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THE IMMIGRANT DROPOUT CRISIS
AS SEEN THROUGH RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PREPARED FOR JLARC



JIE YING HUANG
APPLIED POLICY PROJECT



FRANK BATTEN SCHOOL
of LEADERSHIP *and* PUBLIC POLICY

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DISCLAIMER

The author conducted this study as part of the program of professional education at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Policy degree. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Batten School, by the University of Virginia, or by any other agency.

Honor Statement

On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey A. Ang".

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Key Abbreviations and Definitions

APP: Applied Policy Project

BIPOC: Stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color, used as an alternative to simply POC (people of color). It acknowledges the fact that individuals face varying levels of injustice and discrimination, with Black and Indigenous individuals having been impacted the most by the system of inequality (Clarke, 2020).

English Learner (EL): Referring to someone who is learning English through the U.S. educational system, English is not their first language/mother-tongue, also not the primary language that is spoken within their home/with their family

First-generation immigrant: Someone who was born outside the United States and moved to this country after. There is no distinction between documented and undocumented immigrant status for the sake of this APP unless stated otherwise.

Latine: A person of Latin American origin or descent, used as a gender-neutral or nonbinary alternative to Latino or Latina, used over the term Hispanic in respect for the history of the Latin Americas

Latine, Latinx, Latino/a, and Hispanic are all terms used by the community in reference to the community. Hispanic is the term used historically but the community prefers the term "Latin-". Latino is the masculine term, but in efforts to be more exclusive of the LGBTQ community and genders other than male/female, the term Latinx was coined. However, recently, there has been a backlash on the term stating that it is primarily used in academia rather than the community, hence Latine.

RPS: Richmond City Public Schools

VDOE: Virginia Department of Education

Executive Summary

Immigrants arrive in the United States for a variety of reasons. Ranging from those in search of job opportunities to those seeking asylum from persecution, all come in hopes of a better life. However, without the proper education and English skills, i.e. human capital, there are limited avenues towards success in their future. Yet, despite this, many first-generation immigrants often drop out of school before acquiring the necessary skills for a successful future. This is the case everywhere in the United States, including in Richmond Public Schools.

Richmond Public Schools has both a substantial population of first-generation immigrants and the highest dropout rates within the state of Virginia. This is not necessarily a coincidence. Thus, my problem statement for this issue is as follows:

Dropout rates amongst first-generation immigrants, with English learners (59.02%, or 36/61 students) and Hispanic students (59.89%, or 106/177 students) as a proxy measurement, are disproportionately high in comparison to the overall dropout rate of Richmond Public Schools' 2018 cohort (20.15%, or 297/1474 students).

To address this issue, I evaluated the following policy options:

1. Continuing with the Status Quo
2. Further Collection of Data
3. Changing of the Con Ganas Program

Each alternative was evaluated against three major criteria: effectiveness, cost, and political feasibility.

After careful evaluation, I recommend alternative 3: changing the Con Ganas program. Based on its similarities to the commonly used twilight program policy option for dropout populations more generally, it has been determined to have the lowest cost-effectiveness ratio as well as the highest effectiveness of the three. It also scores high in political feasibility.

While continuing with the status quo, which in this case, is the recently implemented Newcomer Academy, also scores low in cost and high in political feasibility, it has too high of a cost-effectiveness ratio. As for the collection of data, although it may eventually result in highly effective and low-cost policy options, there is too much uncertainty surrounding it at the moment as there is no guarantee of its potential outcomes. Therefore, although high in political feasibility, it only ranked medium in terms of both effectiveness and cost.

Implementation of the policy option should include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Getting into contact with RPS regarding the state of the current Con Ganas program
2. Active recruitment of the target population to enroll in the program
3. Based on student enrollment, assess the need for additional hiring of teachers
4. Teacher training to better aid the students in this program

Introduction

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 dispelled the federal quota system that was put into place by previous immigration acts favoring White Anglo-Saxon Protestants and other western European countries (Chishti et al., 2015). The land of opportunity was now open to immigrants of all national origins. Today, there are over 44.8 million immigrants in America, over 13.7% of the population, and nearly triple (4.8%) that of 1970 (Budiman, 2020). This number is increasing daily, with more than one million immigrants arriving in the US with hopes of attaining the “American Dream” every year (Budiman, 2020). However, many face a harsh reality upon arrival. Without the proper resources and capital, many fail at the starting line. Despite the lack of an official language and claims of being a melting pot, the United States favors those that speak English and those that are phenotypically white (Shvili, 2021). Thus, for all other immigrants, proper education and English proficiency become even more salient in their pursuit of economic success.

However, despite that, many BIPOC first-generation immigrants, especially those that arrive between the ages of 15 and 18, end up dropping out of school. There is an abundance of research surrounding the various issues of immigration ranging from the different types of immigrants and causes of their immigration to how the intersectionality of their identities affects their everyday lives. Similarly, there is plentiful research on dropout rates and prevention measures for the general population of Americans. Yet, less attention is given to the intersection of the two –dropout rates amongst first-generation immigrants. However, this is a particularly salient topic to focus on because educational attainment is strongly indicative of future success in this country. For native-born citizens too, but especially for immigrants who arrive seeking a better life in this new country.

Dropout rates are often higher in cities and areas with a more diverse demographic, but especially within populations with high numbers of immigrants, Within Virginia, Richmond City Public Schools has one of the highest dropout rates (Gannavarapu, 2019). Although the data available on the VDOE website does not have a category that tracks first-generation immigrants, there are categories for Hispanic and English Learners. According to the data available, 8.2% of RPS's population is foreign-born, and within that, 58% are from Latin America (*Census Profile*, n.d.). With that in consideration, we can make some assumptions regarding the dropout rates of first-generation immigrants using the aforementioned categories of Hispanic and English learners on the VDOE website. Based on the data for the RPS 2021 cohort, the dropout rate for these categories are disproportionately high (Hispanic -40% and English Learners -45.2%) (*VDOE: Virginia Cohort Reports*, n.d.). This is in comparison to the dropout rates for all other subpopulations, with the highest being 26% for Homeless students, as seen in Appendix B. However, this is not something unique to the 2021 cohort but is a historical trend. **Dropout rates amongst first-generation immigrants, with English learners (59.02%, or 36/61 students) and Hispanic students (59.89%, or 106/177 students) as a proxy measurement, are disproportionately high in comparison to the overall dropout rate of Richmond Public Schools' 2018 cohort (20.15%, or 297/1474 students)** as well.¹ This policy problem is a two-pronged one, being both social and economic, which will be further elaborated on below.

¹ Data points for this statement are from the RPS 2018 class cohort to account for potential changes in dropout rates caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The disproportionately high dropout rates of first-generation immigrants are something that existed pre-pandemic.

Background

Existing Laws and Regulations on the Subject Area

General Dropout Prevention

The existing laws and regulations limiting the number of high school dropouts center around the compulsory attendance requirement in Virginia. According to the Code of Virginia, all individuals between the ages of five on or before September 30 of the school year and eighteen must attend school or have an alternative education plan (*Compulsory Attendance Required*, 2021). Recently, two bills were passed through the Virginia General Assembly that seeks to, at least indirectly, prevent some of the causes of dropout rates. The first, Senate Bill 3, prevents students from being charged with disorderly conduct at school or in school-related events (Shillingford & Sczerzenie, 2020). The second, SB 729, removes the requirement that school principals must report acts constituting misdemeanors to law enforcement (Shillingford & Sczerzenie, 2020). In broad strokes, these two laws help limit the number of dropouts caused by the escalation of conflict with school officials.

Education of Immigrants

Furthermore, regardless of immigration status, all children have the legal right to a public K-12 education due to the Supreme Court ruling of *Plyler vs. Doe* in 1982 (Maldef, 2018). Virginia's former Governor Northam's signing of Senate Bill 935 into law means in-state college tuition is now a reality for DREAMers and other undocumented youth (Manzanares, 2020). This helps reduce dropout rates of students who prematurely drop out due to knowledge of the idea that they cannot afford to attend college following high school graduation.

VA and Localities

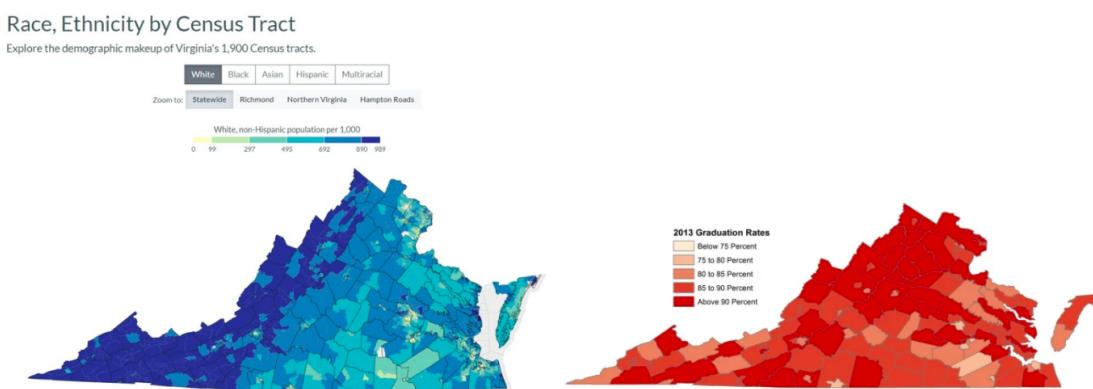


Figure 1 (Left): VA map depicting the demographic breakdown of VA counties (Virginia, 2021); Figure 2 (Right): VA map depicting 2013 graduation rates (Lombard, 2014)

Richmond City public schools hold the title for the highest dropout rates within the state of Virginia according to data from 2019 –with over 24% (Gannavarapu, 2019). This is in comparison to other

localities of VA that have upwards of 100% graduation rates (Gannavarapu, 2019). However, following closely behind RPS include Brunswick County and Manassas (Gannavarapu, 2019). Yet, this is not a fact relevant only to recent years. The element of similarity between these three counties is their substantial share of students of color (*U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*, 2019). Even more salient to the policy problem, RPS and Manassas both have a reasonable share of immigrants (*U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*, 2019). Thus, not only does RPS have the highest dropout rates within Virginia, but it also depicts the issue of disproportionate dropout rates for the immigrant and English learners population, as seen from the maps above. The blue map depicts the demographic breakdown of VA while the orange/red map depicts the 2013 graduation rates. The combination of the two maps reflects this idea.

Funding

According to RPS's budget proposal, much of the budget comes exclusively from the state and local governments (Kamras, 2021). However, they also receive an ample amount of federal Title I funding. This is due to RPS's demographic, which is comprised of a high percentage of low-income households. Title I funding is used to help mitigate the challenges that ensue and help children meet the state's learning standards (*Title I, Part A Program*, 2018). According to RPS Superintendent Kamras' 2021 budget proposal plan, 80% of the operating budget is financed by the state and local governments, also known as the general fund (Kamras, 2021). The other 20% is also known as the special revenue fund and is financed by the federal government for programs such as Head Start and Title I (Kamras, 2021).

Client Overview



JLARC stands for Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission. It is a “key component of the legislative oversight function in Virginia” (*Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission | Virginia.Gov*, n.d.) As the auditing agency on behalf of the Virginia General Assembly, they have a strong interest in the various policy issues and problems related to the state. There are high dropout rates in several regions of Virginia, in particular, RPS and within its immigrant population. With immigrants making up a sizable population of the state (13%), this is an extremely relevant conversation for JLARC on both fronts (*Immigrants in Virginia*, 2015). As the oversight agency and a nonpartisan organization, JLARC’s recommendations to the VA General Assembly have considerable weight and thus influence on potential policy and outcomes for this policy problem in both RPS and Virginia as a whole.

Importance of Issue

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is salient and predictive of one's eventual successes in life, ranging from job opportunities to social circles to everything in between. This is especially so for immigrants, who arrive in this country with ideas of the American dream, dreaming of higher standards of living and better job opportunities (Whelan, 2020). Yet, these dreams are much harder to attain without the proper educational attainment. For example, most white-collar jobs that are higher paying and often depicted alongside the image of the American dream require high levels of education (Hayes, 2021). On average, high school graduates earn \$8,008 more a year than their peers who drop out (Stobierski, 2020). Similarly, dropouts are 2.7 percentage points more likely to be unemployed than their graduate peers (*Education Pays*, 2021). Thus, without the proper education and skills at their disposal, employment is often in blue-collar and/or minimum wage jobs.

Social



Figure 3: Photo of Chinese immigrants working on the Transcontinental Railroad (NCRY, 2019)

This issue delves into the unique history of this country and how it was built on the backs of enslaved individuals and immigrants of color. For example, during the California Gold Rush, a wave of Chinese immigrants who, motivated by “the discovery of gold in 1848,” arrived in America (Kanazawa, 2005). However, their reception by Americans was not the most welcoming, as they felt that these Chinese immigrants were competition in this search for gold. As a result, the U.S. government implemented various Chinese exclusion acts to limit their upward mobility. The Chinese “bore the brunt of antagonism from native miners...because [they felt like] it was easier to rationalize excluding them,” because they were foreigners (Kanazawa, 2005). This perception is also

the reasoning behind the fact that the jobs the Chinese did undertake were 3D jobs, dirty, dangerous, and difficult. Such dangerous tasks included the blowing up of mountains for the transcontinental railroads because they were viewed as dispensable labor. Due to anti-Chinese popular sentiments, the Californian government also implemented various taxes, such as the “foreign miners’ tax...in 1850 when all foreign-born miners were required to pay \$20 per month to obtain a license to mine for gold” (Yang, 2011). Another example included the “capitation tax [that taxed] arriving vessels carrying persons ‘incompetent...to become citizens,’ [something] obviously targeted [towards] Chinese immigrants” (Yang, 2011).



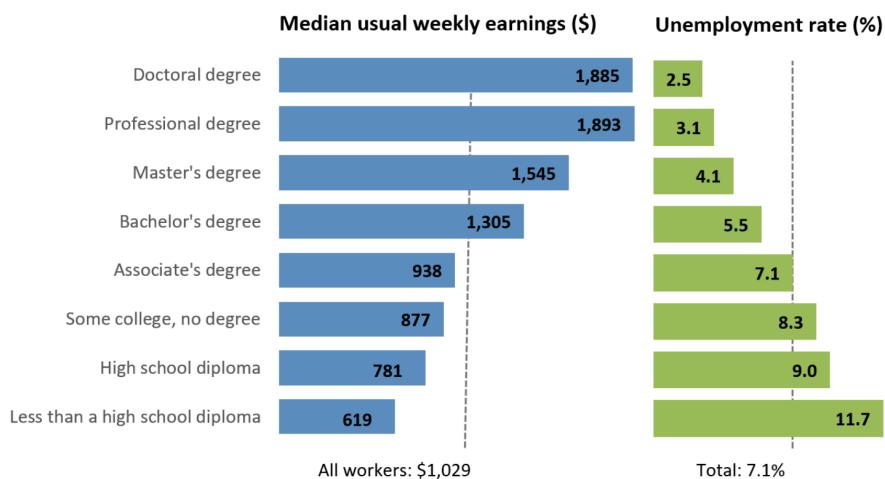
Figure 4: Mexican Laborers brought over by the Bracero Program (Longley, 2021)

Anyone who was not considered white was viewed as ‘other’ and discriminated against by the ‘in-group,’ or White, Americans. Chinese Americans, and Asian Americans more generally, have now been grouped under the model minority status. Although this status often does more harm than good, it does shield them from being the 3D laborers of the country (Fleegler, 2014). However, other immigrants of color do not get the same treatment. What was once the role of Chinese Americans is now the treatment of many Latine immigrants and laborers. A prime example is the treatment of many Mexican field laborers initially brought over by the Bracero Program, depicted in figure 4, to fill labor shortages (*Bracero History Archive | About*, n.d.). Thus, whether then or now, the mistreatment of immigrants of color by the harsh reality of the system remains unchanged. As such, due to the many implicit biases, educational attainment is all the more salient to success.

Economic

According to The Graduation Alliance and a study conducted by Northeastern University, the total cost per dropout is approximately \$292,000 over their lifetime –that is the cost to taxpayers through the course of their lives (*The True Cost of High School Dropouts | Graduation Alliance, 2017*). This is the estimated total cost factoring in the “lower tax revenues, higher cash, and in-kind transfer costs, and imposed incarceration costs relative to an average high school graduate” (Sum, 2009). According to the study, researchers found that the average high school dropout will have a -\$5,200 lifetime net fiscal contribution to society whilst high school graduates have a positive lifetime net fiscal contribution of \$287,000. The \$292,000 is the combined total of the two, -5,200 + the loss of \$287,000 from dropping out =-292,000.

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2020



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Figure 5: Median weekly earnings and unemployment rate by level of education in 2020 (*Education Pays, 2021*)

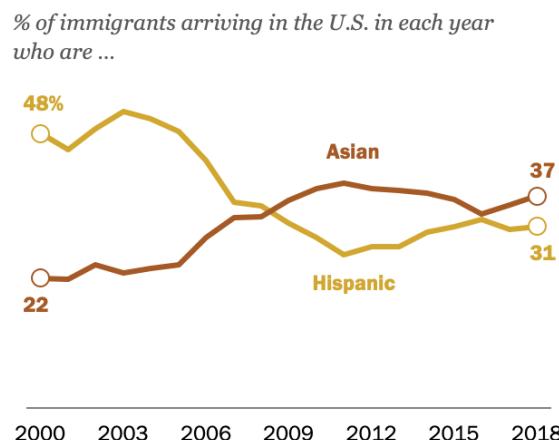
This \$292,000 accounts for the costs of the fact that high school dropouts are more likely to live in poverty, have worse health outcomes, and end up in prison (Romero, 2014). According to a report conducted in 2014, approximately 80% of all prisoners are high school dropouts or GED recipients (Romero, 2014). Within that, over half earned their GED credentials while in prison and about 41% of all inmates have no high school credential at all (Romero, 2014). Furthermore, as briefly mentioned above, high school graduates earn a national average of \$8,000 more than their peers who dropped out (*Education and the Economy, 2011*). More specifically, it is a state average of \$8,562 more than their peers in Virginia (*Education and the Economy, 2011*). Thus, having such high records of high school dropouts is detrimental to the U.S. economy as well. This is also vehemently clear from the chart above, which disaggregated average earnings and unemployment rates in 2020 by level of education.

Causes and Potential Solutions

Subpopulations of Immigrants

Dropout rates amongst first-generation immigrants are especially nuanced. Although Asian immigrants make up the majority of immigrants in America today by a slight margin, 37% compared to the 31% of Latine immigrants, Latine immigrants are much more likely to drop out, as seen from the graphics below (Budiman, 2020). This goes back to the history of America once again.

Among new immigrant arrivals, Asians outnumber Hispanics



Note: Figures for 2000 to 2004 are based on the household population and do not include arrivals residing in group quarters. For 2000-2017, the shares are computed using immigrants who arrived in the year before the ACS surveys of 2001-2018; for 2018, based on those arriving in 2018 in the 2018 ACS. Race and ethnicity based on self-reports. Asians include only single-race non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of 2001-2018 American Community Surveys (IPUMS).

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Educational attainment among U.S. immigrants, 2018

% among those ages 25 and older

	Less than high school	High school graduate	Some college	Bachelor's or more
U.S. born	8%	28	31	33
Foreign born	27	22	19	32
Foreign born birthplace:				
Mexico	54	26	13	7
East and Southeast Asia	16	18	20	46
Central Asia	5	16	22	57
South Asia	10	9	10	71
Oceania	13	25	26	37
Europe	11	22	23	44
Canada and Other North America	7	17	26	50
Caribbean	23	30	25	22
Central America	47	26	17	11
South America	14	27	25	34
Middle East-North Africa	12	19	19	50
Sub-Saharan Africa	12	20	27	40

Note: "Some college" includes those with two-year degrees. "High school graduate" includes those with a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a GED certificate.

Middle East consists of Southwest Asia and North Africa.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2018 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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Figure 6 (Left): Graph depicting immigrant arrivals by country, Figure 7 (Right): Chart displaying average educational attainment for individuals from different countries (Budiman, 2020)

Over the past century, Asian immigrants transitioned from being portrayed as “the yellow peril to the model minority” (Tzu-Chu Wu, 2017). They went from being “perceived by most Americans...as perpetual foreigners who threatened the U.S. economy, society, and nation, [to this group] whose educational success and income attainments had even ‘out-whited’ the whites” (Tzu-Chun Wu, 2017). They were “elevated as a self-sufficient group which had integrated and ‘succeeded’ in American society” and used as the model for other minorities (Wong, 2015). An example for every other minority to prove that they too could push past barriers and attain upward mobility in American society if they worked hard enough (Wong, 2015). Thus, one aspect explaining this phenomenon is that by internalizing these ideas pushed onto them, many Asian Americans excel academically and beyond. The other side is that many Asian American sub-populations involve H1-

B visa holders, or personnel who arrive due to their high educational attainment and specialty skills, guaranteed for success (*H-1B Cap Season | USCIS*, 2021).

On the other hand, Latine immigrants do not have the same treatment. There is a history of anti-Latine bigotry in America (Arana, 2019). Portrayed and treated as little better than Black Americans throughout history, Latine Americans have faced centuries of racism and discrimination (Arana, 2019). Associated with ideas of crime, drugs, and poverty, this subpopulation has been viewed as sub-human and denied proper access to the resources necessary for success (Arana, 2019). Thus, upon arrival in America, they face a far more difficult time attaining success, including in academics, due to both low expectations and resources from society. Furthermore, Latine Americans are portrayed as having a disproportionate amount of high school dropouts even though over half never enroll in a U.S. school; they are counted as dropouts if they did not complete high school in their country of origin (Morse, 2005). Thus, considering the lack of specific data tracking for first-generation immigrants in school systems, including RPS, and the disproportionate rates at which Latine Americans are affected by this issue, this APP will continue forward with data on the Latine population as a proxy measurement.

Working Youth –Financial Aspect

Although this eventually improves as individuals become assimilated into society, data from the NELS:88 dataset suggests that out of all first-generation Latine Americans in America, 44% are high school dropouts (Driscoll, 1999). Furthermore, according to the 2008–12 American Community Survey five-year estimates, of all high school dropouts, approximately 54% do so between 10th-11th grade (Scott, 2015). Working youth account for 30% of this dropout population (Scott, 2015). Breaking this down further, first-generation immigrants make up 25% of this subpopulation (Scott, 2015). It is no coincidence that a disproportionate amount of the working youth dropout population is composed of male, older Latine students not living with a parent (Scott, 2015). These families consisting of working youth are less likely to be connected to welfare, less likely to be educated, and more likely to be paying higher monthly housing costs than other groups (Scott, 2015). Again, this connects back to the limited resources available to Latine immigrants compared to others. Thus, with limited resources and money, households have to turn to their of-age children to work –16 being the legal age to start working in VA without a permit (*Teens and Employment – Virginia Rules*, 2019; Scott, 2015). Illustrating this idea is the data showing that being male, first-generation, and living without a parent is 48-67% more likely to be associated with having a job (Scott, 2015). Due to the low market wages and job opportunities available to individuals, especially those without the proper education, many low-income households must supplement low wages with more workers to stay afloat (Scott, 2015). They cannot afford to have non-working individuals and mouths to feed. Thus, if high school graduation does not explicitly equivocate higher future earnings and opportunities, individuals find it difficult to forgo the current income and opportunities to start contributing to their families right now (Potochnick, 2014).

Environment of Schools –Social Aspect

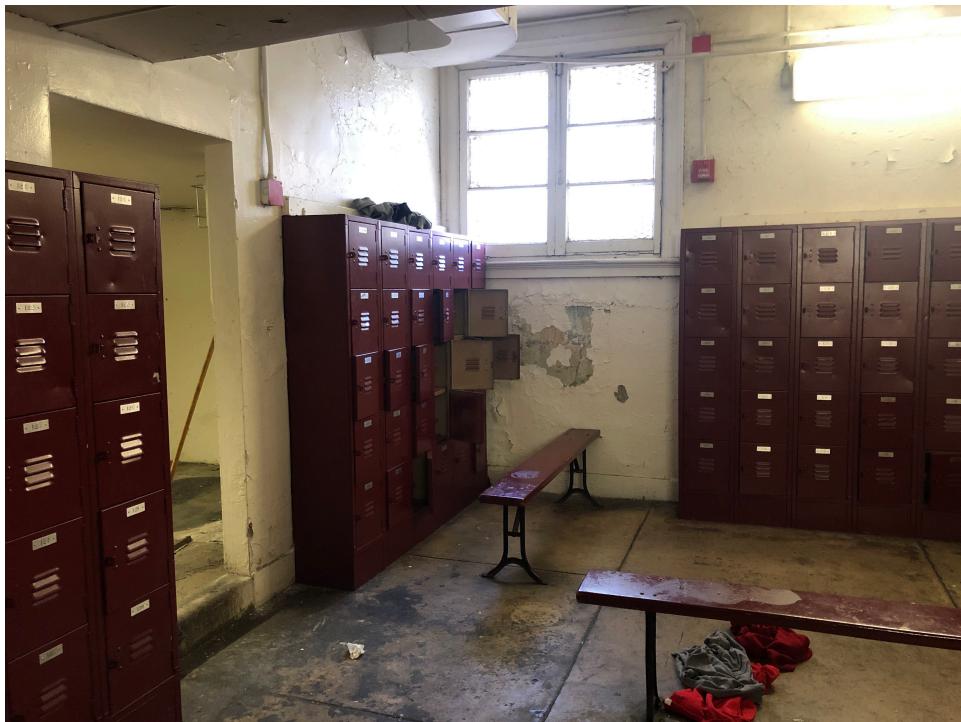


Figure 8: Picture of the deteriorating conditions of RPS buildings (Truong, 2019)

Another element of this issue is the environment of the schools that these children are attending. The demographic breakdown of the RPS student population is as follows: 62.9% Black American and 19.3% Latine American, with only 14.2% white (*Richmond City Public Schools*, n.d.). According to a report from the nonprofit EdBuilds, “the average nonwhite school district receives \$2,226 less than a white school district” (Lombardo, 2019). There are fewer resources, less money, poor building conditions, and fewer teachers willing to teach in such poor conditions (Truong, 2019; Jaquith & Hall, 2021). This is salient to note, especially as research shows that school-level attributes are at least partially responsible for the diverging of educational plans (Diaz, 2020). With such poor learning conditions, it makes all students –but particularly those that already have limited faith and expectations in the system –more likely to drop out (Diaz, 2020).

Furthermore, evidence shows that victimization in school can detrimentally impact the physical and emotional well-being of students as well (Peguero et al., 2021). It can lead to academic failures and even dropping out (Peguero et al., 2021). This is salient as research notes that (children of) immigrants are disproportionately victimized in school (Peguero et al., 2021). With many facing discrimination and racism from peers and sometimes even adults in school, many turn towards dropping out as a result of their negative experiences (Shields & Behrman, 2004).

Age of Immigrants

Research shows that the age at immigration, coupled with the duration of residence in the host country, is the primary determinant of investment in schooling (Goldner & Epstein, 2014). Those who arrive in their late teens, ages 15-18, are more likely to have lower lifetime earnings than their peers who immigrate before and after these ages (Goldner & Epstein, 2014). This is partially related to the financial aspect of dropping out –ages 15-18 being the sweet spot of being able to work (*Teens and Employment – Virginia Rules*, 2019). While those with better English skills are more likely to at least graduate high school, their low-income and non-English speaking peers are less likely to do so (Goldner & Epstein, 2014).

Overview of Potential Policy Interventions

Previously researched and executed policy interventions for high school dropout rates will be explored below. As elaborated on in the above section for causes, the main focus of the APP revolves more specifically around Latine immigrants who arrive in the country as teens, between the ages of 15-18, as this is the category of immigrants that are most likely to drop out. However, due to the limited research examining the cross-section specifically between first-generation English speakers and dropout rates, the discussed policy interventions will vary, ranging from focusing on dropout rates broadly to dropout rates for multi-generational immigrants.

Newcomer Programs



Figure 9: Picture of Newcomer Academy (*Newcomer Academy, 3741 Pulliam Dr, Louisville, KY 40218, USA*, 2020)

A suggested alternative for this policy problem is a newcomer program, which is something that RPS recently incorporated into their system, called the Newcomer Academy. Findings show that “there is no one set model for a newcomer program” as each group of students is different (Short, 2012). Therefore, the programs must be “carefully designed to meet their needs” (Short, 2012). However, the general template consists of those entering the American school system after age 15 and/or was either aging out or dropping out (Morse, 2005). It helps address the issues of low literacy rates, limited English proficiency, and schooling (Morse, 2005). Typically presented in the form of 6-18-month programs, they helped bridge the gap in students’ academic backgrounds and slowly integrate them into the normal school system. While some were in separate buildings, a majority of these programs were housed in the primary school building to help with integration. Furthermore, while some were full days, other versions of these programs were only half days, integrated with regular classes.

These programs include academic help, “offer cross-cultural orientation to help students become familiar with the school system and community,” healthcare, and career counseling (Morse, 2005). Furthermore, they sometimes serve their families with adult ESL and help gain access to social services (Morse, 2005). After one to two years in the program and adequate support, the students transition into “regular language support programs” (Short, 2012). Reports found that students in these programs achieved “language and academic improvement” based on pre- and post-test scores, federal Title VIII reports, and staff reports (Morse, 2005). However, results and success for these programs are more difficult to gauge as school districts do not typically specifically tag the newcomer students and track their progress in the programs. As a result, there is also little evidence and measurement of the effectiveness of this policy option.

Twilight Programs

Another suggested policy intervention for high school students at risk of dropping out is a version of a twilight program. Twilight programs target those between the “ages of 16-20,” advertised as an alternative setting to the traditional 7-3 pm schedule. Instead, it often meets in the evening, ranging from 3:30-to 7 pm (Crawley, 2020). It allows those with insufficient credit classes to make up said credits through the program (Tobin & Colley, 2018). Students in the program are still allowed to “attend prom, senior activities, and other school functions of a traditional high school,” maintaining some sense of normalcy despite the difference in school schedule (Crawley, 2020). Various versions have also employed a hybrid learning model, incorporating an online program with in-person classes for the best results (Crawley, 2020).

Not only is it useful in the process of earning and making up courses that risk delayed graduation or dropping out, but it is also helpful for those interested in pursuing their diploma amidst other responsibilities. More specifically, the later hours and employment of online platforms allow more flexibility for those with job commitments during normal school hours. This is something of note because dropout rates and thus the target population of the twilight programs are primarily composed of those “who are minorities and who live in lower socioeconomic status (SES) environments” (Crocker, 2019). Thus, the aforementioned population is one that greatly overlaps with the target population of this APP as well.

Policy Alternatives

Alternative #1: Continuing with the Status Quo



Figure 10: Logo of Newcomer Academy (Newcomer Academy, 2022)

Richmond Public schools recently implemented a Newcomer Academy catering to first-generation immigrants who arrive and enter school in America between the ages of 14 and 17, targeted towards those who were either aging out or dropping out (Morse, 2005). Like other Newcomer Academies across the nation, it helps address issues of limited English proficiency, low literacy rates, and limited schooling (Morse, 2005). According to the official RPS Newcomer Academy page, students are to “receive excellent instruction that will not only [help them] earn credits to meet the criteria needed to graduate with the Advanced Diploma, but also to acquire English language skills and literacy at an accelerated rate, improve literacy in their native language, and learn academic language within core contexts” (*Newcomer Academy – Richmond Public Schools*, n.d.). Furthermore, they will also “receive trauma-informed care from a bilingual school counselor, college and career services through our Academy coordinator, and specialized outreach efforts through our bilingual parent liaison” (*Newcomer Academy – Richmond Public Schools*, n.d.). However, as it was only recently implemented, there is little evidence and data regarding the potential effectiveness or benefits of the program past what research/studies on other Newcomer Academies across the nation suggest. Thus, my first alternative is to continue down this path for at least five years, monitoring its effectiveness, amongst other criteria, before potentially implementing a different policy option.

The Richmond public school district has a division called Academic Programs & Supports, whose mission is to “utilize authentic data to develop structures that create a more equitable system by providing collaborative and quality services for all stakeholders” (*Academic Programs & Supports – Richmond Public Schools*, n.d.). The newly implemented Newcomer Academy falls under the control of this division. Thus, in collaboration with this division, JLARC should collect data and monitor the effectiveness of this program before deciding to implement something else. The finances for this alternative can come from the RPS budget. Data on effectiveness can be tracked through the change in the number of students who drop out versus graduate as a result of this program over the course of five years. After proper data collection, can the program then be re-evaluated. Only when there is clear evidence of little to no improvement in dropout rates through this program should JLARC/RPS consider enacting other policy options.

Alternative #2: Further Collection of Data

There is a significant lack of data regarding first-generation immigrants and their dropout rates/reasoning, both within RPS and the broader United States. Thus, this alternative focuses on the data collection and further research on this specific population. Only with proper knowledge of the specifics behind their disproportionate dropout rates can an enduring policy option and recommendation be provided. The data collection can be conducted through a partnership between RPS's Academic Programs and Support division and JLARC. The finances can be taken out of the RPS budget.

RPS and JLARC should prioritize the overall collection of data regarding the number of first-generation immigrants in the district as that data is currently lacking. This can be done through the collection and organization of specific data, including the enrollment rate of the number of first-generation immigrants registered in the RPS system. However, even more than that, it also includes a deeper dive into information and data including the following:

Other data that are to be collected include (but may not be limited to):

- Information on the age that these children first arrived in America
- Level of education they completed in their mother country (if available/applicable)
- Family situation (Are their parents in America/living with them, do other family members speak English, household income, number of siblings, etc.)
- Number of people still in their mother country relying on them –either financially or otherwise (if applicable)

This information is salient enough to constitute a standalone alternative because it is vital to the implementation of an effective and beneficial policy option that will help improve the future opportunities of these children. For each of the following, it is vital because:

- Information on the age that these children first arrived in America
 - The age at which these children enter America is a key determinant of the potential reasons for why they might drop out vs. finishing high school. Those that arrive between the ages of 14 and 17, aka the targeted audience of Newcomer Academies, are much more likely to drop out as they start prioritizing immediate work and pay over education. In comparison, immigrants who arrive at younger ages are more likely to prioritize their education as they have less access to potential jobs, and their parents (if present) are more likely to prioritize their education as well. Thus, the possible alternatives and recommendations may range significantly depending on this factor.
- Level of education they completed in their mother country (if available/applicable)
 - The level of education completed while living in their mother country can affect them in various ways. If their level of education obtained before arrival is significantly lower than their American peers, it would likely make them less motivated to continue with their education here as they cannot keep up. The knowledge gap is exacerbated by the foreign language aspect of immigration. On the other hand, if their level of education is similar to that of their American peers, they are more likely to assimilate successfully and graduate due to their level of human capital.

- Family situation (Are their parents in America/living with them, do other family members speak English, household income, number of siblings, etc.)
 - Ex: the more intact their family is (with working parents), the higher their household income, the fewer siblings/mouths to feed there are, and the more likely the child will prioritize their education over their family income. Similarly, the more people who speak English and the appropriate personnel can communicate effectively about the importance of a High school diploma/GED, the more likely the child will graduate on time.
- Number of people still in their mother country relying on them –either financially or otherwise (if applicable)
 - The fewer people they are financially responsible for back in their mother country while here, the more likely they are to prioritize their education.

First and foremost, information collection should be completely transparent with potential respondents in its intents and purposes –used exclusively to help formulate better alternatives regarding this policy problem –to alleviate concerns on what responding may cause. It can be conducted through an anonymous survey that these children take upon registration with the school. Another means of collecting this information is an anonymous electronic survey via email sent out to families. The anonymity of the data collection will allow for more respondents, particularly those who may be of undocumented status and thus are afraid of possible repercussions from filling out the survey. Limiting survey responses to one time per link will also help prevent fraudulent responses. Once collected, further research can be conducted to propose and implement the most effective policy option for this population.

[Alternative #3: Changing of ¡Con Ganas! Program](#)

One potential policy intervention, as discussed in the available literature, is that of a twilight program. Although previous renditions have typically targeted high school dropouts/students at risk of dropping out more generally, the similarities between the general dropout population and first-generation immigrants make it a possible alternative for this APP as well.

Alongside the Newcomer Academy, RPS also implemented another alternative form of schooling called the Con Ganas program in 2020. As stated by RPS, the Con Ganas program is meant to be “a year-round program designed for EIs in which traditional day classes do not meet educational needs due to work-related needs, child-care needs, over-age and under-credited circumstances, and/or other personal urgent circumstances” (*Con Ganas! – Richmond Public Schools*, n.d.). Like the twilight programs explored in the above sections, it features a hybrid model, enlisting the use of Edgenuity, an online learning platform, alongside in-person instruction from LIEP (ESL) teachers who “actively scaffold the materials to meet their language needs” (Mirjahangiri, 2022). Courses for this program are held from 5:30-8:30 pm Mondays through Thursdays, allowing students in the program who otherwise cannot attend classes to continue their education (Mirjahangiri, 2022).

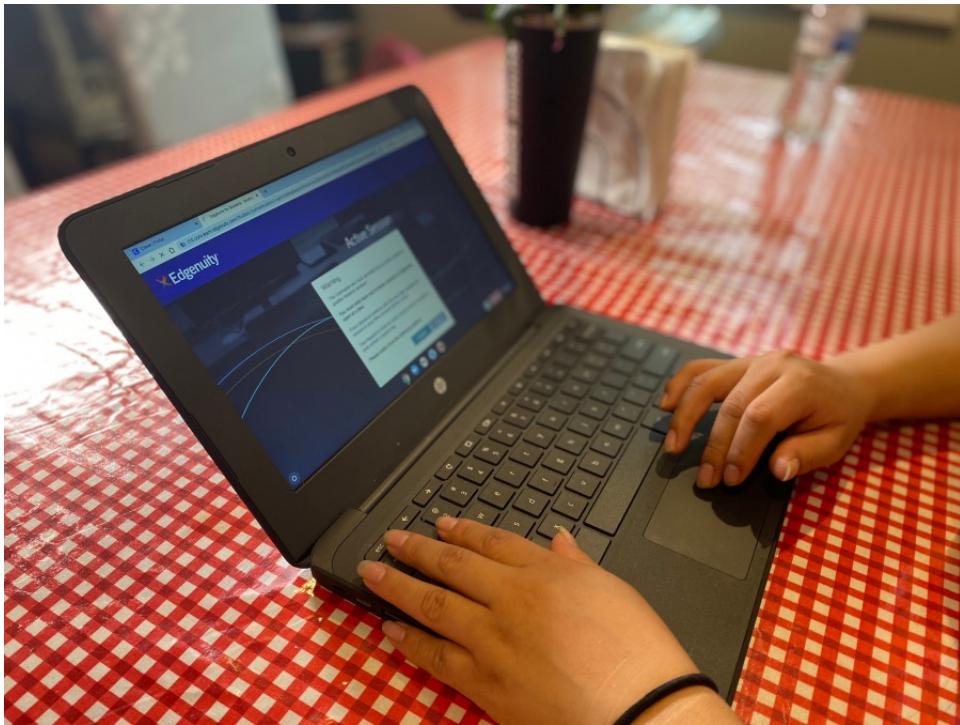


Figure 11: Student in Con Ganas program using the Edgenuity online platform to do her schoolwork at home (“PHOTOS,” 2021)

However, the program has a low enrollment rate, with only fifty-seven students enrolled in it, according to reports back in late 2020 (Epps, 2020). Two years later, the number of students enrolled is now eighty-three (Mirjahangiri, 2022). Although increasing, the double-digit number is still only a fraction of the population that this program could potentially benefit. Thus, this alternative identifies ways of improving and expanding the program.

Such adjustments will include proper teacher training as current teachers are not necessarily trained to teach English learners in a hybrid setting where the learning primarily takes place via an online platform. There should also be a better advertisement of the program in school settings to increase awareness of this option for interested students/students at risk of dropping out. As the number of students increases, the number of teachers appointed to it should increase as well. Thus, this alternative will also require the hiring and onboarding process for the newly hired ESL teachers. Lastly, it should also expand its eligibility from its current state of only accepting existing RPS students to include previous students that dropped out before they realized this program was an option and are now interested in re-enrollment.

Criteria

Criteria		
Effectiveness	Cost	Political Feasibility

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of each policy option will be evaluated through the change in dropout rates for first-generation immigrants in Richmond public schools. However, beyond that, effectiveness can also be measured through the change in the target group's English proficiency levels as well as their adaption to life in America. The latter measures of effectiveness are particularly salient as the ultimate goal of this project is not only to help decrease dropout rates within RPS but to help better the lives and future opportunities of the targeted group.

Cost

While JLARC will not be the organization making direct payments for these alternatives, it is still critical to consider the cost to properly assess the pros and cons of each option. The cost will be measured through the monetary gains and losses of each. However, more than that, it will also assess the indirect costs and associated externalities.

Political Feasibility

Political feasibility will assess how likely it is for each policy option to be approved and implemented by RPS given its budget and operational capacity.

Evaluation of Policy Alternatives

To address this policy problem of disproportionately high dropout rates amongst first-generation immigrants, the proposed alternatives are as follows: continuing with the status quo, further collection of data, and adjustment of the Con Ganas program. The relevant assessment criteria for the alternatives are as defined in the previous section, including effectiveness, cost, and political feasibility.

Alternative 1: Continuing with the Status Quo

This first alternative proposes that RPS continues on the path they are currently on. The current program at RPS is a Newcomer's Academy, first introduced as an option in 2020 (Epp, 2020). Now present in both River City Middle school and George Wythe High school, there are one hundred eighty 9th and 10th graders currently enrolled in the Newcomer Academy as of data from November 2020 (Epp, 2020).

Effectiveness:

The consensus from previous studies is that “it is difficult to gauge success for these programs...because few studies evaluate newcomer programs” (Morse 2005). Furthermore, evaluation of effectiveness is “complicated by the fact that school districts [including RPS, do not usually] tag newcomer students distinctly in their accountability databases so their progress could be tracked in the program and after they had exited” (Morse, 2005). This lack of tracking then makes “comparison with other English language learners, who [are not] in the newcomer program, impossible.” (Morse, 2005). Yet, despite such limited data, the conclusion of these studies has nonetheless advocated for these programs, even if it did not decrease dropout rates. This is because regardless of dropout rates, these programs have been proven to help increase necessary skills in America such as English proficiency –students in these programs were more likely to “pass state minimum competency tests and graduate sooner than similar students in other high schools” (Morse, 2005). Furthermore, the few studies that were able to tag and track the newcomer students returned positive findings. One such study is a newcomer academy program implemented in Fort Worth, Texas in 2015, where the overall dropout rate for these students decreased by approximately 6% over the course of the program (Walqui & Chu, 2015). Considering the similarities between the Fort Worth Newcomer Academy and RPS’s, this 6% estimate is one that I am comfortable applying to RPS’s newcomer academy as well.

The RPS Newcomer Academy was introduced relatively recently, in 2020. Given that, there is still a lack of adequate data surrounding the effectiveness of the program. However, it is also true from the limited data available, that there has been a steady increase in student enrollment in the program. Over the course of 2020, enrollment grew from 130 students in March to 180 by November (Epps, 2020). Furthermore, from the available VDOE data, there has been a substantial and positive effect on dropout rates for the target population since the program’s implementation. The change in graduation/dropout rates in recent years is shown in Appendix A.

“RPS was no longer essentially “rubber-stamping” its diplomas. Because of this, our graduation rate fell from 75.4% in 2017-18 to 70.7% in 2018-19. Though our rate is still unacceptably low, we are now trending up. From 2018-19 to 2019-20, we saw an increase from 70.7% to 71.6%.” (Epps, 2020)

This decision in the 2018-19 school year led to a substantial decrease in on-time graduation rates and an increase in dropout rates, as stated above (Epps, 2020). This is further reflected by the data for George Wythe High School, where a substantial proportion of the student population (49.8%) is of the target group (GEORGE WYTHE HIGH, n.d.). An attempt to address these drastic dropout rates led to the simultaneous launch of three programs –Newcomer Academy, ¡Con Ganas!, and the Secondary Success Center (Epps, 2020). Despite the lack of data identifying the effectiveness of each program, the combination of all three has improved dropout rates for the target group, as seen from the change in graduation and dropout rates between the 2019-20 school year and 2020-21 school year in Appendix A. However, on the other hand, we must also account for the effect of the pandemic on dropout rates, which might make the data difficult to interpret without disaggregation of it.

According to various studies, the pandemic made schooling even more difficult than it already was for first-generation immigrants and English Learners. Even before the pandemic, many students of color lacked the same resources as their white counterparts, both in school and in general (Goldberg, 2021). The pandemic disproportionately affected BIPOC children, whether it be losing a parent, changes in household income, limited access to resources that allow for online instruction, or something else (Goldberg, 2021). The transition to remote learning also left many schools unable to even get in contact with many English learners and immigrant children (Sugarman, 2020). Thus, this suggests that the pandemic would perpetuate the increase in dropout rates for this population further. However, the results are more nuanced than that, with some data suggesting that this population persevered and decreased dropout rates. One such example is East Hampton High School. In 2019, pre-pandemic, 19 percent of English language learners finished high school in four years, this rose to 21 percent in 2020 (Sampson, 2021). Thus, with limited data on both the effect of the pandemic and the effect of RPS’s newcomer academy, it is difficult to interpret and attribute all decreases in dropout rates to either factor. Yet, considering the scope of the overall decrease in dropout rates shown in Appendix A, it is still reasonable to assume that at least part of the improvement is due to RPS’s interventions, i.e., the Newcomer Academy.

Cost:

Given that it has already been implemented and incorporated into the RPS system over the last two years, there would be low additional costs involved with this alternative. The current costs involved primarily center around the funds associated with the salaries of the faculty. According to the Fiscal Year 2023 report in early 2022,

“RPS has made significant investments to support our English Learners, including: 28 new ESL teachers, 9 new bilingual support staff, and 3 new bilingual counselors” (Kamras, 2022).

Thus, this analysis assumes that approximately 15 teachers, three bilingual support staff, and one bilingual counselor work exclusively with the Newcomer Academy. This estimate assumes that the program has a smaller teacher-to-student ratio (10-12 students per teacher), while the rest of the staff (bilingual support staff and counselors) is divided equally among the three ESL programs. Although the specific data regarding individual salaries and costs of hiring is not available online, the same report states that the adjustment from hiring five new ESL teachers to ten new ESL teachers will cost approximately \$405K for the year (Kamras, 2022). This suggests that the total cost, including hiring, onboarding, training, and annual salary for one new ESL teacher is approximately \$81,500. These costs were mirrored in 2022's fiscal year report as well, where it stated the cost of hiring three new ESL teachers for the Newcomer Academy would cost approximately \$244,500 for the year or \$81,500 per person. The same report states that the cost for two new ESL specialists will be \$192,000 for the year, or \$96,000 per person (Kamras, 2022). Assuming no additional costs in regards to school materials or administrative, as they were incurred upon initial implementation of the program and thus are considered sunk costs, it will not be accounted for in this analysis. Furthermore, as these students would be attending the schools regardless, adopting this alternative would only be a matter of the curriculum and amount of specialized attention they would be receiving from the school rather than monetary costs. With that in mind, the estimated cost-effectiveness rate of this program is approximately \$46,000 per enrolled student, with the specific calculations illustrated in Appendix E.

Political Feasibility:

The political feasibility for this alternative is high as it is the option that has already been implemented in RPS and the status quo for assisting newcomer students. Continuing down this path would likely be ideal, especially if the other evaluative criteria for it remain relatively reasonable.

[Alternative 2: Further Collection of Data](#)

The second alternative expands the data collection aspect of the previous alternative further as the amount of data involving “newcomer” students is, as mentioned before, significantly lacking (Morse, 2005). It involves an extensive dive into data collection on the target population in preparation for the curation of a uniquely developed policy option to ensure lower dropout rates.

Effectiveness:

As effectiveness in this scenario refers to the change in dropout rates for first-generation immigrants in Richmond public schools, this alternative would score relatively low on this criterion. This is as the simple collection of data on this population would not amount to significant changes in dropout rates. However, despite this fact, there is potential for high effectiveness (or low effectiveness) in the future through the implementation of whatever policy option is deemed best for RPS using the results of this data collection. The immediate results of this alternative would provide more concrete information on the nuances of the causes of the disproportionately high dropout rates.

Some potential alternatives that could result from this may be:

- After-school tutoring program that helps with English proficiency and challenging course material
- Mentorship program helping with English proficiency and social skills/assimilation (*National Dropout Prevention Center*, 2022)
- Social and emotional support through counseling (Rodriguez, 2020).
- It could serve as justification for the continuation and expansion of the status quo after ensuring that the data supports the usage of the Newcomer Academy/Con Ganas program to tackle this problem. (If this alternative is selected, other programs will continue in the meantime but not necessarily expanded –no additional funding –until the data collection results come in.)

Thus, when accounting for the potential effectiveness of these possibilities and uncertainty at the moment, I will argue that the effectiveness of this policy option is medium.

Cost:

The immediate costs associated with this alternative will be relatively low as there is already a department called Academic Programs and Supports that Newcomer Academy falls under in RPS (Newcomer Academy - Richmond Public Schools, n.d.). Furthermore, there is also a sub-department called LIEP (Language Instruction Educational Program) aka the Newcomer Academy Department in the specific schools, such as George Wythe HS, that have a Newcomer Academy (LIEP/Newcomer Academy Department - George Wythe High School, n.d.). Thus, there does not necessarily need to be any substantial increases in costs for data collection. Instead, RPS can utilize the existing personnel plus a couple more specialists for the data collection. As of the moment, the plan is that data collection will mainly revolve around surveys upon application/admission into the Newcomer Academy as well as graduation versus dropout rates (Keng Kuek Ser & Edwards, 2016; Driscoll, 1999). This information is either already being tracked, or can be acquired through anonymous surveys responses from the students and families. However, it would likely require the hiring of at least two additional personnel focusing specifically on data collection in addition to the current LIEP team to ensure that individuals do not get overloaded with tasks. These two new additions would likely take on similar jobs to research assistants, which in the Richmond area are paid on average \$18.69 per hour (*Research Assistant Salary in Richmond, VA*, n.d.). Assuming an average of 40-hour work weeks and similar requirements to the 180 days per year contracts that teachers sign, that is approximately a total of \$27,000 per individual or \$54,000 for the predicted two total costs (McLoud, 2019).

As for the potential options that could result from this, initial estimates are as follows:

- Small group (1:5 teacher to student ratio) tutoring: medium costs
 - Salary per tutor: average of \$41,044 per year; cost per student: \$8,208.80 (*Tutor Salary*, 2022)
- Mentorship program: low costs
 - Community volunteer-based
- Counseling/Psychologist support: high costs
 - Salary per individual: \$96,000 per year (Kamras, 2021)

Thus, when accounting for this, I will argue that the overall cost is medium due to both uncertainty and potential possibilities.

Political Feasibility:

The political feasibility for this alternative is high as there is constant data collection and record-keeping of information such as dropout and graduation rates. This is seen through the extensive amount of similar data within the Virginia Department of Education's database. This alternative would only be supplementing the existing database with data specific to this category of individuals.

Alternative 3: Changing of jCon Ganas! Program

This third alternative expands and improves the Con Ganas program. Now present in George Wythe High school, it serves 83 ELs between the grades 9-12th. Changes include better advertisement in school settings, better teacher training, increased staff support, and more.

Effectiveness:

Due to the relatively new status of the program, there is still little data on the program available. However, the decrease in enrollment, from 81 to 57 students between March and November, suggests that the program is not meeting the desired outcomes. The current enrollment of 83 continues to imply similar ideas. Thus, the effectiveness as it is currently would be low. However, with the proper changes, effectiveness is likely to become high.

According to studies conducted on the effectiveness of twilight programs, which offer evening classes similar to that of Con Ganas, these programs were repeatedly successful in improving graduation rates (Orr, 2021). The 2021 annual report for Austin Independent School district's twilight programs reported a 10% enrollment rate from the district, with those enrolled being individuals "at risk of dropping out" (Orr, 2021). According to the report, out of the 455 12th graders in the program that year (all of whom would have dropped out otherwise because of a lack of sufficient credits), 81% graduated (Orr, 2021). Thus, with that assumption in mind, this suggests the program improved dropout rates of those enrolled by 80 percentage points, from 100% to 19%. We are assuming the original high school dropout rate is 100% for the enrollees of this program, as this program is to be immediately advertised as an alternate form of schooling for those either currently considering dropping out or have already dropped out due to various factors such as job conflicts, limited English proficiency, and more. Although the target population for the evaluated twilight program had a different target population (high school students at risk of dropping out in general versus first-generation immigrants), the two groups had similar characteristics. Of particular notice is the identification of dropouts as being primarily composed of "Students who are poor, who are members of certain minority groups [Black and Latine] who have limited English proficiency," and with adult responsibilities, elements also reflected in the target group for this policy problem (Genao, 2010). Similarly, the evaluated twilight program incorporates online learning platforms and teacher-led courses, just like the Con Ganas curriculum (Orr, 2021). Therefore, taking this into account, the effectiveness of this option is high. Furthermore, similar to the evaluation and explanation of alternative #1 against the effectiveness criterion, the available aggregate VDOE data depicts an overall positive effect on dropout rates for the target population since the program's implementation. This change is in Appendix A.

It is unlikely that the Con Ganas program will have a 100% take-up rate by all those eligible, at least initially. However, it is also difficult to estimate how many individuals will enroll in it as each

Latine/EL/immigrant population is different. Thus, as there is a lack of information on this population, the effectiveness/costs will be calculated as if it is at a 100% take-up rate. However, with a proper and persistent recruitment strategy and emphasis on the importance of education/English proficiency for future job opportunities, the program should attract more individuals as it expands. Furthermore, the element of this alternative that allows for the enrollment of individuals who previously dropped out will also help attract more students.

Cost:

There are currently five teachers working with students in the Con Ganas program, approximately 10-12 students per teacher. Assuming proper promotion and expansion of the program, this number will increase. RPS data states that there were 497 dropouts this past year, assuming that 21% of that group are English learners, program enrollment should be approximately 105 students (VODE). For now, we will assume approximately 10 total teachers to maintain the 10-12 students per teacher ratio. Assuming the necessity of a training session for the existing teachers to help better understand how best to help these students, the cost for the first year after implementation will be \$818,475.06. Assuming an estimated 80 percentage point decrease in dropout rates resulting from the enrollment of this program, the cost-effectiveness rate of this program is approximately \$8,432.79 per enrolled student. The precise calculations for this are in Appendix E.

Political Feasibility:

The political feasibility for this alternative is high as it is an option that has already been implemented in RPS as well. Suggested changes to the program are highly feasible, as teacher training are events that often occur and are easy to execute over the summer.



Figure 11: Picture of Con Ganas graduates (*Behind the Creation of Richmond Public Schools ¡Con Ganas! Program | WRIC ABC 8News, 2021*)

Recommendation

After careful evaluation of each alternative based on the established criteria, the recommended course of action for JLARC is the third option, the adjustment of the existing Con Ganas program to better suit the needs of the target population. It is both the most effective, suggesting that approximately 80% of students enrolled in the program will graduate, and the most cost-effective, with a cost-effectiveness rate of approximately \$8,432.79 per enrolled student. Furthermore, it is also highly politically feasible considering that this alternative is advocating for the expansion of an existing program rather than the creation of a new one. Especially when considering the effect of education on the future of first-generation immigrants, the expansion of Con Ganas suggests the best outcome. This will also inherently improve equity in the school district as it helps their most underprivileged group.

Tradeoffs:

Choosing to go with the third option means continuing down the current path of limited data and information regarding the target population. Going with alternative two could potentially lead to the development of an even better policy option and higher retention rates. However, recommending alternative three thus denies that possibility. It is also a gamble because the primary reason behind the recommendation is the estimated effectiveness of the program. However, considering that the estimate is concluded from the results of twilight programs that target HS dropouts more generally, there is no guarantee that Con Ganas will result in the same levels of effectiveness as estimated. In such a case, the policy problem would revert to the current situation, with limited information on the population and consequentially, limited means of addressing the issue.

Outcome Matrix:

	Effectiveness (x2)	Cost	Political Feasibility	Total
Alternative #1: Continuing the Status Quo	Low (1)	Medium (2)	High (3)	7
Alternative #2: Data Collection	Medium (2)	Medium (2)	High (3)	9
Alternative #3: Changing of Con Ganas!	High (3)	Low (3)	High (3)	12

Implementation

The Con Ganas program has already been implemented in RPS, alongside the Newcomer Academy (Kamras, 2022). Thus, my recommendation primarily revolves around expansion and improvement via increases in the number of students and teachers. Implementation for it will revolve around further recruitment for the program as well as teacher training, held over the summer, to better meet student needs.

Implementation Plan:

To move this recommendation forward, RPS, and more specifically, the head of the LIEP department/ Con Ganas program at George Wythe High School, are relevant stakeholders. According to the information listed on RPS's website, the primary person of contact will be Jennifer Blackwell (*Con Ganas! - Richmond Public Schools*, n.d.). An English Success Specialist, Blackwell is one of the individuals who worked on the proposal for the Con Ganas program in the first place (*ABC 8News*, 2021). Thus, Blackwell will also play a vital role in the teacher recruitment and training component of implementation.

Furthermore, JLARC will also need to contact RPS as soon as possible. This is important for two reasons. One, if training is to take place over the summer so that teachers and the program will be ready for students with the new school year, planning needs to start soon as we approach the end of the current year. On the other hand, it is also important to get their input on the plan. This APP was developed despite the lack of publicly available information, thus, getting into contact with the personnel running this program will be all the more salient. If the information that RPS provides states contrary findings to the APP, recommendations must be reevaluated.

However, assuming that the recommendation is one still worth implementing in light of any new data RPS provides, RPS must consider the need for teacher training and organize efforts for the implementation of that. The most crucial figure in this will be the coach or “teacher” for the teachers. Thus, RPS must locate the most qualified individual in the system as soon as possible in preparation for the training.

Communication regarding the expansion of Con Ganas will be conducted through meetings with the creators of the program, i.e., Jennifer Blackwell and other relevant personnel. Data and information on the similarities between the twilight program and the existing program should be present to help with expansion. Although not necessarily expecting the immediate expansion of the program from 57 to 104 students or five teachers to 10 teachers, promotion of the program should be conducted as soon as possible. This can take the form of postings about the program in weekly emails/letters to students and parents, announcements regarding it during morning announcements in school, the cherry-picking of students at risk of dropping out for the program by teachers and counselors, and more. This opportunity should be extended to students who already dropped out but fit the eligibility criteria as well, in case they are interested. Once interest in the program increases, RPS can determine how many more teachers they will need to hire and slowly expand.

Conclusion

Dropout rates amongst first-generation immigrants, with English learners (59.02%, or 36/61 students) and Hispanic students (59.89%, or 106/177 students) as a proxy measurement, are disproportionately high in comparison to the overall dropout rate of Richmond Public Schools' 2018 cohort (20.15%, or 297/1474 students). This existing problem is detrimental not only to the immigrants but also to the country as a whole. Without the proper education and English proficiency, there is limited upward mobility and ability to reach their full potential. In a sense, this defeats the purpose of immigrants who arrive in hopes of economic success and the American dream. Furthermore, it deprives America of both human capital and money; talented individuals generally, and \$292,000 per individual through the various costs to society.

However, through the expansion of the Con Ganas program, dropout rates are likely to decrease by 80% for those enrolled, helping tackle the aforementioned problem. Enacting the properly implemented version of this existing program in RPS will help significantly lower both the dropout rates of its first-generation immigrants as well as their dropout rates generally, as so much of RPS's general dropout population is composed of first-generation immigrants. With enough evidence of the effectiveness of this program, it can also be expanded to other areas of Virginia with similar problems, such as Manassas and Brunswick County.

However, the implementation and recommendation of this APP are dependent on the data that RPS can/cannot provide. If they provide contradictory findings and data on the existing program, and in particular, ones suggesting a much lower cost-effectiveness rate, it could result in a reevaluation and analysis of the current recommendation. Thus, the most important next step will involve contact with RPS and Blackwell as soon as possible.

However, assuming no contradictory findings, it is recommended that RPS expands its existing Con Ganas program to help the policy problem of disproportionately high dropout rates amongst first-generation immigrants.

Appendix A (VDOE data)

On-time Graduation Rates					
School Year	2018-2019	2019-2020	Percentage Point Change	2020-2021	Percentage Point Change
RPS Division Wide	70.80%	71.53%	0.73%	78.50%	6.97%
George Wythe HS	59.86%	50.15%	-9.71%	60.51%	10.36%
English Learners	51.19%	38.46%	-12.73%	53.79%	15.33%
Hispanic/Latine Students	40.29%	32.91%	-7.38%	57.20%	24.29%

Dropout Rates					
School Year	2018-2019	2019-2020	Percentage Point Change	2020-2021	Percentage Point Change
RPS Division Wide	24.13%	23.22%	-0.91%	15.08%	-8.14%
George Wythe HS	34.51%	46.77%	12.26%	32.25%	-14.52%
English Learners	47.62%	61.54%	13.92%	45.52%	-16.02%
Hispanic/Latine Students	57.19%	65.18%	7.99%	40.47%	-24.71%

George Wythe High School ²					
School Year	2018-2019	2019-2020	Percentage Point Change	2020-2021	Percentage Point Change
Graduation Rates					
English Learners	44.44%	26.03%	-18.41%	40.28%	14.25%
Hispanic/Latine Students	36.63%	24%	-12.63%	41.38%	17.38%
Dropout Rates					
English Learners	55.56%	73.97%	18.41%	59.72%	-14.25%
Hispanic/Latine Students	62.38%	74.67%	12.29%	56.03%	-18.64%

² Of 1,295 students total, 645, or 49.8%, are Latine and 491, or 37.8%, are English Learners according to data collected for the 2020-2021 school year.

Appendix B (VDOE Data)

VDOE State Level Cohort Report for Class of 2021

Richmond City Public Schools	On-Time Graduation Rate (%)	Dropout Rate (%)
All Students	78.8	15
Female	85.7	9.9
Male	71	20.9
Asian	94.7	5.3
Black	80.6	11.5
Hispanic	57.7	40
White	93.3	3.6
Multiple Races	91.7	0
Students with Disabilities	75	23.9
Students with Disabilities anytime	75.1	23.5
Economically Disadvantaged	82.1	10
Economically Disadvantaged anytime	78.7	13.4
English Learners	54.1	45.2
English Learners anytime	49.2	50.3
Homeless	63.2	26.3
Homeless anytime	67.1	21.7

Appendix C

Government and Jurisdiction

The primary and most direct level of government that has jurisdiction over this issue is at the local level, the Richmond City government, as the policy problem focuses specifically on the dropout rates of RPS. However, as immigration and education are both national-level issues, both the state (Virginia) and federal level has jurisdiction. Yet, as my client works for the Virginia General Assembly, the state government is the level most applicable for this policy problem. Within that, the Virginia Department of Education is likely to have jurisdiction over this issue (*Department of Education | Virginia.Gov*, n.d.). Each level of government has its aspect of jurisdiction over the issue. For example, RPS has implemented various programs addressing the issue, including Con Ganas and the Newcomer Academy (*Con Ganas! - Richmond Public Schools*, 2021). Similarly, the state-level government has also launched various programs addressing the issue, including Project Graduation and Race to GED (*High School Dropout*, 2017).

Appendix D

Potential Changes that could make this APP Obsolete

Some changes that might come along and make the entire analysis obsolete include changes in demographics. As mentioned above, a substantial component of why RPS is the center of this APP is because of the substantial immigrant population (*U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*, 2019). However, if there are changes in the demographic makeup, then the policy analysis will no longer be relevant to the city. On the other hand, if the policy analysis is zoomed out for the state of Virginia or the entirety of the U.S., it is unlikely it will become completely obsolete. This is as the percentage of immigrants in America increases by the day, measuring over 13% in 2020 (Budiman, 2020). There will always be new immigrants of color coming and people in search of the American dream, and educational attainment will almost always be a necessary component in that journey.

Appendix E

Cost Analysis for Newcomer Academy

ASSUMPTIONS		WHERE FROM?											
General													
Timeframe =10 years													
Decrease in dropout rates (%)	6.00%	(Walqui & Chu, 2015)											
Number of Current Dropouts	497	RPS Data											
497 dropouts * .06	29.82	RPS Data											
Social Discount Rate	3.00%	Social program											
Personnel													
Teachers (\$81500x35)	\$1,222,500.00												
ESL Specialists (\$96000x4)	\$384,000.00												
Costs													
Counselor Professional Development		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	NPV (2022 USD)
Year 0		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Number of Dropouts		30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	330
Personnel													
Personnel Costs	\$1,606,500	\$1,606,500	\$1,559,709	\$1,514,280	\$1,470,175	\$1,427,354	\$1,385,781	\$1,345,418	\$1,306,232	\$1,268,186	\$1,231,248	\$1,195,387	\$15,310,271
Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS year 0	\$1,606,500												
Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS over 10 years	\$15,310,270.86												
Outcome													
Number of students prevented from dropping out over 10 years		329.82											
Cost per student dropout prevented		\$46,420.08											

Cost Analysis for Con Ganas Program

ASSUMPTIONS		WHERE FROM?											
General													
Timeframe =10 years													
Decrease in dropout rates for students in program (%)	80.00%	Orr, 2021											
Number of Current students in program	57	RPS Data											
Number of dropouts*percentage of english learners: 497 students *.21069	104.71	RPS Data	aka ideal number of students in program after expansion										
students in program *.8	83.77	(Orr, 2021)											
Social Discount Rate	3.00%	Social program											
Personnel													
Teachers (10 teachers x \$40.75/h x 5 hr), 1:10 teacher to student ratio	\$2,037.50	Barrett & Pas											
Coach (1 coach x \$119.54/h x 5 hr)	\$597.70	Barrett & Pas											
Teachers (10 teachers x \$81500 annual salary)	\$815,000.00	RPS Data, Kamras 2022											
Training													
Mileage (33 miles roundtrip x \$0.585/mile x 11 participants)	\$212.36	Barrett & Pas											
Travel Time (1 hour x Total lost wages from personnel costs)	\$407.50	Barrett & Pas											
Materials costs (11 participants x \$5/participant)	\$55.00	Barrett & Pas											
Facilities													
Lunch (11 Participants x \$15)	\$165.00	Barrett & Pas											
Building Use costs	\$0.00												
Costs													
Con Ganas		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	NPV (2022 USD)
Year 0		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Number of Dropouts		84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	921
Personnel													
Personnel Costs (salary)	\$815,000	\$815,000	\$791,262	\$768,216	\$745,840	\$724,117	\$703,026	\$682,550	\$662,670	\$643,369	\$624,630	\$606,437	\$7,767,115
Personnel cost (training)	\$2,635	\$2,635	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,635
Training													
Training Costs	\$675	\$675	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$675
Facilities													
Facilities Costs	\$165.00	\$165	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$165
Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS year 0	\$818,475.06												
Total Cost for Implementing this in RPS in 10 years	\$7,770,590.37												
Outcome													
Number of students prevented from dropping out		921.47											
Cost per student dropout prevented		\$8,432.79											

*The ~21% that is in “Number of dropouts*percentage of English learners: 497 students *.21069” is concluded from the fact that there were 318 dropouts across the RPS district in 2021. Within that, 67 were English learners. 67/318 is approximately 21% and thus the assumption that will be used in this APP.

*Cost-effectiveness rate, also listed as “cost per student dropout prevent” in the cost analysis spreadsheet for Newcomer Academy and Con Ganas Program, is calculated over the span of 10 years.

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