Immigrant children topic of education forum
By Victor Manuel Ramos
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Early-childhood education advocates and educators discussed the growth of Long Island’s immigrant families at an East Farmingdale discussion of the most recent population trends in Nassau and Suffolk counties.

The event was organized by the Early Years Institute, a Plainview nonprofit seeking to improve learning programs for young children.

David Dyssegaard Kallick, senior fellow with the Fiscal Policy Institute in Manhattan, presented an analysis of the most recent census figures showing a significant shift in the population of children reaching school age on Long Island.

While the Long Island population of children younger than 5 decreased by more than 22,000 in the past decade, the number of those born to immigrant families grew by nearly 31,000, Kallick said. The regional numbers reflected slow growth for families of U.S.-born couples in Nassau and a decrease in children for those families in Suffolk. The number of children for immigrant families grew in both counties.

“I think that’s pretty striking,” Kallick said. “That is the future of the area and we need to make sure they succeed as much as they can... Their success is our success.”

Forum participants said the demographic shift highlights a need to allocate more resources to districts in immigrant communities that may be coping with growth in the population of students needing language assistance and tutoring to meet standards.

“When I see these numbers, my mind goes to our public schools and how so many of our schools for students of color are underfunded,” said Danielle Asher, 35, an activist with the Long Island Progressive Coalition. “We are already behind... in a lot of districts.”