Cross Currents

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Identifying School Reform Practices in Linguistically Diverse Schools
by Kris Anstrom

A nationwide study of school reform and student diversity, funded through the U.S. Department of Education, identified Linda Vista Elementary School as one among eight schools with an exemplary learning environment for limited English proficient (LEP) students (Berman, et al., 1995). This learning environment came about through the concerted efforts of the Linda Vista staff and principal, who provided the leadership and vision necessary for sustained schoolwide reform. In her forthcoming NCBE publication *Linguistic Diversity and Reform: Can the Practices Be Identified?*, Dr. Adel Nadeau, former principal of Linda Vista, provides a personalized account of successful reform in a school with a student population 77 percent limited English proficient. The following synthesis highlights portions of Dr. Nadeau's publication, available on NCBE's web site at: *http://www.ncela.gwu.edu /pubs/directions/dir10.html* http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/directions/10.htm

Linda Vista Elementary School in San Diego, California serves approximately 1000 students, 45 percent of whom are Hispanic, 37 percent Asian, 8 percent African American, and 10 percent white. In this diverse environment, five major languages are spoken: Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese, Spanish, and English. Students from newly arrived immigrant or refugee families, often with little or no formal education, form the majority of Linda Vista's student population. Within this highly diverse setting, principal and staff were challenged to bring experience with reform practices and the premises for bilingual instruction together. Although both research and experience tell us that reform is unique to each setting, certain parameters can serve as guides for implementing reform in any setting. These include: decision making, teaching and learning, organization, assessment, and accountability.

Decision making. The decision making process in school reform involves all members of the school community in continued inquiry, questioning and self-assessment. Parents, classified staff, and teaching staff

think and talk about curriculum, instruction, and other important issues related to school change. After thorough discussion and inquiry, decisions are made collaboratively and involve all members of the school community.

Teaching and learning. A major paradigm shift in how teaching and learning are conceptualized is called for in a progressive organization. The graded system, norm-referenced tests, grades, and rankings are all forms of classification that assume all students fall into prescribed levels or that place them at a point on a normal curve. This continual classifying and ranking becomes a system of failure for many students, particularly those who speak a language other than English or who have had very little formal education.

Decision Making at Linda Vista:
An example of the inquiry process

Linda Vista established a schoolwide portfolio assessment process by the fourth year into the restructuring.

- A staff development day brought the entire staff together in groups to analyze the student portfolios across levels.
- Discussions were held related to student work, adjustments in the anchor papers, and revisions of the rubrics the staff had previously developed.
- Classified staff acted as reflectors, providing feedback to the teachers regarding both content and processes.

These activities exemplify a decision making process that achieved not only a trusting involvement of all staff, but also a focus on accountability and improvement for the sake of the students.

At Linda Vista, the concept of continuous progress became the organizing force for all instruction and assessment. Learning was viewed as developmental and student progress monitored individually on an ongoing basis. Consequently, a non-graded program was begun. Students were organized into four age groupings (Early Childhood, Primary, Middle, and Upper) rather than grade levels. Within each age grouping, there were as many as six levels of English language proficiency. The Southeast Asian students were in a sheltered English program, with social studies taught in the primary language; the Hispanic students were in a full bilingual program. Continuous progress was embedded in the instructional program since students were allowed to move up through the levels as soon as they demonstrated they had met the curriculum standards set by the staff. As a result of these changes, student learning was viewed developmentally and all students were expected to meet the high standards set by the staff.

Organization. Organizational flexibility, including flexibility in staffing, resources, and services, was imperative to successful reform at Linda Vista. In traditional, graded, compartmentalized systems, the student becomes secondary to the grade-level expectation, test scores, and ranks. Organizational factors, such as how students are grouped, how they progress, and how flexibility of movement throughout the day is attained, should be factored into school design.

For effective change to occur, interacting factors such as implementing a non-graded program and flexibility of movement must coincide. For example, in order for students to move up the levels of language proficiency at any time, class size had to be reduced to allow for sufficient room for students to move in and out of levels. Thus, staffing changes had to be negotiated requiring reallocation of resources to obtain several part-time teachers for the morning program. The focus for class size reduction was not on achieving equality across classes, but rather on meeting specific student needs.

Assessment and Accountability. Key to reform is the assessment and accountability practices a school adopts. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment must be aligned with one another, and assessment must measure authentic student work. Assessment should be a means by which the student and teachers together evaluate progress along the student's own developmental path.

Accountability is closely tied to assessment in that schools undergoing reform are held accountable for improved results on standardized tests while at the same time urged to adopt performance-based assessments. School personnel need to learn how to link norm-referenced data and performance-based assessments in a manner that will provide accountability information to the public, parents, and other agencies.

At Linda Vista, a schoolwide assessment system evolved out of the staff's commitment to bringing all students to high standards through a develop-mentally appropriate continuous progress teaching and learning process. Initially the staff developed language arts standards for all of the age grouping and language proficiency levels in the instructional design. Math standards soon followed. Portfolios were used to mark each student's progress toward the standards, and descriptive rubrics were developed and designed around the age groups. No grades, numbers, or scale rankings were used. The standard district progress report was changed to reflect the continuous progress design and the use of rubrics, which were checked for each reporting period. The report was accompanied by a hard copy of the student's portfolio that contained the appropriate work for the quarter. Finally, schoolwide data were extrapolated from the portfolios for reporting to the district and to the State School Report Card.

Through her involvement with school reform at Linda Vista, Dr. Nadeau gained valuable insight into the parameters that guided her school's efforts at reform. These parameters can also serve as guides to other linguistically diverse schools contemplating the difficult issues surrounding school reform.

References

Berman, P. et.al. (1995). *School Reform and Student Diversity: Case Studies of Exemplary Practices for LEP Students.* National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning: Santa Cruz, CA

Nadeau, A. (1997). "Linguistic Diversity and Reform: Can Practices Be Identified?" *Directions in Language & Education*, No.10. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education: Washington, DC.

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OBEMLA Releases SEA Report for 1994-95

by Barbara Silcox

The number of limited English proficient students (LEPs) enrolled in public and non-public schools continued to increase in 1994-1995 over previous school years, according to the information submitted by state education agencies (SEAs) to the U.S. Department of Education in the annual *Survey of States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services, 1994-95* (the SEA Survey). The total kindergarten to grade 12 LEP enrollment reported by the states responding to the survey for 1994-95 was 3,184,696, representing an increase of 4.8 % over 1993-94.

SEAs participating in the State Grant Program authorized by Title VII of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* and administered by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs

(OBEMLA) are required to report on LEP enrollments; services and programs provided to LEP students; and the educational condition of LEP students in terms of retention rates, dropout rates, and levels of academic achievement. Survey responses were submitted from 53 states and jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Palau, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands (Virginia and West Virginia did not participate).

Generating a national picture of the educational condition of LEP students based on the data collected through the SEA Survey is difficult because not all of the state education agencies responded to the Survey and not all of those who did respond to the Survey answered all of the questions. Also the lack of a single nationally consistent definition for limited

English proficiency, the variations in assessment instruments used across the states, and the range of educational programs available to LEP students contribute to the difficulty in determining how LEP students nationwide are performing academically. In addition, obtaining data on student performance classified by LEP status may be difficult because LEP students are often excluded from testing and test results may not be reported by the category of LEP.
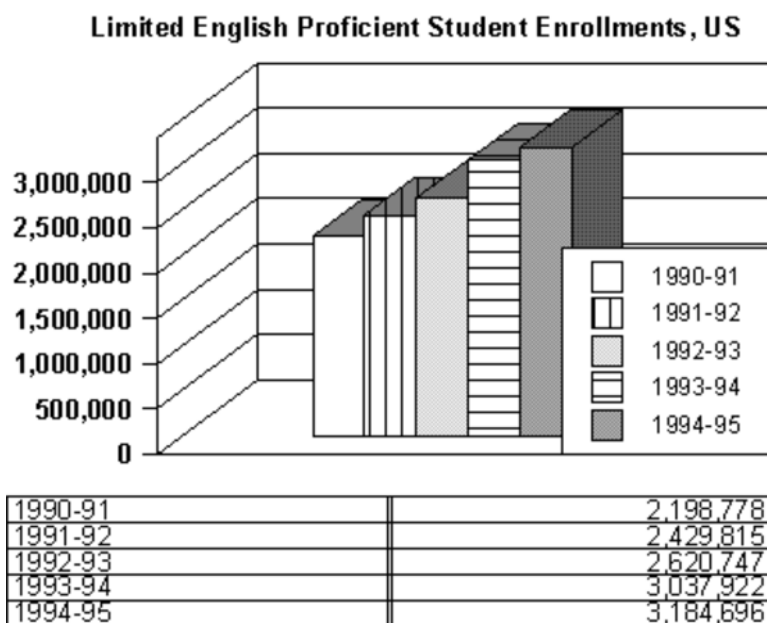
How many LEP students are enrolled in the nation's schools?

The States with the highest numbers of limited English proficient students tended to be those states with the largest total K-12 enrollments. (See Table 1). California enrolled the most public school LEP students, with 1,262,982; followed by Texas, with 457,437; and New York, with 236,356. Over half of the reported national LEP enrollment was in two states (California and Texas), and over two-thirds of the national LEP enrollment was in four states (California, Texas, New York, and Florida). Among outlying jurisdictions, Puerto Rico reported 143,769 students needing special language services. The total national LEP count for 1994-95, as reported by the survey respondents, continued the upward trend of LEP enrollments seen over the last several years. From 1990-91 to 1994, the reported numbers of LEP students increased by 44.8% from 2,198,778 to 3,184,696. (See Figure 1) .

Table 1

STATES WITH LARGEST LEP ENROLLMENTS 1994-95		
State	**LEP Enrollment**	**% of National LEP Enrollment**
California	1,262,982	39.9 %
Texas	457,437	14.5 %
New York	236,356	7.5 %
Florida	153,841	4.9 %
Illinois	107,084	3.4 %
Arizona	98,128	3.1 %
New Mexico	84,457	2.7 %
New Jersey	52,081	1.6 %
Washington	51,598	1.6 %

Source: *Summary Report of the Survey of the States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services, 1994-1995.*

Figure 1

Limited English Proficient Student Enrollments, US

1990-91	2,198,778
1991-92	2,429,815
1992-93	2,620,747
1993-94	3,037,922
1994-95	3,184,696

Data Source: SIAC, 1995; & SEA Survey, 1996

Source: *Summary Report of the Survey of the States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services, 1994-1995.*

How are the needs of LEP students being met?

The states and outlying jurisdictions reported that the great majority of LEP students were being served by some type of school program designed to meet their educational needs. Some 2,522,584 LEP students attending public or nonpublic schools were reportedly enrolled in special programs, while 633,480 LEP students (approximately 20%) were not enrolled in special programs. Among the federal programs serving these students Title I enrolled about 46.9% (1,482,943), Emergency Immigrant Education served 23.9% (757,918), and Migrant Education served 10.5% (333,142). All of the Title VII Programs together served 9.4% (298,787) of the LEP students. State and local level bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL)-only programs served 77% (2,437,723) of the reported number of LEP students. (Since a student could be served by more than one program, they were counted in each program in which they participated, thus allowing for multiple counts).

How are LEP students faring in the nation's schools?

The SEA Survey had several indicators for determining the educational condition of LEP students: dropout figures, grade retention figures, and normative test performance in English reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. While more than half of the SEAs responded to these questions relating to educational conditions for LEPs, the total number of LEP students being reported on by these states was less than half of the nationally-reported total LEP enrollment.

For the 1994-95 school year, 33 states reporting on grade retention indicated that 13,906 students were being retained in grade, representing about 2.3% of the total number of LEP students in these states. Some 10,021 LEP students were reported to have dropped out of school in 1994-95, according to the dropout information reported by 32 states. Among the states reporting dropout information, the LEP dropout rate ranged from a low of 0.3% to a high of 4.2%.

From 1990-91 to 1994-95, the overall dropout rate for LEP students declined slightly from 2.5% to 1.5% (See

Table 2). This decrease may be attributed to a real difference in the dropout rate, reporting differences from year to year, or the lower number of states responding to this question on the 1994-95 survey.

Table 2

LEP DROPOUT RATES, 1990-91 to 1994-95		
School Year	% Dropout	No. of Students
1990-91	2.5%	12,679
1991-92	2.0%	11,864
1992-93	1.5%	10,858
1993-94	1.7%	11,861
1994-95	1.5%	10,180

Source: *Summary Report of the Survey of the States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services, 1994-1995.*

For More Information

The report, *Summary Report of the Survey of the States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services, 1994-1995* is available on the NCBE web site at *http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/seareports/94-95/*
http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/seareports/94-95/

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Evaluation of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students and the Programs that Serve Them

by Kris Anstrom

For program directors, teachers, administrators and others faced with the task of demonstrating the value of a particular program to the board of education or talking with a parent about her child's progress in school, evaluation means more than simply testing students to meet state or district requirements. The *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994* makes clear that sound assessment practices for linguistically and culturally diverse (LCD) students involve aligning evaluation with curriculum and instruction. However, all too often, the purposes and uses of evaluation are poorly understood and not well-managed. Evaluation is even more problematic for LCD students who may lack the English skills necessary to demonstrate their skills and knowledge on most tests routinely given in U.S. schools. Evaluating these students without consideration for their special language needs is not an option; neither is removing them from all testing situations until they have learned enough English. Both scenarios neglect the need for information on the educational progress of the linguistically and culturally diverse segment of our school population and the programs that serve them.

To assist those involved with the education and evaluation of LCD students, the former Evaluation Assistance Center (EAC) West developed a series of resources on such issues as designing effective program evaluation, performance assessment, and reviews of various Spanish and English language proficiency tests. Highlights from each of these resources are discussed below.

Managing a bilingual program is a complex business requiring skills in program design, implementation, management, and evaluation. The *Evaluation Handbook* provides a comprehensive examination of all phases

of program evaluation from thinking about evaluation in the context of program design to reporting the evaluation results. Valuable information includes descriptions of various types of evaluations; how to select assessments that measure learner success in a manner sensitive to their language, culture, and gender; implementing, evaluating, and reporting the results; and presenting the results to various audiences.

A Guide to Performance Assessment for Linguistically Diverse Students focuses on the individual student and suggests alternatives to traditional testing methods for assessing the student's academic abilities and achievement. Practices such as excluding LCD students from the norming group when developing norm-referenced achievement tests, failing to consider the cultural bias of many testing instruments, and not ensuring for English proficiency have led to the use of alternative forms of assessment with these students.

The Guide clarifies the term "performance assessment" and offers a framework for selecting and designing this type of assessment. Six elements considered essential to creating good performance assessments are described and related to the needs of LCD students. The Guide also focuses on approaches for presenting performance assessment data in a meaningful and useful manner, strategies for displaying student results over time, and ideas for summarizing these results. The appendix includes a form for rating and reviewing performance assessments from the perspective of their usefulness with LCD students as well as sample assessments that demonstrate the six essential elements of good performance assessment.

Language proficiency testing in both English and the native language is essential to monitoring the progress of LCD students. The *Handbook of English Language Proficiency Tests* and the *Handbook of Spanish Language Proficiency Tests* provide valuable assistance to program administrators and teachers needing information on standardized, commercially-available language proficiency tests in English and Spanish. The two handbooks complement one another by selecting the same tests to examine but focusing on either the English or Spanish version. Thus, educators working with Spanish/English bilingual programs will find both handbooks useful. Information on the following five tests is included: Basic Inventory of Natural Language; Bilingual Syntax Measure I and II/Bilingual Syntax Measure I and II Spanish; Idea Proficiency Tests/Spanish Idea Proficiency Tests; Language Assessment Scales; and Woodcock Muñoz Language Survey.

Both handbooks also provide background information on legal mandates for English and native language proficiency testing and issues related to the assessment of language proficiency in LCD students. The major purpose of the handbooks, though, is to describe the five aforementioned language proficiency tests in order to facilitate informed test adoption.

The school reform movement's emphasis upon setting high standards and ensuring that all students meet those standards has brought evaluation to the forefront, particularly as it pertains to students at risk for academic failure and students who speak a language other than English. Taken together, these four documents offer valuable insight into the evaluation process as it pertains to linguistically and culturally diverse students.

For More Information

The EAC West materials cited in this article, as well as numerous other publications dealing with assessment and evaluation, are available electronically at no cost from NCBE's web site at: *http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/library/assess.htm*
http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/library/assess.htm

What's New At NCBE's Web Site ?

Resources for Promoting Effective Partnerships Between Schools, Families, and

Communities

The *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994* emphasizes the importance of family-school partnerships and encourages collaborations across education and community services to assist families in supporting their children's education and enabling them to meet high standards.

NCBE's Online Library contains the full text of a variety of resources offering innovative ideas and strategies for establishing and maintaining partnerships with linguistically and culturally diverse families.

- profiles of exemplary parent involvement and family literacy programs
- journal articles
- brochures for parents in both English and Spanish
- links to other Internet resources

All this and more can be found on NCBE's web site at: *http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/library /parent.htm* *http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/library/parent.htm*

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