parents do not speak English. Bilingual story books are an important way to empower parents to participate in their children's education by developing habits of reading together at home while allowing parents and children to work together in learning English.

New Neighbors received a pair of local foundation grants to support family literacy programming. These programs sent books into children's homes and provided opportunities for

parents to read with their children at home and in group settings. Hispanic mothers read stories in their children classrooms in network elementary schools, to Headstart classes and IU Southeast Childcare Center. The parent program sought to help immigrant and Latino parents become leaders and partners in the educational success of their children. The five core components included: empowerment, communication, education, culture, and healthy parenting skills.

One parent explains the importance of this experience in changing her relationship to her child's education:

Well for me, I stopped being so scared. Before I would look to the teachers and say to myself, "gosh what do I tell them?" But thanks to [New Neighbors]⁶ the scared part in me went away. Now I come, I don't know much English I just know little words but now I'm not scared to tell them even though they may not understand me, but we understand each other somehow, and so my experience is that I am able to help my son more because before I didn't know how to help him, how to explain to him everything, and now I come with more confidence. I open the door and I like it.

Before I used to say "how will I do it, how will I tell him" and now that we come with [New Neighbors], it's like it's given me more energy. And so, for example, now I know what the teacher's name is in Kindergarten and I know the names of the administrators here. When we came here to read they would introduce us to the director and this is that and he is that, so we got to meet more people that are involved with our kids and that is what I learned.

The parent describes something more than just learning the ropes. She feels comfortable and confident in entering the school and participating and she is not afraid to talk to school personnel about her son. In the latter part of her comment she mentions that participation in the program has helped her get to know administrators and teachers. When parents go to read at the schools, they get to know teachers and administrators by name and the familiarity that develops helps them better communicate. The same parent commented both on the value of reading and her prior fear of talking with teachers:

Well I can read to him more easily, like I already told you I can talk to the teachers now because I am no longer scared so when

⁶ Where interviewees named particular staff from the New Neighbors program, we have replaced those names with "New Neighbors."

I'm talking to the teacher I no longer get lost. Really, I would tremble thinking what I would do if he told me something and I didn't understand him or he didn't understand me. Well, more or less the language component of it, that for me the language part, is the most difficult.

This parent indicated that her interest in being involved in her child's schooling and her positive experiences working with the interpreter, teachers and administrators makes her want to learn English. In the meantime, she says that knowing the translator is there gives her "a lot more security for [her] kid." This mother is very insightful about the importance of the reading program for all those involved:

I ask my son how he likes it when I go read with him and he tells me "yes mom" and his friends, he is with many American kids, well half are Hispanic and half are American so we know that half don't understand. But then we go and explain it to them, how the story went, because I go there and read it in Spanish and the teacher reads it in English. But many times there are kids who are left like "what is she saying?" [laughs] And my experience with my kid is, just like the [American] kids feel like when they don't understand my Spanish is how I feel when I don't understand your teacher. I say imagine the frustration of a kid when he doesn't know how to speak in English. I think that it is worse than it is for a parent. So little by little one keeps learning from positive experiences that keep you going forward.

Having the mothers read to their children's classes provides comfort to the Hispanic children and a sense of pride and positive feelings about their mothers' involvement, an opportunity for American children to hear another language, and potentially pick up on some language, and for American students and teachers to experience what it is like to not understand what others around them are saying.

In addition to relationship building and socialization, parents benefit from having more information as the result of the parent and family services. When asked if the program helped them better understand how the education system works, another parent said:

When we have come here they have given us new information or a lot of information that we did not know that is not similar to that of our countries of origin. They informed us of the exams they were about to take or how to help them in specific subjects, different things they were going to do in the school; she would inform us of it. She would encourage us to participate with the kids, to speak with the teacher, many things.

The high stakes testing system in the U.S. is completely new to immigrant parents. Parents commented that [New Neighbors] taught them about how the testing system worked, why it was important, and provided instructions for how to support their children's performance on the exams.

[New Neighbors] came and told us this month this and that will happen, she told us "get together with your kids, practice with your kids, because one of the hardest exams is about to come." So she would tell us to put our kids to practice, to make them go to sleep early, feed them well the days of the exams. So all that would help us because we knew, for example she would say "in the month of March there will be one of the hardest exams, you have to prepare them to do well, by helping them more than anything. Now that [New Neighbors] has left it's like we have lost track of them. They send us the letter and I'm like "oh yeah I remember her saying that...this would happen", but it's not like before.

The parent mentions learning about the testing system and how to help their children perform well, but she also makes a point about the importance of continuing support. The schools send home information about the tests as the date approaches, but the parent says this is not the same as having New Neighbors staff helping them prepare and talking to them about why the tests and their children's performance matters. This may indicate the motivating quality of community involvement that has a greater impact simply making material available in the parents' language.

A different parent noted that the most important thing she learned was, "to tell them to read, in English or in Spanish, but to read a lot to them and have them read." In some countries of origin, the oral tradition remains strong and economic and cultural factors mean that families do not have many books in the home and may not encourage reading as a pastime or family activity.

Even the culture things that they don't have a lot of books in their home, they aren't reading to their children at home, they don't have a literature rich environment, and that's just not part of what they do at home. That we have to understand that and we have to help them understand that those are things that they can do, which will help their kids do better in school. —Elementary School Administrator

Several parents commented that prior to their interaction with New Neighbors, they thought that they should limit their children's opportunities to speak and read in Spanish in order to

effectively encourage their English language acquisition. New Neighbors assured parents that reading in any language will help their children with both and encouraged them to speak Spanish with their children in the home and work to help them become fully bilingual.

When asked for other suggestions, parents responded,

“Well, like at the beginning when [the NN parent outreach staff] held the meetings that the program that she had...”

Another parent cuts in, “that it return.”

And the first parent finishes,

That program was very good at informing like having a meeting like this with the parents, because I thought today we were going to have that.... yes like I was saying if they could continue to do the meetings, like how she came and gave us information, like giving us tips on how we can teach our children so if that program could continue because it does offer much help because I liked it.

Well it motivates you much more to continue with your kids (the other parents nod), how to deal with a problem they are having, like they simply just don't want to do their homework and they told me well “no you have to do this and that.” So that's how one learns to be more involved with the kids, to be more involved in what they do at school. In fact I was not very involved with my kid I would only come here to pick him up or if I had a meeting or something, so I think if they continue those meetings parents will be more motivated to participate with their kids. Because in fact, I am more interested in continuing to practice with him, to be more close to him in regards to school. That he sees that I come so like that, so that's my idea of how I can get closer to him.

The interviewer followed up this comment by asking the parent if she saw any impact of her participation on her child's success. She replied, “Well indeed you can see the change in the child, he is more motivated to be in the school or do homework, he has more motivation as do I.”

New Neighbors approached EL students' educational experiences from a systems perspective. They raised intercultural awareness among parents, teachers, professional staff, support staff, bus drivers, and administrators in order to help participating schools reform their school culture to better meet the needs of all their students. Amidst rapid demographic changes, the professional development and parent involvement efforts empowered all those involved to face

the challenge with confidence. Administrators, teachers and parents speak with pride about how far they've come in improving communication, understanding and student success.

A Systemic Approach to Lasting Change in the Professional Development of Teachers

In new Latino destinations, school systems and their funding structures have not yet adjusted to the increased demand for ENL services so few resources exist to support professional development and the purchase of needed instructional materials. The New Neighbors program fills the gaps in local districts that are scrambling to understand and respond to their new students.

University faculty training teachers need to integrate EL issues into their own curriculum so that future teachers will be equipped to do the same, but many of these professors have had little exposure to EL students and teaching strategies themselves. The faculty who run the New Neighbors program are both academics in education with clear understanding of the gaps in teacher training and can offer assistance to their colleagues as they integrate ENL strategies into the University curriculum.

School of Education faculty at IU Southeast took advantage of professional development opportunities to learn more about integrating EL strategies into the teacher development curriculum. Those who had a history of working on EL issues in the area were pleased at the increase in resources available to local teachers as a result of the New Neighbors program.

As with public school teachers, Education faculty appreciate the materials provided by New Neighbors, "I still use the materials. Sometimes they'll give us more materials it's just very valuable." University faculty agreed that the basic lessons book supplied by New Neighbors provides great tools to help students learn to develop lesson plans that tend to EL student needs. Faculty also received some funding for additional materials.

University faculty members need systemic support and funding to expand their knowledge and develop new skill sets. While materials are helpful, connecting to professional networks and learning more about the broad resources and networks available to support educators is essential. An IU Southeast faculty member who did the full two-day training commented, "The New Neighbors project actually paid for me to go to the TESOL conference in Boston the year

that I did the two day training and that was great too, just to see and hear people outside of the university setting.”

New Neighbors PD workshops and conferences led to curricular transformations in every program of the School of Education at IU Southeast. New Neighbors provided PD to 22 IU Southeast colleagues, equivalent to approximately 82% of the faculty members at the School of Education.

I think my students go away with a much better understanding of how to teach them actually, because when they do their practice lesson plans, in all the methods classes I always have them include accommodations for ESL children sometimes I give them a scenario of the child.

An IUS faculty member who had more limited interaction with the PD programs found the one program she participated in to be very helpful, “I did the dream day it was a one day session for k-12 teachers on ESL and it was a really good conference.”

Implications and Conclusions

A systemic approach to the schools requires the intervention to address not only ENL specialists, but also mainstream teachers, counselors, special education teachers, administrators, secretarial staff, bus drivers, janitors, and anyone else who comes into contact with students during the school day or through school-based programs. By recognizing that the school is a system, this approach acknowledges that creating a welcoming and supportive educational environment for newcomers requires that all school personnel have a sense of the experiences of EL students and have some strategies for managing situations that might arise with their EL students.

The network allows educators and administrators access to observe other programs, it creates a means for the ongoing exchange of ideas and assistance in problem solving, and it provides support for the community of ENL specialists. Our findings suggest that these three functions are particularly important for addressing a relatively recent demographic shift that has fundamentally reshaped the needs of several schools in the network. With a paucity of teachers in the schools with prior experience in EL education and with so few tasked with the primary responsibility for serving ELs’ needs, the network is the only way for ENL professionals to establish active community and support for their new field of work—work that is distinct in some ways from the work of the mainstream classroom teachers in their own schools.

In addition to observation which is a mostly one-way flow of ideas, the maintenance of the network creates the means for the ongoing exchange of ideas. The conversation among ENL specialists included not only responses to our questions, but some trouble-shooting and an element of simply sharing experiences with others who understand.

The sharing element is easily overlooked and its importance may be underestimated. Classroom teachers have a built-in community of fellow professionals sharing very similar experiences on a day-to-day basis. They can look to each other for affirmation, an opportunity to vent, or advice. Other specialized staff in the schools may come from professionalized subspecialties. For example, while special education instructors play a particular and distinct role in the schools, this subspecialty is built into teacher training programs and maintains its own professional networks and ongoing education channels. While these networks exist for EL, many of those tasked with serving EL's needs in new Latino destinations are teachers who did not plan to become ENL specialists and work in schools that may not have needed such specialists as recently as ten years ago. The paths that teachers are taking into this work are varied and often isolated. New Neighbors serves an important function in developing a professional network for the "new" subspecialty that provides support to schools, teachers and staff through a major transition.

University faculty, administrators, ENL specialists and parents provided useful feedback on how and why the New Neighbors program was effective in empowering each of them, in their different roles, to better meet the needs of the EL student population. Participants also noticed places where the program might be expanded or improved and we asked that they share these thoughts to help the New Neighbors staff think about future program development.

University faculty had a few nuts and bolts kinds of suggestions. First, they would like a better sense of the literature on ENL strategies, particularly when the program presents information based on research that may be more recent than the information they were given in graduate school. Faculty cited a discussion about whether or not age is a significant factor in ease of new language acquisition. They were surprised to hear that it may not be and would like to have citations to follow up on topics like this that are discussed in the PD seminars.

In addition, one faculty member commented on two other areas for improvement: "I do feel like there was some overlap in the two half days that I went to.... I remember I felt like most of the PDs and things were directed towards teachers, which is totally great and makes sense and is primarily who we serve so I felt like I was on my own a little bit in terms of, ok how can I adapt and make it as relevant for school counselors as possible? That would kind of be my only two

things so maybe a little overlap in the two half day things I went to and how do I make this so that my students can get the most out of it.”

New Neighbors provided some targeted PD to school psychologists and counselors. This may be an area where catering to an existing subspecialty may be important to student outcomes. A workshop that brings school counselors and psychologists together with university faculty who teach school counseling and students training to be school counselors might be a useful expansion on these targeted PD programs. A workshop like this might work well as a break-out session in the context of New Neighbors’ annual two-day training.

Throughout the individual and group interviews, university faculty, teachers and school administrators commented on the extent to which so many of the ELs and parent engagement strategies were useful for non-EL students as well. Many of the specific teaching practices that are helpful to non-English speakers are also helpful to other students who may struggle with literacy-related skills. For example, the use of visual aids is essential in teaching EL students, but many native speakers who struggle with reading and literacy-based instruction are also visual learners who may benefit from these aids.

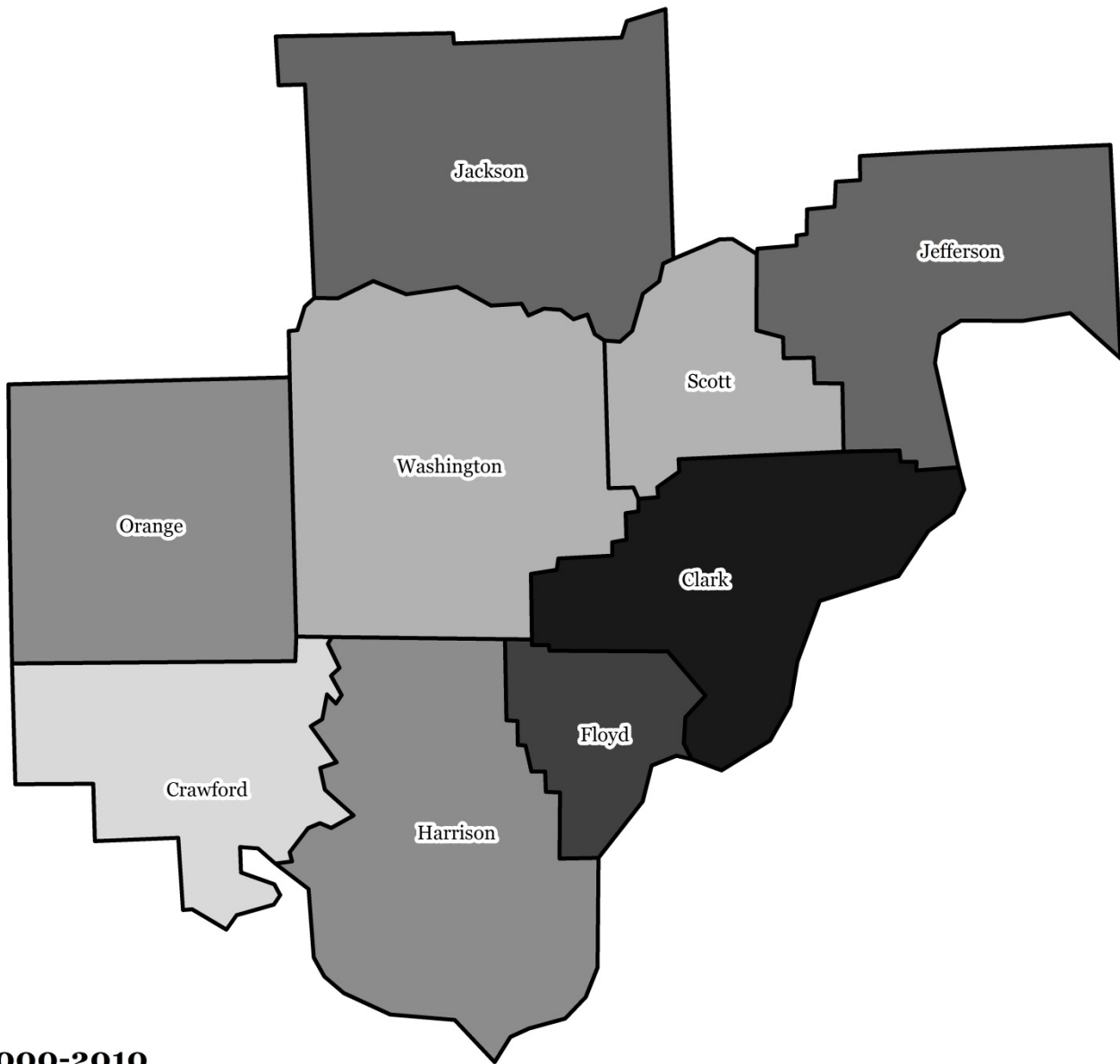
Just helping us see things that we can do, and tweak a little bit can really help us better meet the needs of these types of learners. And the strategies that they’ve really helped us work through are strategies that work with lots of children, not just ELL kids, but since it was a New Neighbors grant, it was kind of targeted towards the ELL kids, but they always did say, “These are good strategies to use with any kids.”

The New Neighbors program had very strong success with parent involvement especially at some of the elementary network schools. The schools that did more to engage parents saw greater improvements in student outcomes. One administrator commented that the same strategies for parental involvement would be good for the rest of the low-income population that her school serves. The New Neighbors strategies for parental involvement, when fully implemented, were successful and well-received. This piece of socio-educational capacity building may have broader applications for populations with low rates of parent participation.

One parent commented that she wished New Neighbors had offered some English classes for parents. She added, “I don’t only think that it would benefit only me, but many fathers too that are in my same place.” Another parent concurred, “Maybe classes for adults it could be right. Maybe not right now but when the year ends if they told me that there are classes for adults right, like she said we have to think about the future, to be able to help our kids in their homework.” A third parent confirmed that she would also be interested in English language

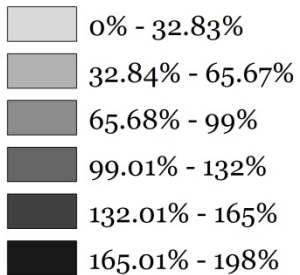
classes for adults. While adult language classes were beyond the scope of this five year capacity building project, New Neighbors might consider the possibility of broadening the network to include community organizations involved in adult education. Parents' successful transition in the form of language acquisition and literacy is likely to continue to be an important part of the socio-educational context shaping outcomes for EL students and affecting successful integration of new neighbors into our communities.

Figure 1: Growth of the Latino Population by County in Southern Indiana 2000-2010



2000-2010

Latino Population Change
by County



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Sources: U.S. Census Bureau and
American FactFinder.
April 23, 2013.

Figure 2: Growth of the Latino Population in the Greater Clark County School District by Census Tract, 2000-2010

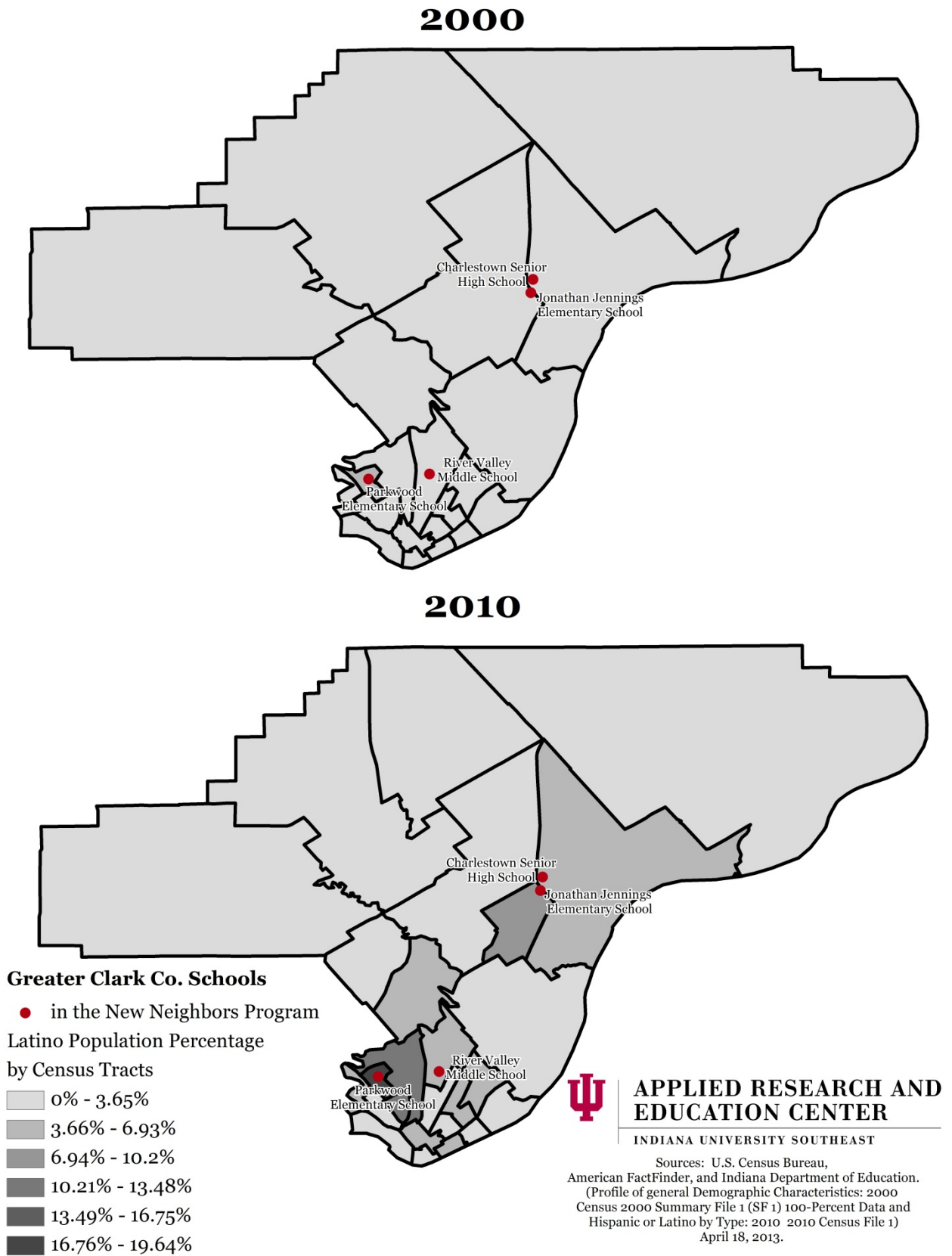


Figure 3: Growth in the Latino Population in the New Albany Floyd County Consolidated School District by Census Tract, 2000-2010

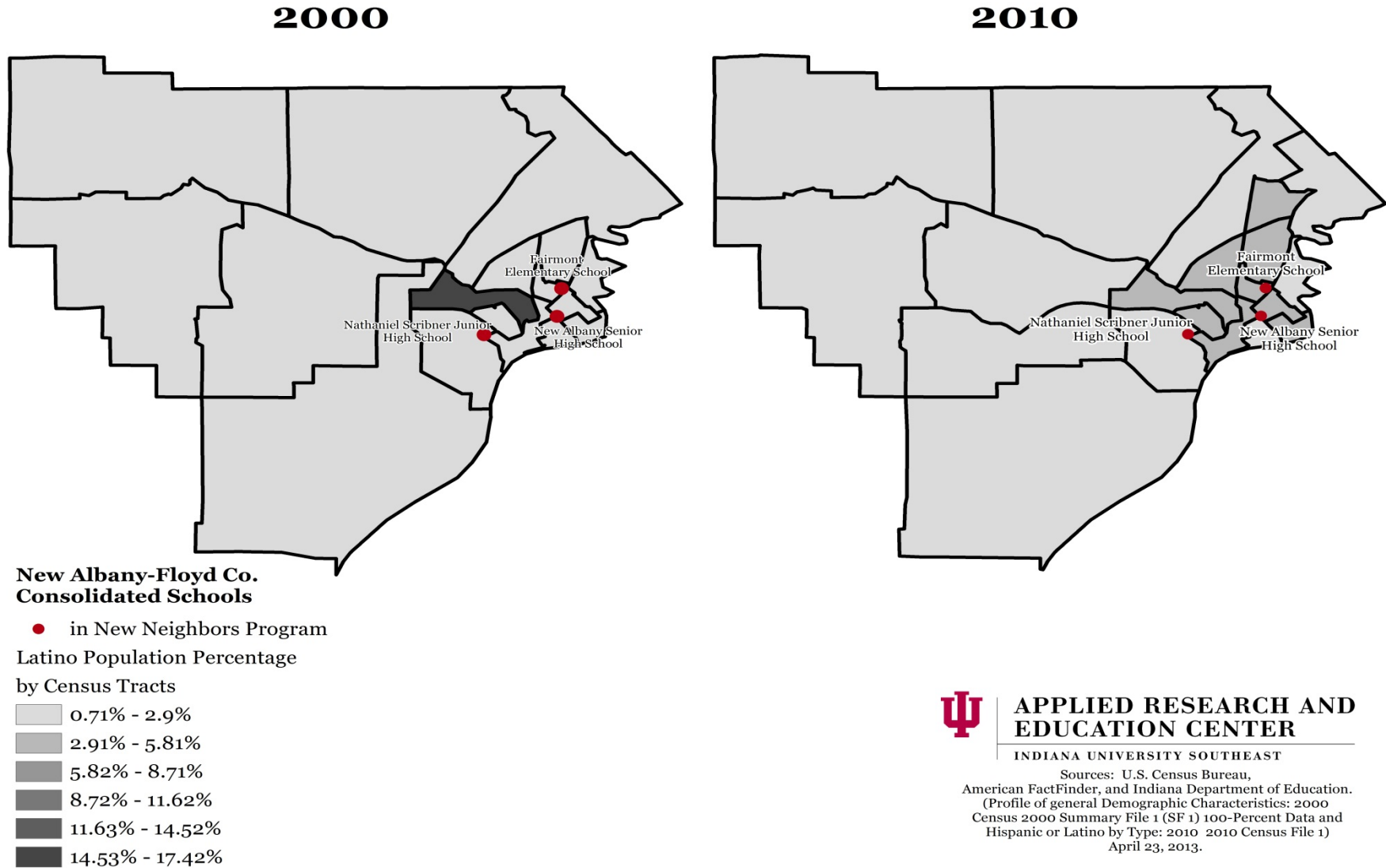


Figure 4: Growth in Latino Population in the Jackson County School District by Census Tract, 2000-2010

