

**FRAMING EFFECTIVE PRACTICE:  
TOPICS AND ISSUES IN EDUCATING  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

**A Technical Assistance Synthesis  
by the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education**

**Task 4.3  
Contract No. ED-00-CO-0113**

**Prepared for:  
U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs**

**DECEMBER 2000**

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The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), and is operated under Contract No. ED-00-CO-0113 by The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, Center for the Study of Language and Education. This report was prepared under Task 4.3. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government. Readers are free to duplicate and use these materials in keeping with accepted publication standards. NCBE requests that proper credit be given in the event of reproduction.

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## Introduction

Patricia Anne DiCerbo

Where do we stand in our national efforts to educate all children to high standards? What have we accomplished and what issues are left unresolved? The six essays in this technical assistance synthesis address these questions as they relate to students who are learning English as a second language, who live in households in which a language other than English is spoken, or who need special language support to be able to succeed in English-medium classrooms.<sup>1</sup>

Along with other special needs populations, English language learners (ELLs) have traditionally remained on the periphery of education policy and planning, largely underserved in our nation's schools. Although the growth rate for the ELL population has long exceeded that of the mainstream,<sup>2</sup> and ELLs now account for approximately one in every 11 students enrolled in grades K through 12, education reform efforts have typically underestimated the extent to which linguistic diversity has become the norm rather than the exception for U.S. classrooms.

Significant changes to education policy have been made, however. The *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA) of 1994,<sup>3</sup> in concert with other federal initiatives such as *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (1994), the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (1998), and the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (1994), provided the initial foundation for implementation of inclusive school reform. The national focus since that time has been on academic excellence and equity for all, not just for some, students. The national education agenda that is currently being proposed rests on the notion that “no child be left behind,” and continues the focus on high standards for all stakeholders, along with the themes of accountability, parent involvement and research-based practice.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the more recent umbrella terms for these culturally and linguistically diverse students is English language learners or ELLs. Federal and state legislation typically refers to limited English proficient or LEP students. Both terms are used interchangeably in this document.

<sup>2</sup> The number of ELLs increased by 104% from 1990 to 1999. During that same period, the growth in enrollment of children from monolingual English-speaking homes increased by only 13.6 percent.\*  
(\* These percentages are based, in part, on projected figures from *The growing numbers of limited English proficient students* (1999) by the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.)

<sup>3</sup> The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as reauthorized.

The purpose of this technical assistance synthesis is to bring together the more recent literature on educating ELLs, and present a broad picture of a few of the most pressing issues and topics. Each essay is accompanied by a resource guide designed to enable technical assistance providers to secure additional information on the topic.

## **Common Practices for Uncommon Learners: Addressing Linguistic and Cultural Diversity**

Patricia Anne DiCerbo

What approach is most effective for helping our students learn and keep learning? Which model will transform a marginal or ineffective program into an exemplary one? What instructional practices work best?

The reality is that no single approach, program or set of practices fits all students' needs, backgrounds and experiences. What works for a U.S.-born child whose first language is English may *not* work for a recent Chinese immigrant. The ideal program for a Native American teenager attending an isolated tribal school may fail to reach a Hispanic youth enrolled in an inner-city or suburban district.

Nevertheless, research provides strong evidence about what makes some programs and practices more effective than others. Practices shown to work, for example, are clear communication by teachers, focused tasks, high expectations and accountability, and positive reinforcement (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1993, cited in August & Pease-Alvarez, 1996). These are basic components for any child. In the same way, research on special populations of learners provides a broad framework of the major dimensions of effective education for students with diverse needs. This essay presents recent findings from the research on one group of special needs students: students who are learning English as a second language and/or students who live in households where a language other than English is spoken.

Current approaches and program alternatives for these English language learners (ELLs) tend to fall into one or more categories distinguished primarily by the amount and type of first and second language use, and the linguistic goals of the program. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of the major program models being implemented in U.S. schools.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the Major Program Models for LEP Students (Source: Zelasko and Antunez, 2000)**

Language(s) of Instruction	Typical Program Names	Native Language of LEP Students	Language of Content Instruction	Language Arts Instruction	Linguistic Goal of Program	
English and the native language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two-way Bilingual Education,</li> <li>Bilingual Immersion, or</li> <li>Dual Language Immersion</li> </ul>	Ideally, 50% English-speaking and 50% LEP students sharing same native language	Both English and the native language	English and the native language	Bilingualism	
	Bilingual Education Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Late-exit or</li> <li>Developmental Bilingual Education</li> </ul>	All students speak the same native language	Both; at first, mostly the native language is used. Instruction through English increases as students gain proficiency	English and the native language	Bilingualism
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early-exit or</li> <li>Transitional Bilingual Education</li> </ul>	All students speak the same native language	Both at the beginning, with quick progression to all or most instruction through English	English; Native language skills are developed only to assist transition to English	English acquisition; rapid transfer into English-only classroom
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sheltered English,</li> <li>Structured Immersion, or</li> <li>Content-based ESL</li> </ul>	Students can share the same native language or be from different language backgrounds	English adapted to the students' proficiency level, and supplemented by gestures and visual aids	English	English acquisition	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pull-out ESL</li> </ul>	Students can share the same native language or be from different language backgrounds; students may be grouped with all ages and grade levels	English adapted to the students' proficiency level, and supplemented by gestures and visual aids	English; students leave their English-only classroom to spend part of their day receiving ESL instruction	English acquisition	

Rarely, though, are any of these programs implemented in their pure form. Nor are they implemented in the same way in every district, school or classroom. Instead, students are provided with an eclectic form culled from either the best or the most practical pieces of these models. Findings from *The Benchmark Study: A National Study of Title VII Comprehensive School Programs* (2000, September) indicate that:

*[e]lementary, middle and high schools use an array of approaches for serving LEP students and a number of schools use more than one approach to adapt to a multiple language situation. Among the elementary schools, the most common approaches included transitional bilingual, native language maintenance, dual language or two-way bilingual, sheltered instruction and English-as-a-Second Language instruction. When compared to elementary schools, far more high schools used sheltered instruction and offered newcomer programs. (Institute for Policy Analysis and Research and the Center for Applied Linguistics, September 2000, iv)*

Much of the research on effective education for ELLs points to the specific features or attributes of a program that provide these students with the opportunity to achieve academic success. An overview of some of that research follows.

### ***What are the Attributes of Effective Instruction for ELLs?***

Native language instruction is included as a component in many studies of effective practices. A recent report from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2000) argues:

*It is clear that the need for bilingual education some combination of instruction in the English language with content instruction in a language that the student understands will actually increase in the coming years. Therefore, principals must expand English as a second language programs and the application of bilingual concepts to the teaching of important subjects. The crucial first year or two of mathematics should certainly be offered in a language that the student understands, while they are learning English. (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2000)*

Two of six research-based principles of effective practice for limited English proficient (LEP) students identified by The George Washington University's Center for Equity and Excellence (1996) acknowledge the need to consider students' language proficiencies in building an educational program.

- LEP students receive instruction that builds on their previous education and cognitive abilities and that reflects their language proficiency levels.
- LEP students are evaluated with appropriate and valid assessments that are aligned to state and local standards and that take into account the language acquisition stages and cultural background of the students.

The remaining four principles stress high standards of instruction and accountability, and the involvement of key stakeholders.

- LEP students are held to the same high expectations of learning established for all students.
- LEP students develop full receptive and productive proficiencies in English in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, consistent with expectations for all students.
- LEP students are taught challenging content to enable them to meet performance standards in all content areas, including reading and language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, the fine arts, health, and physical education, consistent with those for all students.
- The academic success of LEP students is a responsibility shared by all educators, the family, and the community. (The George Washington University's Center for Equity and Excellence, 1996)

These six features correspond to the thirteen attributes of effective schooling listed by the Committee on Developing a Research Agenda on the Education of Limited-English-Proficient and Bilingual Students, Board on Children, Youth and Families (August & Hakuta, Eds., 1998). Their list is based on findings from a review of 33 different studies, and targets comprehensive change for students and schools. Here, the use of native language for instruction is specifically mentioned.

- Customized learning environment
- Supportive school-wide climate

- School leadership
- Articulation and coordination within and between schools
- Systematic student assessment
- Staff development
- Home and parent involvement
- Use of native language and culture
- Balanced curriculum
- Explicit skills instruction
- Instructional strategies that enhance understanding
- Opportunities for student-directed activities
- Opportunities for practice (August & Hakuta, Eds., 1998)

Other authors present similar comprehensive models outlining school and classroom culture, policies and practice that affect learning. Most of these advocate taking into account native language and culture, as well as a safe, challenging and responsive environment in which teachers, students and the school community are partners in learning (Beykont, 2000; August and Pease-Alvarez, 1996).

Recent work in the area includes the 1999 CREDE report, *Program Alternatives for Linguistically Diverse Students* (Genesee, 1999). Programs described in that report share a common set of characteristics considered to be essential:

- Developmentally-appropriate curriculum and materials
- Staff qualified and knowledgeable in sound practice for limited English proficient students, including the integration of content and language learning, support for academic literacy, sheltered instructional approaches, and assessment linked to instruction
- Appropriate and ongoing professional development for all teachers who work with limited English proficient students
- Strong leadership at the district, school and classroom levels
- Parent involvement that is extensive and ongoing
- Adequate resources to coordinate parent/school interaction (Genesee, 1999: p.2)

book of best practices for language minority students, including the integration of language and subject matter development, comprehensive staff development, and strong leadership. Samway and McKeon add the need for high expectations for all students, and a school ethos of caring and support.

### ***ELLs in the Mainstream***

It is often the case that ELLs are enrolled only in mainstream classes, without any of the types of special support described in the previous discussion. A recent review of the literature on the instruction of LEP students (University of California, Linguistic Minority Research Institute, reissued 1999) indicates that approximately 20-25 percent of ELLs in California are mainstreamed with no special services. These numbers are consistent with findings from the *Survey of state education agency programs and services to LEP students, 1996-97* (Macías, 1998).

The question of how to help ELLs in the mainstream develop the cognitive and linguistic skills necessary to succeed academically is addressed in *Language minority students in the mainstream classroom*, by Carrasquillo & Rodríguez (1996). The following set of practices for teachers and other school staff are suggested:

- Use students' educational and personal experiences as a part of the curriculum
- Provide students with long-term support in developing academic proficiency in English
- Integrate students into the mainstream of the school's social and academic life
- Recognize all teachers as teachers of language
- Integrate the teaching of English with the teaching of content
- Establish parent/school partnerships

Carrasquillo and Rodríguez (1996) also give more specific guidance for classroom teachers working with ELLs. The authors recommend collaborative activities that integrate language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and are modified to fit individual learners. Much of what they say is aligned with individual features of the sheltered instructional approach, including modeling, demonstrating, and using text modifications. The approaches they suggest

developing literacy through literature, writing as a process, and the thematic approach. Their findings are echoed in a 1998 research brief published by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE):

*Effective approaches include students and teachers working together, in discovery processes and supportive interaction across the curriculum, developing language through dialogue, and making school meaningful by connecting instruction to students' strengths and everyday experiences in their homes and communities (Currents, April 20, 1998).*

The authors stress that, whether within an ESL or bilingual education class or the mainstream, these approaches are simply good practice. Teachers or schools that adopt these features offer an opportunity for ELLs to move toward full linguistic and academic competence.

### ***Conclusion***

With all of this research, among all of these studies, there are points in common. Individual students do matter. Cultural and linguistic diversity does not necessitate sounding the alarm. Implementing sound programs for ELLs simply, or not so simply, requires schools that take into account what practices work, what to try and what to discard. The studies presented here, although not by any means the entire body of research on successful practices, serve as a bookmark of where we are in the discussion, a jumping-off place for where to go next.

## Resource Guide

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### ***Organizations***

Center for Bilingual Education and Research, Arizona State University  
<http://www.asu.edu/educ/cber/index.htm>

Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE)  
<http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/>

ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics  
<http://www.cal.org/ericll/>

Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University  
<http://www.lab.brown.edu/public/index.shtml>

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning  
<http://www.prel.org/>



Southwest Educational Development Laboratory  
<http://www.sedl.org/>

The National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement  
<http://cela.albany.edu/>

The University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute (UC LMRI)  
<http://lmri.ucsb.edu/>

### ***Resources Online***

*Fostering academic success for English language learners: What do we know?*  
<http://www.wested.org/policy/pubs/fostering/index.htm>

NCBE Online Library: *Curriculum & Instruction*  
<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/library/curriculum/index.htm>

NCBE Online Library: *Educational Programs* for Linguistically & Culturally Diverse Students  
<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/library/edpro.htm>

NCBE *Success Stories*  
<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/success/>

Title VII *Benchmark Study*  
<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/titlevii/benchmark/index.htm>

## Standards-Based Education Reform and English Language Learners

Kate Menken

Standards and assessment have been pivotal themes in recent reform efforts, and cut across much of the federal legislation passed by Congress in the last decade to improve the education of all students. Six broad education reform goals to improve education and raise student achievement by the year 2000 were passed into law by Congress in 1994 in the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Along with the passage of *Goals 2000*, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act, required states to adopt challenging academic content and performance standards, and assessments aligned with these (Riddle, 1999). *Goals 2000* and the ESEA both aimed at "all students" and specifically included "students or children with limited English proficiency." They have worked together to set many of the principles of standards-based reform, including the expectation that *all* students will attain high standards of academic excellence.

### ***What Do Standards Mean for ELLs?***

The standards in standards-based reform identify what students should know and be able to do as they progress through school. They are meant to be anchors, aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Within the standards movement is a strong emphasis on educational equity. Not only are standards intended to make expectations clear and measurable, they also set high expectations for all students including ELLs. As school systems adopt standards with more rigorous expectations for the performance of ELLs than ever before, greater attention is being paid to ensuring student attainment of those standards.

Within the standards movement is a strong emphasis on educational equity. Not only are standards intended to make expectations clear and measurable, they also set high expectations for all students including ELLs.

For students who are English language learners, the attainment of these rigorous academic standards is fully reliant on the presence in our schools of high-quality programming, teachers, and all of the other resources necessary to meet their learning needs. The purpose of one type of standards, *opportunity-to-learn standards*, is to guarantee "the level and availability of programs,

staff, and other resources sufficient to meet challenging content and performance standards” (McLaughlin & Shepard, 1995, p. 5). Opportunity-to-learn standards for ELLs would offer a framework that articulates what this entails, and could be used as a lever to ensure equity. However, these standards have not been created or adopted yet.

At present, all states have adopted content standards and about half have performance standards (Blank, Manise, & Brathwaite, 1999). While a few states have also created standards and curriculum frameworks for ELLs, others are only developing them now and still others have not yet begun. The standards that have been developed for ELLs vary greatly by state and school district, both in the language of the actual standards and also in the ways the needs of this population of students are addressed.

### *Examples of Standards for ELLs*

In 1997, the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) organization produced *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students*. The development of these standards was “motivated by a desire to ensure educational equity and opportunity for ELL students” (Cummins, 2000, p.154). These standards set learning goals for ELLs that center on personal, social, and academic uses of English. As described in the examples that follow, most states and districts have shaped their standards for ELLs primarily or at least partially on the TESOL standards.

The standards that have been developed for ELLs vary greatly by state and school district, not only in the language of the standards but also in the ways the needs of this population of students are addressed.

### Chicago Public Schools

The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has created a set of English as a second language (ESL) standards closely aligned to TESOL’s ESL standards. In their standards document, CPS states its vision as follows:

*Students will learn to understand, speak, read, and write English fluently, competently and proficiently in order to succeed academically and participate actively in the United States social, economic, and political environment* (Chicago Public Schools, 1999).

Along with this general mission statement, CPS lists three goals that identify the elements of the English language they feel students must possess in order to succeed:

1. Use English to achieve in all academic areas and settings,

2. Use English for all social and personal purposes, and
3. Tailor the English language for various and specific purposes and uses (Chicago Public Schools, 1999).

Each goal is supported and further defined by several standards focused on English language acquisition. The standards for goal one identify the elements of English that CPS policymakers feel its students must possess to succeed in school, and specify the use of English in learning across the curriculum. The second goal expects that students will also use English outside of school, with the underlying standards emphasizing the use of English in communication. The final goal and corresponding standards delineate appropriateness; they cultivate in students an understanding of the cultural subtleties of English for example, in choice of language variety and use of non-verbal communication.

Like Chicago, a number of districts (e.g., Redwood City, CA and Oklahoma City, OK) and States (e.g., New Jersey and Florida) have adopted standards that are closely aligned to TESOL's ESL Standards.

#### New Mexico and Texas

The standards for English language learners created by the states of New Mexico and Texas offer a different approach. While incorporating the TESOL standards, they are not based primarily on them. And, they also address home language development. In New Mexico, standards for ELLs are primarily aligned to standards for native English speakers. As they write:

*At the time of the development of the NM standards, the NM [State Department of Education] bilingual education unit was careful not to give the message that ESL students were held to different standards than any other student. The message is clear: ALL students should be held to high standards. (New Mexico State Department of Education, 2000)*

New Mexico identifies language arts as an umbrella category under which lie English language arts (ELA) for native English speakers, ESL, and language arts for native speakers of other languages (e.g., Spanish language arts [SLA] for native Spanish speakers in bilingual education programs).

Aligned to New Mexico's language arts standards are strategies that each school district has created for ESL and for the different home languages being taught (M. López, personal

communication, April 28, 2000). The New Mexico State Department of Education makes it the responsibility of school districts to develop the means by which ELLs will attain the standards that have been set. For example, while ELA and ESL share a common core of standards, differing instructional guides are provided for each. In this way, the New Mexico standards guide ESL teachers in their students' language learning process while simultaneously ensuring that instruction in the ESL class is aligned to instruction in the ELA class. Furthermore, the development of students' home languages is supported.

The Texas Education Agency has taken a similar approach to that of New Mexico, but has also created and adopted specific standards for Spanish language arts. Their approach is described in the following explanation of how to implement their English Language Arts Essential Knowledge and Skills:

*Students of limited English proficiency (LEP) enrolled in Spanish Language Arts and/or English as a Second Language will be expected to learn these same knowledge and skills through their native language, and students in English as a Second Language will apply these skills at their proficiency level in English (Texas Education Agency, 1998b, p. 3).*

Each English language arts standard for elementary and middle grades students corresponds to a Spanish language arts standard. In addition, the Texas standards document encourages home language instruction for native speakers of other languages. In both Texas and New Mexico, ELLs are expected to attain the identical standards to those set for native-English speakers; however, they may do so while using their native language.

The creation of standards alone is not enough to change teaching and learning. Rather, attention must also be paid to the process of standards implementation.

### ***Issues in Standards Implementation***

One of the primary findings from the implementation of standards across the United States thus far has been that the creation of standards alone is necessary, but not sufficient to affect changes in teaching and learning. Rather, attention must also be paid to the complex process of standards implementation. One of the limits of standards is that they do not tell teachers how to help their students attain them. As Kate Nolan explained in her discussion of standards-based education reform at the conference of the Education Commission of the States:

*Policies will not create change in the classroom unless educators and policymakers have a visceral understanding of what a standards-driven classroom looks like (O'Brian, 1998).*

Standards do not offer guidance on the process of their implementation; therefore, teachers themselves must translate the language of the standards into instructional practice. This requires that teachers have a thorough understanding of standards and standards-driven teaching and learning. However, most teachers do not feel well prepared to use standards in the classroom. The National Assessment of Title I found, for example:

*In 1998, only 37 percent of teachers in [Title I] schools reported that they felt very well prepared to implement state or district curriculum and performance standards. This sense of preparedness is a key factor in predicting student outcomes, according to the [Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance (LESCP)] study of 71 high-poverty Title I schools. The LESC found that teachers' reported preparedness in both subject matter and instructional strategies had a positive relationship with student growth. The LESC also found that district reform policy had an influence on teachers' familiarity with standards-based reform and their implementation of such reform in their classroom. Teachers in higher-reform districts were more likely than their peers in lower-reform districts to be familiar with content and performance standards and assessments and their curriculum was more likely to reflect the standards. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Undersecretary Planning and Evaluation Service, 1999, p.14)*

These issues also apply to Title VII teachers and other teachers of English language learners. In the School District of Philadelphia, for example, academic content standards were adopted in 1996; four years later they are still working to connect standards for ELLs to classroom practice.

The effective implementation of standards requires extensive professional development for teachers.

The effective implementation of standards requires extensive professional development for teachers. The quotation above from the National Assessment of Title I indicates that professional development and preparation for using standards positively impacts teachers' ability to implement standards-based curriculum and, subsequently, improve student performance.

While a great deal of additional research and further supports for practitioners are needed, a number of national initiatives already exist to help teachers implement standards in their classrooms. TESOL, for example, has recently created a training manual to help educators implement TESOL's ESL standards. As part of this project, members of TESOL's Standards Committee are currently working with several school districts to offer technical support in their implementation of standards. Through their *Standards, Assessment, and Instruction* initiative, the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University also works with states and local districts serving ELLs as they strive to implement standards and meet the education needs of their diverse student populations.

High-quality professional development aids in the process of standards implementation. However, greater attention needs to be paid to turning standards documents into changes in practice. Although several initiatives like the ones described above exist nationally, very little emphasis has been placed upon the critical need for sustained professional development to assist with the implementation of standards:

*In 1998, public school teachers, regardless of the poverty level of their school, spent a limited amount of time on professional development, although they did focus on topics that supported standards-based reform. Most teachers are not participating in intensive or sustained training two essential characteristics of effective professional development. Given the relationship found between teacher preparedness and student achievement, this is a troubling finding...Over two-thirds (70%) of teachers in high-poverty schools reported receiving less than 9 hours per year of professional development related to content and performance standards. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Undersecretary Planning and Evaluation Service, 1999, p. 15)*

Rather than focusing on professional development to foster the use of standards in instruction, the current focus of the national conversation about standards is on accountability. Standards are linked to high-stakes assessment that holds students and their teachers accountable for student performance. Districts and states are moving to high-stakes assessment before putting the necessary structures in place to ensure that all students can actually meet the standards that have been set for them; opportunity-to-learn standards are not the current focus. Standards hold the potential to guide and dramatically improve the instruction and assessment of

students who are English language learners but, in order for these reform efforts to be effective, it is critical that every aspect of the process of standards implementation be considered.

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### ***Online Resources for Information about Standards-Based Reform and ELLs***

Center for Applied Linguistics  
<http://www.cal.org/eslstandards/>

Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory At Brown University (LAB)  
<http://www.lab.brown.edu/public/InitsStandards.taf?function=search>

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages  
<http://www.tesol.org/assoc/k12standards/index.html>

U.S. Department of Education  
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/IASA/newsletters/standards/>

### ***Online Resources for Information about Standards Implementation***

Annenberg Institute for School Reform  
<http://www.aisr.brown.edu/accountability/lswA/index.html>

Council for Basic Education  
<http://www.c-b-e.org/psi/psiintro.htm>

Education Trust  
<http://www.edtrust.org/main/sip.asp>

Learning Research and Development Center  
<http://www.lrdc.pitt.edu/about.htm>

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel)  
<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/index.asp>

Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory At Brown University (LAB)/Center for Applied Linguistics  
<http://www.cal.org/brownlab/ellstds.htm>



Philadelphia Education Fund  
<http://www.philaedfund.org/slcweb/index.htm>



## What are the Critical Issues in Wide-Scale Assessment of English Language Learners?

Kate Menken

The standards-based education reform movement has serious implications for students who are English language learners (ELLs),<sup>4</sup> particularly with regard to wide-scale assessment. Standards-based reform was promoted nationwide through two federal initiatives, the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (H.R. 1804, 1994) and Title I of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended. For example, the 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA (“Improving America’s Schools Act,” U.S. Department of Education, 1994) required states to adopt challenging academic content and performance standards,<sup>5</sup> and assessments aligned with these (Riddle, 1999). The legislation dictated that standards and assessments apply to all students, including those who are ELLs. By the end of the 2000-2001 school year, each state must have an assessment system that includes ELLs and ensures that these students make “adequate yearly progress.” With this new emphasis on the inclusion of all students, performance by English language learners on assessments can greatly affect the positive or negative evaluation of a teacher, school, district, or state. Wide-scale assessments also now carry high stakes for students in most locales, shaping major decisions such as graduation and grade promotion.

### *Inclusion of ELLs in Wide-Scale Assessment*

Across the country, new efforts have been made to include ELLs in current testing practices. However, an analysis of reports from state education agencies recently compiled by the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education for the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) indicates that most states continue to allow ELLs to be exempted from wide-scale or mainstream assessments. ELLs are exempt from such assessments if they have been in the United States or enrolled in ESL/bilingual education programs for three years or less. They are also permitted exemption based on their English language proficiency level (Holmes, Hedlund, & Nickerson, 2000).

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<sup>4</sup> In this paper, the term “English language learners” refers to the same population of students termed “limited English proficient (LEP)” in federal legislation.

<sup>5</sup> Standards establish what students should know and be able to do as they progress through school.

Each year, significant numbers of ELLs are not included in any form of statewide assessments. As a result, there is no state record of the progress these students have made in their language development and/or attainment of content area skills and knowledge. For many ELLs, there is therefore no system of accountability in place to ensure that they achieve to the same high standards that have been set for mainstream students.

Unfortunately, there is no simple solution. While the inclusion of ELLs in wide-scale assessments could be beneficial, it is unclear that the immediate inclusion of this population of students is appropriate given the testing tools currently being used and the high stakes for participation. The following sections explore the potential complications when ELLs participate in wide-scale assessments, particularly those that were created for native English speakers.

While the inclusion of ELLs in wide-scale assessments could be beneficial, it is unclear that the immediate inclusion of this population of students is appropriate given the testing tools currently being implemented and the high stakes for participation.

### ***Testing Accommodations and Modifications for ELLs***

Efforts to assess student attainment of the knowledge and skills identified in state or local standards become particularly complex as states and districts move toward broader inclusion of ELLs in their standardized assessments and systems of accountability. The primary way that states and school districts include ELLs is by offering them the same tests as those taken by native English speakers, but with special test accommodations that are intended to “level the

Each state varies in the accommodations it permits, if any (Holmes et al., 2000). As identified in a study of state policies by Rivera and Stansfield (2000), accommodations can be classified into four main types:

- 1) *Presentation* – permits repetition, explanation, test translations into students’ native languages, or test administration by an ESL/bilingual specialist;
- 2) *Response* allows a student to dictate his/her answers, and to respond in his/her native language;
- 3) *Setting* includes individual or small group administration of the test, or administration in a separate location; and

- 4) *Timing/scheduling* allows for additional time to complete the test or extra breaks during administration (Rivera & Stansfield, 2000).

Both Rivera and Stansfield's findings and the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education's analysis of state reports on accommodations (Holmes et al., 2000) indicate that the most common types of accommodations fall into the categories of *timing/scheduling* and *setting* accommodations, which do not specifically address the linguistic needs of ELLs. *Presentation* and *response* accommodations can address ELLs' linguistic needs, but these are less commonly permitted. In other words, while accommodations are intended to make test content more accessible to ELLs, the most common types of accommodations are not well matched to the needs of this population of students.

### ***Instrument Validity and Reliability***

Including ELLs in wide-scale assessment raises many questions that must be addressed to ensure that assessment tools are valid, reliable, and appropriate for assessment of these students. For example, when accommodations are permitted, is the test still valid for the intended purpose? Does the test accurately measure the test taker's knowledge in the content area being tested? Does the performance by ELLs with accommodations compare equally to the performance by native-English speaking test takers?

Additionally, any assessment of an English language learner's content-area knowledge administered in English may be greatly influenced by the student's English language

proficiency; testing done in English is first and foremost an English language proficiency exam, not necessarily a measure of content knowledge. Furthermore, it is uncertain at what point a child should be tested in a second language to yield meaningful results (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1997). And finally, there is great variance in how ELLs are defined within and between states, which greatly limits how well statewide results can be compared.

In spite of these issues in the assessment of ELLs, standardized tests are currently being used across the United States, with major impact on individual students. Most states are now administering standardized tests, and using the results to make crucial decisions (Blank, Manise, & Brathwaite, 1999). ELLs are particularly vulnerable to high-stakes decisions based on test

ELLs are particularly vulnerable to high-stakes decisions based on test results; tests are used to make decisions regarding high school graduation, grade promotion, and the placement of ELLs into tracked programs.

results; tests are used to make decisions regarding high school graduation, grade promotion, and the placement of English language learners into tracked programs (Heubert & Hauser, 1999).

### ***Alignment of Assessment to Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction***

Standards were intended to be the critical lynchpin in reform efforts promoted through *Goals 2000* and the 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA, aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment. As such, they were meant to guide curriculum and instruction, and serve as the foundation upon which assessment is based. The ESEA mandated that by 2000-2001, “all states will have assessments aligned with content and performance standards for core subjects” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Undersecretary Planning and Evaluation Service, 1999). At present, however, these elements remain disconnected from one another, which negatively impacts the education of all students.

The need for alignment of each of these elements is particularly critical for English language learners, as supported in the following quotation from the Illinois State Board of Education’s *Language Proficiency Handbook*:

*The delivery of instruction and assessment should be identical in terms of the types of materials accessed, the grouping and interaction of students, the language(s) used, and the techniques employed. In classrooms, that means the conditions for instruction and assessment should be identical... Assessment has to mirror curriculum if it is to be a valid account of what students know and are able to do... If assessment is an expression of the curriculum and the curriculum, in turn, maximizes the opportunity to attain designated Illinois Learning Standards, there is continuity in the education program for students. Anchoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the Learning Standards increase the validity of the educational program. (Gottlieb, 1999, p. 3)*

These tenets extend beyond Illinois’ standards, and apply to standards for ELLs in every state and school district. Alignment of assessments with curriculum, instruction, and other aspects of education is vital for the successful implementation of standards-based education reform.

### *Next Steps in Wide-Scale Assessment of ELLs*

While new research has been generated such as the studies mentioned above, there is still a great need for additional information on how best to assess ELLs. The questions below are based on the literature reviewed, and may be used to frame an agenda for further research into the wide-scale assessment of students who are English language learners:

- Given that the assessments being used are high-stakes, what additional supports are needed to ensure that ELLs will be able to pass them?
- How do alternative assessments (e.g., Spanish language exams) compare to mainstream assessments? When is the use of native language assessments appropriate?
- How do accommodations impact comparability with mainstream student performance?
- Do wide-scale tests with the permitted accommodations fully expose English language learners' knowledge and abilities or does the system need to be fully redesigned such that the needs of these students are addressed in the development of assessments?
- Do other data collection methods, such as portfolios or other performance assessments, yield more accurate results with regard to ELLs than traditional assessments?
- What sort of information is needed to make fair high-stakes decisions about ELLs (e.g., grades, classroom performance, an array of samples of student work, teacher recommendations)?
- What would be the most beneficial system(s) of accountability to ensure that these students are making progress in what they know and can do in important content areas?
- What supports are necessary to aid states and districts in their alignment of assessments, standards, curricula, and instruction?

The heightened attention being paid to this critical area holds great promise for the education of English language learners, and presents the opportunity to ensure that they also achieve to high standards.

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### ***Online Resources for Further Information on the Wide-Scale Assessment of ELLs***

Center for Equity and Excellence in Education, Region III Comprehensive Center  
[http://www.ceee.gwu.edu/standards\\_assessments/sa.htm](http://www.ceee.gwu.edu/standards_assessments/sa.htm)

FairTest  
<http://www.fairtest.org>

Illinois Resource Center  
<http://www.thecenterweb.org>

National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST)/AERA  
Special Interest Group  
<http://aerasig.cse.ucla.edu/aboutus.htm>

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education  
<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/reports/highstakes/bibliography.htm>

NWREL's Comprehensive Center Region X  
<http://www.nwrac.org/pub/hot/assessment.html>

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory  
<http://www.sedl.org/culture/lnp.html>

The Council of Chief State School Officers  
<http://www.ccsso.org/lepsscass.html>



**Do the Models Fit?  
Towards Comprehensive School Reform  
for English Language Learners**

Kate Menken

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRSD) program was funded by the federal government in 1997 to provide financial incentives for schools that need to substantially increase student achievement, particularly schools receiving funding through Title I (Helping Disadvantaged Children Meet High Standards) of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended. Title I funds are currently available to two million English language learners (ELLs) – that is half of all ELLs, and almost one-fifth of all students served by Title I (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Undersecretary Planning and Evaluation Service, 1999a). It is, therefore, important that the needs of these students be addressed through comprehensive school reform (also known as schoolwide improvement or reform).

***Addressing the Needs of ELLs through Comprehensive School Reform***

Schoolwide reforms funded by CSRSD are intended to incorporate reliable research and effective practices, and include an emphasis on academics and parental involvement. These programs seek to stimulate schoolwide change covering virtually all aspects of school operations, rather than a piecemeal, fragmented approach to reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The federal legislation for the CSRSD initiative mandates specific program components, each of which has implications specific to English language learners that must be addressed for successful program implementation.

Funds that schools receive through the CSRSD initiative must only be used for school reform programs that integrate, in a coherent manner, the following nine components listed in the federal legislation (H.R. 390, 1997):

- Effective, research-based, replicable methods and strategies
- Comprehensive design with aligned components
- Professional development
- Measurable goals and benchmarks
- Support within the school

- Parental and community involvement
- External technical support and assistance
- Evaluation strategies
- Coordination

Each of these components is listed below, with a corresponding set of questions for consideration when English language learners are served through schoolwide reform programs. These questions draw upon the work of Hansel (2000) and McKeon (1998).

*Effective, research-based, replicable methods and strategies.* Have the methods and strategies employed proven effective in the education of ELLs, to ensure that they also meet challenging academic standards? Is evidence of effectiveness based on multiple measures that are accurate and reliable when employed with ELLs?

*Comprehensive design with aligned components.* Is the schoolwide improvement plan fully inclusive of ELLs in school management, classroom management, curriculum, assessment, and instruction? Does the plan allow for the implementation of the best language support program option for the ELL population within a particular school and community?

*Professional development.* Are ample opportunities provided for high-quality, sustained training and professional development that prepares educators to work effectively with ELLs? Is professional development in the education of ELLs provided to all school faculty, administrators, and staff and not solely to ELL specialists?

*Measurable goals and benchmarks.* Are there measurable goals for the performance of ELLs and benchmarks for meeting those goals that are appropriate, accurate, and reliable<sup>6</sup> for this specific student population?

*Support within the school.* Are programs selected and supported by all school faculty, administrators, and staff, including those directly involved in the education of ELLs? Is it required that school faculty, administrators, and staff work collaboratively to ensure the success of ELLs? Is a school climate fostered in which linguistic and cultural diversity is seen as a rich resource, and where high expectations are set for the performance of ELLs?

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<sup>6</sup> Standardized tests in English, for example, are not always accurate measures of achievement for ELLs; therefore, effectiveness must be measured using tools intended for the evaluation of ELLs, and whereby evaluations of a student or program are not made based solely on a single test score (Menken, 2000).

*Parental and community involvement.* Are opportunities provided for the full involvement of ELL parents and community members in the planning and implementation of school improvement activities? Are the challenges specific to forging partnerships with language minority communities addressed (e.g., translation of school materials into home languages, selection of activities that are culturally appropriate, etc.)?

*External technical support and assistance.* Is high-quality external technical support provided from a CSR entity with experience or expertise not only in schoolwide reform and improvement, but also in the education of ELLs?

*Evaluation strategies.* Is there a plan for evaluating program implementation that is inclusive of ELLs? Does it evaluate the impact of programs on the achievement of ELLs, whereby data is gathered and disaggregated according to language proficiency?

*Coordination of resources.* Are resources coordinated to ensure sufficient funding is allocated to supporting and sustaining educational programming for ELLs?

### ***The Impact of Comprehensive School Reform Models on ELLs***

Comprehensive school reform models are plans for schoolwide improvement that address various aspects of school operations, and are being widely implemented in schools across the nation as a primary means to accomplish reforms. Models provide a variety of resources to schools, including curricula, assessment tools, technical assistance, professional development, and guides for school administration. Schools typically contract with model developers for school improvement materials and professional development for a period of three or more years (National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, 2000).

Through early comprehensive school reform implementation efforts, it has become clear that the capacity of models to meet the needs of ELLs must be developed as models “scale-up” and expand to new locations – particularly to those with diverse student populations. Although schoolwide reform models are currently being implemented across the United States in schools with significant ELL populations, very few of the models specifically address their needs. Furthermore, it is unclear which of these models, if any, are effective in the instruction of ELLs.

*While the focus of CSRD is schoolwide change in schools, particularly Title I schools, where there is the greatest need to improve student achievement substantially, there is little information readily available with regard to which models are most appropriate for*

*students learning the English language (ELL, or English language learners). Indeed, while a number of models have demonstrated some success in raising student achievement, thus far most do not address directly the learning needs of ELL populations although a growing number of nationally available models are placing more emphasis on this population. (Wilde, Thompson, & Herrera, 1999)*

Models that do not directly address the needs of the ELL population often entail the use of curricula, instructional materials and strategies that are inadequate and/or inappropriate for educating ELL students.

A middle school in Philadelphia, for example, adopted the *Talent Development* model in a neighborhood densely populated by ELLs. The model restructured educational programming and offered extensive professional development. In addition, school staff and administrators selected literature and corresponding curriculum guides from a list provided by the model developers. Since this model had never before been implemented in schools with substantial ELL populations, it did not require the use of literature appropriate to ELL students' language proficiency levels or to their cultures, and did not ensure that these students received necessary language supports.

Furthermore, the professional development provided was not geared towards the education of ELLs. In response to teachers currently struggling in

Very few schoolwide reform models specifically address the needs of ELLs. Models must develop the capacity to meet the needs of this population, both before and during implementation, by creating model components that incorporate effective educational programming and instructional approaches for ELLs.

the implementation phase, the school district has supported local educators in their quest to account for the educational needs of these students within the model (J. Brown, personal communication, February 8, 2001).

A growing number of model developers are beginning to incorporate the needs of the ELL population during the development and planning phases. The *Success for All* model, for example, specifically targets disadvantaged children in inner city schools. One of the most common comprehensive school reform programs, it is currently being implemented in at least 747 schools (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory [NREL], 1999). The model restructures elementary schools, with a focus on reading, and prescribes curricula and instructional strategies for teaching. *Success for All* developed a Spanish version for its

Connmigo” and native-language assessments are available to support English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual instruction through sixth grade. Researchers have begun to evaluate ELL performance in schools that have adopted the program (Durán & Slavin, 1996).

### ***Issues in the Implementation and Evaluation of Comprehensive School Reform***

The recent attention paid to the creation and expansion of schoolwide reform programs has raised a number of issues and questions that impact all students, including ELLs. For example, research by the RAND Corporation on the first two years’ implementation of New American Schools’ whole-school designs (which include several models mentioned in the CSRD legislation) showed significant variation among the schools in the level of implementation obtained. Of the 40 schools in the study, about half (45%) were still at early implementation phases; four schools were still only in the planning stages. RAND identified several barriers to implementation at the school, design team, and district/institutional levels:

- Poor communication with schools, rushed and limited school choice in design selection, and negative school climate due to strife or leadership turnover;
- Unstable leadership of design teams, limited capacity of staff serving schools, inability of design teams to engage school and district support, and lack of emphasis on key criteria associated with design success (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development); and
- Unstable district leadership and political crises, distrust between central office and schools, and lack of resources (Bodilly, 1998).

These barriers indicate how important local politics are within a school and district for the success of whole-school reform. Furthermore, the RAND findings suggest it is extremely difficult to successfully implement comprehensive reform quickly.

Comprehensive school reform implementation shows the greatest effects on student achievement where: (1) programs are well-matched with local needs; (2) principals and central administrators fully implement the design, with adaptation to the local setting; (3) ongoing professional development and technical assistance are provided and are relevant to school issues and problems; and (4) curriculum is rigorous (Stringfield et al., 1997). How student achievement

is measured, however, raises another critical issue pertaining to the inclusion of ELLs in comprehensive school reform: evaluation.

At the center of current debate is confusion over which schoolwide reform models, if any, improve education. While this issue affects all models, it is particularly complex in those programs serving ELLs. One of the primary criticisms of comprehensive school reform models has been that so little research exists to back up the effectiveness of the most popular models (Viadero, 1999). That was the conclusion of Olson (1999) in her review of *An Educator's Guide to Schoolwide Reform* (1999). The *Guide* surveys the research on twenty-four different whole-school reform models and suggests that little research addresses this area. According to Olson, this has serious consequences:

*... according to the report, "most of the prose describing these approaches remains uncomfortably silent about their effectiveness." That leaves schools in the tough position of deciding which model to choose with little evidence to go on. (Olson, 1999)*

A third of the models reviewed in the *Guide* provided no research offering evidence of positive effects on student achievement. Studies that did provide "[e]vidence of positive effects on student achievement" most often used standardized tests, including statewide assessments, to demonstrate their effectiveness (Herman et al., 1999).

Evidence of effectiveness based on standardized tests is particularly problematic for ELLs, who are at a disadvantage with "one-size-fits-all" assessments – particularly when English-medium tests that were developed to assess native English-speakers are used to evaluate the content-area knowledge of ELLs. Assessment of an English language learner's content-area knowledge administered in English may be greatly influenced by the student's English language proficiency; as such, the tests measure students' English ability rather than their ability in mathematics, science, or other areas. There is currently no shared understanding of how best to measure the achievement of ELLs on a wide scale, particularly as the tools currently being used to measure student progress are inadequate (Menken, 2000). As a result, there is a dearth of convincing research that indicates comprehensive school reform models are effective in the education of ELLs, and schools do not have the information they need to select a program and develop an effective plan for these students.

## ***Research Directions in Serving ELLs through Comprehensive School Reform***

What is now needed is a great deal of research to evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensive school reform, particularly in the education of ELLs. Recognizing the need for

Extensive research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensive school reform models in the education of ELLs.

further research, the *Catalog of School Reform Models* (1999) by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and the National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform provides information on over sixty models, including *entire-school* models

(covering most aspects of school operations) and *skill- and content-based* models (reading, math, and so on). Descriptions of the models include information about the types of students served (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1999).

Building on this work, the Southwest Comprehensive Center provides a description of schools that have implemented school reform models believed to be effective with the ELL population in their guide, *Comprehensive School Reform Models Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners* (Wilde et al., 1999). While the purpose of the guide is not to evaluate program models per se, the research team selected schools for inclusion in the study based on evidence that ELLs had been successfully incorporated into school reform models. Evidence of effectiveness in serving the ELL population is offered in the description of each school, based on such data as the performance by ELLs on wide-scale and school-based assessments, and their school dropout information.

Two forthcoming studies promise to begin filling some of the evaluation gaps. A longitudinal study by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, *Scaling Up School Restructuring in Multicultural, Multilingual Contexts*, is focused on the impact of externally-developed school reform models in schools serving multicultural/multilingual students (Datnow, 2000). A study by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, *Adapting Comprehensive School Reform Models for English Language Learners*, examines the adjustments made to comprehensive school reform models as they are implemented in schools serving large numbers of ELLs (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000). What is particularly promising about these research projects is that, in addition to offering information about comprehensive school reform models and ELLs, the research is being conducted by third party

researchers; previously, most evaluative research in this area was conducted by model developers themselves.

In addition, a panel created by New American Schools — whose membership is comprised of recognized education reform experts as well as representatives from major education associations and the business community — has created guidelines for comprehensive school reform models (New American Schools, 2001). The panel has set “standards of quality” for providing schoolwide assistance. “The aim is to help consumers decide which designs and providers would be right for their schools and which are most likely to yield results” (Olson, 2000). Guidelines such as these can shape the place held for ELLs in the implementation of comprehensive school reform.

### ***Recommendations***

While new attention is being paid to the effects of schoolwide reform on ELLs, it is clear that further work in this area is urgently needed. The following recommendations are based on the information presented above:

- Models implemented in schools where ELLs are served must incorporate and directly address their needs;
- More research must be generated to evaluate all existing models and other aspects of comprehensive school reform in serving ELLs;
- Studies that plan to evaluate comprehensive school reform on a wide scale must include evaluations of the particular impact on ELLs; and
- Standards that shape the implementation of schoolwide reform should offer guidance on the inclusion of ELLs.

The full inclusion of students who are English language learners in reform models and other aspects of implementation holds the promise that these students also benefit from comprehensive school reform.

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***Online Resources for Further Information about Comprehensive School Reform***

Annenberg Institute for School Reform  
<http://www.aisr.brown.edu/csr/index.html>

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning  
<http://www.mcrel.org/programs/csrd/>

National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform  
<http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu>

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory  
<http://www.ncrel.org/csri/>

Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory At Brown University (LAB)  
<http://www.lab.brown.edu/public/csr/csr-index.shtml>

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory  
<http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/index.html>

Region III Comprehensive Center  
<http://r3cc.ceee.gwu.edu>

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory  
<http://www.sedl.org/csrd/welcome.html>

U.S. Department of Education  
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/index.html>

## **Balancing Teacher Quantity with Quality**

Kate Menken  
with Philippe Holmes

The success of our education system is fully reliant on the presence in our schools of high-quality teachers for all students. Estimates suggest, however, that there continues to be a profound teacher shortage; some two million new teachers will be needed over the next ten years. Primary reasons cited for the shortage are that more teachers are reaching retirement age today than at anytime in the last five decades, while nearly 30% of new teachers leave the profession within five years (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

At the same time, the number of students in our schools who are English language learners (ELLs, also known as limited English proficient or LEP students) has been growing at an average annual rate five times that of the total enrollment (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1999). While advances have been made to promote the effective education of ELLs, the body of teachers most qualified to meet their needs has been unable to match their growth. As efforts are made to satisfy the ongoing demand for new teachers prepared to work with this population of students, they must balance the need for quantity with an emphasis on quality.

### ***The Shortage of Teachers for ELLs***

Although recent changes in demographics dictate that half of all teachers may anticipate educating an English language learner during their career (McKeon, 1994), currently only 2.5% of teachers who instruct ELLs possess a degree in English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual education; only 30% of all teachers with English language learners in their classrooms have received any professional development in teaching these students (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).

In 1994, the General Accounting Office reported a shortage of 175,000 bilingual teachers (General Accounting Office, 1994). In their survey of large urban school districts, the Urban Teacher Collaborative found the following:

*At the elementary level ... Bilingual educators are also in immediate demand (67.5%), as are English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers (60%) (The Urban Teacher Collaborative, 2000, p. 5).*

Research argues that teachers who share the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students are better able to identify and serve their needs. In 1992, however, when almost one half of ELLs were Hispanic, 93% of their teachers were non-Hispanic whites (Fleischman & Hopstock 1993). Today, the number of Hispanic students majoring in education is declining faster than the overall decline in education majors. At the current rate of decline, a ratio of only 5% minority teachers to 40% minority students could be a reality early in this century.

The shortage of qualified teachers is most extreme in urban areas, where the majority of ELLs reside. A severe shortage of teachers in these urban districts threatens to exacerbate conditions where the waiver of teaching requirements has become common practice. In 1999, two-thirds of the 54 largest urban school districts reported an immediate demand for K-6 bilingual teachers. Over 80 percent of the same districts reported allowing non-credentialed teachers to teach (The Urban Teacher Collaborative, 2000).

Earlier concerns about an impending teacher shortage in the early 1980s prompted the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) *Teacher Demand and Shortage* survey, which was carried out over the 1987-88, 1990-91 and 1993-94 school years. It found that the number of full-time teaching positions that went unfilled during that period actually declined because teachers were increasingly teaching subjects outside of their field of specialization and because many were hired without the proper certification. During the 1990-91 school year, for example, 71% of secondary school students in high poverty districts were taught physical science by a teacher lacking at least a minor in the field (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). These findings indicate that school districts respond to this shortage of qualified teachers by lowering their standards for entering the teaching profession.

Teacher preparation has become a target for national reform efforts as a means to ensure the quality of all teachers.

### ***The Significance of High Quality Teachers***

At a time when students are expected to achieve to higher standards than ever before, the need for high quality teachers in our public schools is of increasing concern. In 1996, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future exposed many of the problems concerning the quality of public school teachers in the United States, particularly with regard to

their preparation to teach, and galvanized a renewed belief in the important role that teachers play in student achievement. They write:

*Roughly ¼ of newly hired American teachers lack the qualifications for their jobs. More than 12% of new hires enter the classroom without any formal training at all, and another 14% arrive without fully meeting state standards (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996, p. 9).*

The National Commission’s report identifies teacher expertise as the “single most important factor” in predicting student achievement, and found that fully trained teachers are far more effective than teachers who are not prepared (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996, p.12). In the wake of the Commission’s report, much research has been generated in support of the notion that teachers can and do make a difference in student achievement. For example, Linda Darling-Hammond and Deborah Ball found that teachers’ education, certification, knowledge and experience are measures of their effectiveness; well-prepared teachers affected student outcomes as much as socioeconomic factors (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998, p. 2).

A recent study by the Education Trust emphasizes the influence of teachers’ deep content knowledge on teacher effectiveness. The Education Trust analyzed research findings from Tennessee, Texas, Massachusetts and Alabama to draw the following conclusion:

*The difference between a good and a bad teacher can be a full level of achievement in a single school year (Education Trust, 1998, p. 3).*

In addition to offering further support for the importance of teachers’ content knowledge and basic skills, the Education Trust posits that the third key criterion for teacher effectiveness is their ability to teach what they know. However, there is little research identifying the knowledge and skills that teachers must possess to be effective.

### ***Directions in Ensuring High-Quality Teachers for ELLs***

Even though researchers have yet to agree upon the best assessment of what new teachers know and are able to do, many agree that current teacher preparation and testing practices are not good enough. In a climate of accountability to the high standards that states and school districts have set for students and their teachers, teacher assessment and licensure has become a target for

national reform efforts, along with teacher preparation and ongoing professional development designed to ensure high quality teaching staff.

### State Licensure of Bilingual/ESL Teachers

State licensure requirements are currently a primary gatekeeper to ensure the quality of new teachers for ELLs in our public schools. However, 12 states require neither ESL nor bilingual education certification or endorsement (McKnight & Antunez, 1999). In spite of a significant population of ELLs in Pennsylvania, for example, teachers of these students are not required by the state to have received bilingual education or ESL preparation. Only a minority of the School District of Philadelphia's ESL or bilingual education teachers were prepared to teach ELLs prior to entering the classroom – despite the fact that the district currently enrolls over 10,000 English language learners. Furthermore, the national shortage of ESL and bilingual teachers acts as a disincentive to this and other states to require licensure in this area, as states and districts would then need to grapple with even greater difficulties filling vacancies.

Teachers' education, certification, knowledge and experience are measures of their effectiveness; well-prepared teachers were found to affect student outcomes as much as socioeconomic factors (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998, p. 2).

In states that do have licensure requirements for teachers of ELLs, researchers acknowledge problems with the testing practices employed. The issue is not limited to teachers of ELLs; tests used to assess all new teachers have received a great deal of criticism. The problems identified include:

- Only 29 states require teachers to take tests in the subject area they will teach (*Education Week*, 2000).
- Tests do not certify that teachers have the breadth and depth of subject knowledge to teach all students to high standards and are inadequate to measure teaching skill. The majority of tests are multiple-choice assessments of basic skills, dominated by high-school level material with no evidence of content at the baccalaureate level (Education Trust, 1999).
- Numerous loopholes exist: Certain states require that prospective teachers only answer half of the questions on teacher exams correctly (Education Trust, 1999), states allow new teachers into the classroom who have failed licensure exams, states that require teachers to pass exams in the subject areas they will teach can waive those requirements, and districts can hire new teachers who have not met licensure requirements through emergency certification (*Education Week*, 2000).

## Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

The current shortage of teachers, particularly teachers for English language learners, places new demands on teacher preparation and inservice professional development programs to cultivate a pool of teachers able to effectively teach a diverse population of students. Not only must such programs respond to the demand for teachers in innovative ways, quality must remain at the core of program goals.

Current approaches acknowledge that professional development is not a “one-shot” process, but is best when sustained over time. Teacher inquiry, or the “teacher-as-learner,” offers teachers the opportunity to gather the data they need to reflect on their practice. This critical reflection process is fostered when teachers work collaboratively, as part of “learning communities,” so that they can learn from and challenge each other (Little, 1993).

The Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR) has applied these theories of professional development to teachers of ELLs in their model, *Teachers’ Learning Communities*. Margarita Calderón offers supports for CRESPAR’s peer coaching approach in the following passage:

*By creating a culture of inquiry through ethnography, professional learning becomes more focused and accelerated. With the tools of “teacher ethnography,” the teams of monolingual and bilingual teachers can learn about their teaching by observing the students and their partner, and can draw closer together. Change becomes meaningful, relevant, and necessary. Although these professional development programs are still in development, studies have demonstrated that continuous learning by teachers is bringing about instructional program refinement and greater student gains. (Calderón, 1997, p. 10)*

Training for teachers of language minority students must go beyond incorporation of research on effective professional development to also provide teachers with the knowledge and understanding of content and language learning that is necessary to meet the specific needs of these learners. The critical elements of that understanding are identified in the following:

*Teachers need to understand basic constructs of bilingualism and second language development, the nature of language proficiency, the role of the first language and culture in learning, and the demands that mainstream education places on culturally*

*diverse students (Clair, 1993). Teachers need to continually reassess what schooling means in the context of a pluralistic society; the relationships between teachers and learners; and attitudes and beliefs about language, culture, and race (Clair, Adger, Short & Millen, 1998; González & Darling-Hammond, 1997). Moreover, teachers need a “vision of students as capable individuals for whom limited English proficiency does not signify deficiency and for whom limited academic skills do not represent an incurable situation” (Walqui, 1999). Finally, promising professional development in culturally diverse schools assumes that combining content, ESL, and bilingual teachers would make complementary knowledge and perspectives available to everyone (Clair & Adger, 1999).*

Clearly, the demands placed upon teachers of ELLs are great. Not only must these teachers possess the deep subject-matter knowledge required in order for ELLs to meet grade-level content standards, but they must also possess the pedagogy to enable these students to access the knowledge and skills contained in the standards, and they must have a thorough understanding of their students’ language acquisition process.

Promising standards for teachers of English language learners address such features as proficiency in two languages, an understanding of the impact of students’ cultures on their learning, and how to aid students in the development of their language abilities.

#### Standards for Teachers of ELLs

While much further research is needed, there is a growing body of knowledge defining the attributes of high-quality teaching for all students. Promising teacher preparation and professional development programs are based upon what we know about effective teaching (Rueda, 1998), and several groups have now delineated these attributes in standards for teachers of English language learners. The following organizations have all developed such standards:

- National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) Professional Standards for the Preparation of Bilingual/Multicultural Teachers (1992)
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) English as a New Language Standards (1998)
- Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) Standards for Effective Teaching Practice (1998)
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Pre-K-12 ESL Teacher Education Standards (forthcoming)

The standards listed here build upon general education program standards, such as those produced by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education, to specifically address the needs of ELLs. They include such features as proficiency in two languages, an understanding of the impact of students' cultures on their learning, and how to aid students in the development of their language abilities. Increasingly, standards are being used as the foundation for state licensure, teacher preparation and professional development programs to ensure that these programs are inclusive of the ELL population.

### Professional Development for *All* Teachers

Although much research has been generated in support of bilingual education, ELLs typically spend most of their school day in the all-English-medium mainstream; programs such as ESL “pull-out” continue to pervade U.S. public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). Additionally, there is little of the collaboration among teachers that would support diverse student needs (Sakash & Rodríguez-Brown, 1995). Therefore, cultivating a large pool of successful bilingual education and ESL teachers is not enough. To enable students who are ELLs to attain the same rigorous content as their grade-level peers requires all teachers to be prepared to work with this population.

ELLs in English-medium classrooms are not just responsible for the development of the cognitive skills necessary for them to grasp content material, but they must also focus on linguistic learning in order to access that content material. This entails acquiring new vocabulary, learning strategies, and culture-specific classroom discourse. For mainstream teachers to meet these very specific needs requires that they:

- make academic content accessible to LEP students;
- integrate language and content instruction;
- respect and incorporate students' first languages in instruction; and
- understand how differences in language and culture affect students' classroom participation (Menken & Look, 2000, p. 22-23).

In planning effective educational programs for ELLs, it is important to consider these teacher behaviors and instructional approaches, and include mainstream teachers in high quality teacher preparation and professional development programs.

### ***Balancing Quantity with Quality***

The issue of teacher quality is at odds with efforts to quickly resolve the national shortage of teachers. Regarding teacher licensure, the teacher shortage undermines efforts to improve the quality of teachers by placing pressure on states and districts to: hire non-certified teachers, place teachers in positions for which they were not trained (“out-of-field teaching”), and avoid testing requirements. Effective teacher preparation and professional development offer the opportunity to improve the quality of teachers in U.S. public schools.

There have been major advances in the research in this area, and exemplary new programs created; in addition to the professional development work of CRESPAR already described, several other initiatives are shedding light on the needs of such programs. The Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE), for example, is currently compiling a national directory of exemplary preservice and inservice programs that effectively prepare ESL, bilingual, and mainstream teachers to work with linguistically and culturally diverse students. Research in this direction offers promising insights on the current successes and challenges for preparing teachers of ELLs.

However, the training that most teachers receive continues to be inadequate to meet the demands placed upon them. In their comprehensive investigation of research in this field, Diane August and Kenji Hakuta (1997) conclude:

*... despite advances in some programs, the research on staff development and preservice programs concludes that there is a marked mismatch between what we know about effective professional development and what is actually available to most teachers. Although there has been a paradigm shift in theoretical approaches to professional development, these approaches are not well established in practice. For example, most inservice professional development continues to take the form of short-term, superficial workshops that expose teachers to various concepts without providing the depth of treatment or connection to practice necessary for lasting effects. (August & Hakuta, 1997, p. 255)*

It is evident that states must test teachers with useful assessment tools and do away with the numerous loopholes that allow the tests to be undermined and/or disregarded. Doing away with the state licensure loopholes, however, requires the creation of new incentives to attract and develop high-quality prospective teachers who are willing and able to teach. Such incentives include:

- offering dramatic financial incentives to teach such as tuition reimbursement and increased salaries;
- putting into place the necessary support structures to prepare new teachers to pass more demanding assessments and perform to high standards (such as those the Council for Basic Education is developing in their STAR program); and
- providing sufficient supports for new teachers once they are in classrooms to sustain them and curtail high turnover rates among new teachers.

By restoring distinction to the field through quality preparation and professional development, and offering at least some increase in salary to reflect this more extensive training, more individuals would be interested in teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

### ***Conclusion***

Addressing the shortage of teachers is critical. Augmenting the quality of those teachers is equally important. The research studies mentioned above note the direct impact that teacher quality has on student performance. It is clear from this research that cultivating even *one* new teacher to perform to high standards impacts every student that teacher encounters during his or her career. Also clear is that the accurate assessment of these new teachers requires a better understanding of what effective teaching is. Organizations such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards are likely to guide this exploration in their articulation of teaching standards and their assessment of teachers' abilities. These efforts need to be evaluated and supported further.

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### ***Resources Online***

Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE)  
<http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/>  
*5 Standards for Effective Pedagogy* (1998). Santa Cruz, CA: Author  
<http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/Standards/Standards.html>

National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)  
<http://www.nabe.org>  
*Professional Standards for the Preparation of Bilingual/Multicultural Teachers* (1992)  
Washington, DC: Author.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)  
<http://www.nbpts.org>  
*English as a New Language Standards* (1998). Arlington, VA: Author  
<http://www.nbpts.org/standards/summaries.html>

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)  
<http://www.tesol.org>  
*Pre-K-12 ESL Teacher Education Standards* (forthcoming). Draft Available:  
<http://www.tesol.org/assoc/p12standards/index.html>

## **When Everyone is Involved: Parents and Communities in School Reform**

Beth Antunez

Education research repeatedly documents that parent and community involvement in education contributes to students' academic success. When families, communities and schools form partnerships to enable children's learning, everyone benefits—schools work better, families become closer, community resources thrive, and students improve academically. Language minority students and English language learners (ELLs) in particular, are considerably more likely to succeed when their parents participate in their education by helping with homework, attending school events, conferring with teachers, serving as volunteers, or participating in school governance (Bermúdez & Márquez, 1996; Tse, 1996). Likewise, when communities become active participants, they assist ELLs in overcoming multiple academic challenges. While the importance of forging partnerships with parents and communities is well recognized, specific barriers and strategies for overcoming these barriers exist for those concerned with the education of ELLs.

### ***Importance of Parent and Community Involvement to the Education of ELLs***

Research on parent involvement and its powerful influence is broad and clear. Comprehensive surveys of this research (Henderson & Berla, 1995; National PTA, 1998) document the following benefits for students, families, and schools.

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' education level.
- When parents are involved in their students' education, those students have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and complete homework more consistently.
- Students whose parents are involved in their lives have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education.
- Educators hold higher expectations of students whose parents collaborate with the teacher. They also hold higher opinions of those parents.
- In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, student achievement for disadvantaged children not only improves, but can also reach levels that are standard

for middle-class children. In addition, the children who are farthest behind make the greatest gains.

- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution.
- Student behaviors, such as alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behavior decrease as parent involvement increases.
- Students are more likely to fall behind in academic performance if their parents do not participate in school events, develop a working relationship with their child's educators, or keep up with what is happening in their child's school.
- Junior and senior high school students whose parents remain involved make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, and develop realistic plans for their future. Students whose parents are not involved, on the other hand, are more likely to drop out of school.
- The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to: 1) create a home environment that encourages learning; 2) communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and 3) become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

On their own, schools and families may not be able to support the academic success of every student (Kirst, 1991). In particular, ELL students, including immigrants and the U.S.-born children of immigrants, may not receive appropriate educational services due to a mismatch between the languages and cultures of the schools and those of their communities (Adger, 2000). In order to meet the multifaceted needs of ELL communities, many schools provide language classes, medical assistance, legal services, and childcare. In this community school model, the families are connected to schools, and receive much needed services. Increasingly, schools rely upon collaborations with local businesses, universities, medical centers, faith-based organizations and other community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide a quality education to all students, including ELLs. Partnerships between schools and CBOs can provide academic, linguistic, and cultural support for ELLs' success. These school/CBO partnerships offer appropriate programs that respect students' linguistic and cultural needs, and are accessible both physically and psychologically. In other words, they operate where and when schools and students need them and in ways that seem comfortable and useful. Furthermore, successful

partnerships can offer and reinforce supports that schools assume students already have, such as health care and other social services. Successful partnerships are distinguished by program flexibility as well as by adequate resources for, and responsiveness to, meeting these broad needs (Adger, 2000).

Promoting partnerships between schools and communities has also been an important topic on the nation's agenda (U.S. Department of Education, 1991) and the positive impact of such partnerships is well documented (Gargiulo & Graves, 1991; Espinosa, 1995). Research specifically suggests that schools of the future must be restructured with the assistance of the business sector and the community at large (U.S. Department of Education, 1992). However, restructuring will be effective only if it includes acknowledgement of barriers and specific strategies to address the needs and promote the involvement of these important players in the educational process.

### ***Barriers to Parent and Community Involvement among ELL Populations***

Often, language and/or cultural barriers prevent parents from feeling confident in their own ability to collaborate with schools and assist in their children's academic achievement. Below is a summary of the primary barriers that can impede full parent and community participation in the educational system (Ritter, Mont-Reynard & Dornbusch, 1993; Inger, 1992; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; García, 1990). Knowledge and understanding of these barriers is the first step toward bridging them.

*Language skills.* Inability to understand the language of the school is a major deterrent to the parents who have not achieved full English proficiency. In these cases, interactions with the schools are difficult, and, therefore, practically nonexistent.

*Home/school partnerships.* In some cultures, such as many Hispanic ones, teaming with the school is not a tradition. Education has been historically perceived as the responsibility of the schools, and parent intervention is viewed as interference with what trained professionals are supposed to do.

*Work interference.* Work is a major reason stated by parents for noninvolvement in school activities. Conflicts between parent and school schedules may mean parents cannot attend school events, help their children with homework, or in other ways become active participants in their children's education.

*Knowledge of the school system.* A great number of low-income parents view schools as an incomprehensible and purposefully exclusionary system. Lack of trust is often the result of misunderstanding the perceived intentions of each party. Sending home communications in English only and scheduling meetings at times when parents cannot attend serve to reinforce parent apprehension. The lack of involvement that results from mistrust and apprehension is often misperceived by schools as a lack of concern for the children’s education.

*Self-confidence.* Many parents of ELL students believe that their participation does not help schools perform their jobs as educational institutions; as a result, they separate themselves from the process. Parents who feel uncomfortable in the school setting are less likely to be involved than those who have developed a sense of equal partnership.

Certain pedagogical models, such as family literacy or developmental bilingual education, may facilitate parent involvement.

*Past experiences.* Many non-English speaking parents have had negative education experiences of their own, and these memories linger through adulthood. In some cases, these parents have fallen victim to racial and linguistic discrimination by the schools. Negative feelings toward home-school interaction are often reinforced when schools communicate with parents only to share bad news about their children.

### ***Supporting Parent and Community Involvement for ELLs***

Research on effective practices for all students has identified a number of factors that support parent involvement, many of which are especially relevant to parents of ELLs. For example, parent involvement in children’s education is higher if school policies and teacher practices are designed with parents in mind (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1992). A salient feature of exemplary parent-involvement programs is respect for cultural diversity and active efforts to strengthen the native language in the home (McCullum & Russo, 1993). When parents’ home language is limited, they serve as poor models for children acquiring the language. Home language loss can also have “serious [negative] consequences for parent-child relationships” (Wong Fillmore, 1991). Therefore, certain pedagogical models, such as family literacy or developmental bilingual education, may facilitate parent involvement. Family literacy programs support education for the whole family, connect parents to their children’s schooling and increase student achievement (Mulhern, Rodríguez-Brown, & Shanahan, 1994). Developmental

bilingual education models, because they are designed to develop both languages, facilitate family communication.

Research shows that schools can involve and empower parents of ELL students to fully participate in the education of their children. Following are concrete examples of how schools can immediately increase parental involvement and subsequently establish mutual trust and respect between themselves and parents:

- Translate parent meetings and informational materials into community languages;
- Offer adult English classes and family literacy programs;
- Make explicit unstated rules and behavioral expectations (for example, that parents are expected to attend parent/teacher conferences);
- Invite and encourage parents to volunteer at the school; and
- Offer power-sharing relationships by encouraging parents to form advocacy groups and enabling them to share in decision-making about school programs and policies (Delgado-Gaitán, 1991).

A similar set of outreach strategies was outlined in a more recent study of how to successfully involve Hispanic parents (Espinosa, 1995). Many of these recommendations are relevant to parents of all languages and cultures:

- *Personal Touch.* Written flyers or articles sent home have proven to be ineffective even when written in Spanish. Thus, it is crucial to also use face-to-face communication, recognizing that it may take several personal meetings before the parents gain sufficient trust to actively participate. Home visits are a particularly good way to begin to develop rapport.
- *Non-Judgmental Communication.* In order to gain the trust and confidence of Hispanic parents, teachers must avoid making them feel they are to blame or are doing something wrong when their children do not do well. Parents need to be supported for their strengths, not judged for perceived failings.
- *Perseverance in Maintaining Involvement.* To keep Hispanic parents actively engaged, program activities must respond to a real need or concern of the parents. Teachers should have a good idea about what parents will get out of each meeting and how the meeting will help them in their role as parents.
- *Bilingual Support.* All communication with Hispanic parents, written and oral, must be provided in Spanish and English. Having bicultural and bilingual staff helps promote trust.

- *Strong Leadership and Administrative Support.* Flexible policies, a welcoming environment, and a collegial atmosphere all require administrative leadership and support. As with other educational projects or practices that require innovation and adaptation, the efforts of teachers alone cannot bring success to parent involvement projects. Principals must also be committed to project goals.
- *Staff Development Focused on Hispanic Culture.* All staff must understand the key features of Hispanic culture and its impact on their students' behavior and learning styles. It is the educator's obligation to learn as much about the culture and background of their students as possible.

Outreach efforts need not be limited to parents. Schools can identify and access community organizations able to provide opportunities for out-of-school experiences that enrich children's lives. These organizations can keep children safe, mobilize needed services, and provide children with opportunities for productive use of free time. In neighborhoods that are rich with resources, it is taken for granted that children will be exposed to opportunities for experiential learning, travel, recreation, and experiencing the arts. When ELLs lack opportunities to be exposed to community resources – because of language, financial, or cultural

CBOs are in a position to make deliberate and concerted efforts to provide these opportunities (Schorr, 2000). Additionally, schools can serve as a resource and referral agency to support the overall strength and stability of the families by having access to family literacy programs, vocational training, ESL programs, improved medical and dental services, and other community-based social services.

Partnerships between school and community broaden the base of support for language minority students.

***An Effective Model***

Schools and school districts throughout the nation have established meaningful policies and practices to involve parents and the community. For example, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) has

established that each school site, preschool through high school, develop a long-range parent involvement plan that is an integral part of the general school improvement plan. The plan must address the needs of parents of linguistically and culturally diverse and impoverished students, and require that each school assess the effectiveness of its plan in involving these parents. Additionally, the district requires:

- all school communications to parents be issued in the major languages of the district's linguistically diverse students;
- all public meetings with parents to be translated between English and the major languages of the district's linguistically diverse students; further, that the language of communication used to conduct the meetings will not always be English with translation provided into the parents' languages, but, instead, that meetings will also be conducted on a regular basis in the languages of the parents and translated into English.
- all one-to-one communications and meetings between a student's parent(s) and the school be conducted in the language of the parent(s); further, that the student may not be utilized as the translator.

SFUSD also recommends that schools go beyond the traditional ways of engaging and empowering parents to include strategies that:

- Provide flexible hours for holding meetings so that parents are able to attend;
- Enable familiarity with their students' communities;
- Provide parents with access to information, planning and power structures;
- Teach parents about school institutions and structures;
- Involve parents in professional development efforts;
- Recognize the contributions of parents and communicate respect to parents; and
- Identify sources of knowledge that parents possess and incorporating them into curricula.

### ***Conclusion***

Bermúdez and Márquez (1996) highlight the fact that efforts to involve the community in the education of ELL students invariably lead to the involvement of parents. Thus, there is a three-way link between parents, schools, and the community. When the partnership between any two of these stakeholders is strengthened, the other two are consequently strengthened. Additionally, enabling and empowering parental and community involvement is an important component of school reform for all students, and the barriers to effective involvement and their proposed remedies merit everyone's consideration. For ELLs, the need to examine and establish effective involvement programs is especially crucial to academic success. Given the established benefits associated with engaging parents and communities in school activities, it is worth the time and effort to create bridges that will allow them to communicate effectively between these two important worlds of children.



## Resource Guide

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## ***Organizations***

America Reads

<http://www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/readnow.html>

Center on Family, School and Community Partnerships

<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm>

Communities in Schools

<http://www.cisnet.org/index.html>

ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education

<http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/>

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education

<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu>

National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

<http://www.pta.org>

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs:

<http://www.pta.org/programs/invstand.htm>

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL)

<http://www.nwrel.org>

Parent and Community Involvement Resources

<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/library/parent.htm>

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (PFIE)

<http://pfie.ed.gov/>

The Southeast Asian Culture and Education Foundation (SEACAEF)

<http://www.seacaef.org>

United States Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov>

Links to each state's parent resource centers:

<http://www.ed.gov/Programs/bastmp/PRC.htm>

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