
Chapter 2 At-a-Glance

Chapter 2 will provide you with introductory information in three areas.

The first topic is “Who are our migrant students?” and includes information that will familiarize you with migrant students and their parents. The term “migrant” is often confused with “immigrant”—especially because many migrant farm workers and their children have come to the U.S. as immigrants.

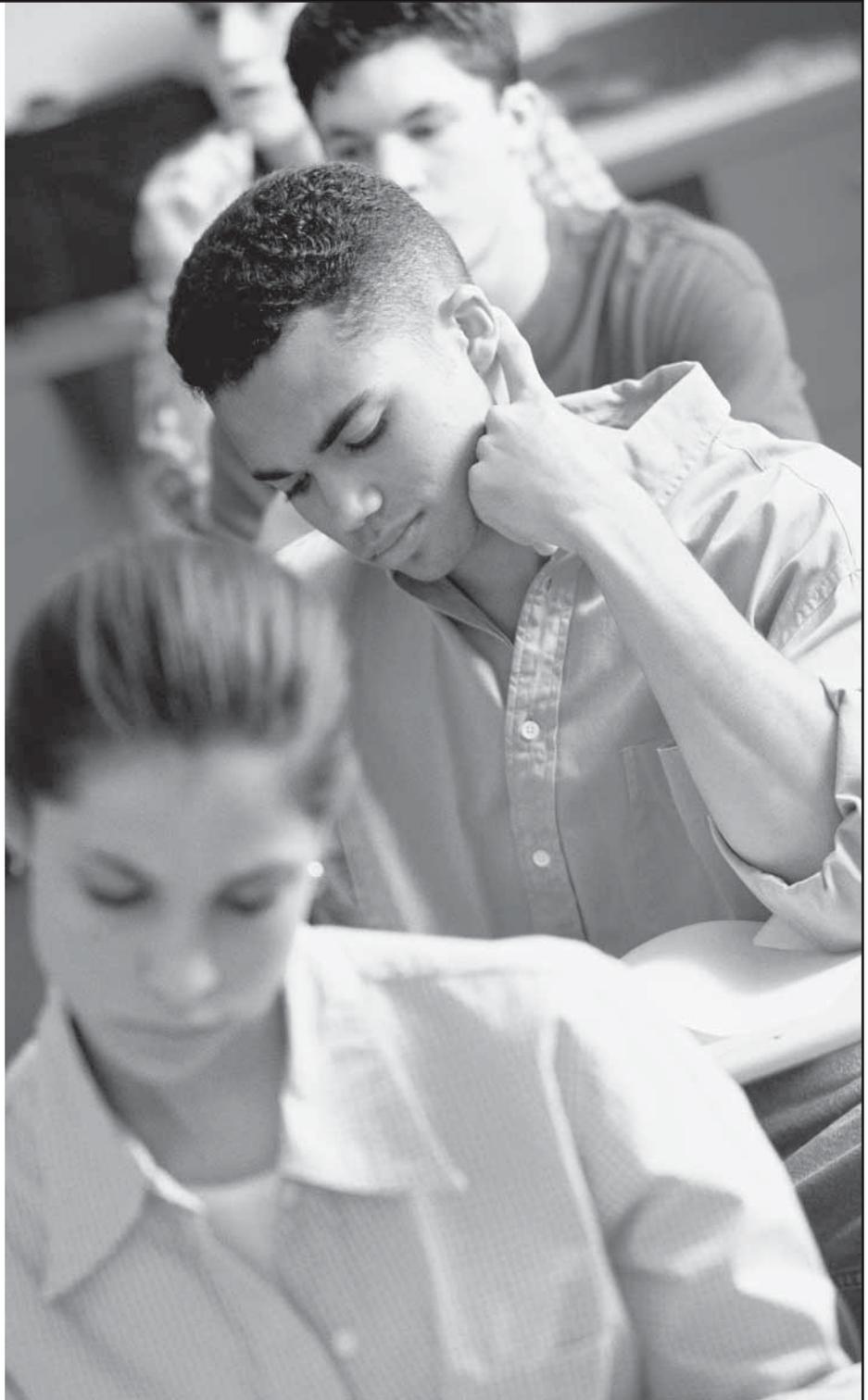
The second topic is “Facts about learning a second language.” This section will provide you with an overview of the nature of second language acquisition as well as an explanation of the importance of using the student’s native language as a resource. You will also learn about how bilingual students “have two language systems that both overlap and are distinct” as they continue to gain proficiency in English. The section ends with some specific advice for teachers of English language learners.

The third topic is “What can I do as a teacher?” This section contains specific suggestions on how you can best support your migrant students both inside and outside of the classroom. You will find tips on how you can help them succeed in the classroom as well as information about supplemental programs such as English as a second language that your school/district should be offering to students with limited English proficiency. You will read about ways that you can collaborate more effectively with your school’s ESL teacher(s). In addition, what federal law says about a district’s responsibilities for serving ELLs is outlined here.

The complex topics of grade retention and special education referrals will also be addressed, and, finally, there is some basic Spanish vocabulary for those who want to brush up on high school Spanish or begin learning your own second language.

“One problem I had recently was facing my future. I had the decision to either continue in school or quit to help my family in money problems. Well, I decided to continue in school so that I could go to college and get a good job and then help my family. I learned that staying in school is the best way I could help my family.”

—Saul,
a tenth-grade
migrant student



Who Are Our Migrant Students?

Migrant students are highly mobile and are likely to have recently arrived in your school district. Each one of you can do your part to help your migrant students succeed as they strive to graduate from high school and pursue continuing education opportunities. You can have a particularly profound impact by taking a personal interest in your migrant students, being flexible, and providing comprehensible instruction for students who frequently have gaps in their knowledge of course content and/or limited proficiency in English.

In the following sections, you'll be provided with some answers to the question "Who are our migrant students?"

CHAPTER 2: Migrant Students, Schools, and Culture

Feelings of self-worth can flourish only in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open, and rules are flexible—the kind of atmosphere that is found in a nurturing family.

—Virginia Satir

1. Characteristics of Migrant Students and Parents

Students

Migrant students are students who move with their families as many as two or three times each school year. Their parents are usually farm workers who are compelled to move frequently in order to harvest and/or process seasonal crops. A family who spends the winter in Florida picking oranges begins to move north in the spring to pick peaches in Georgia and then to New York in the fall to pick apples. Once the apples are picked and the cold weather comes, the migrant family heads back to Florida until the following spring, when the cycle begins again. While many migrant children were born in the United States, the majority of mobile migrants are primarily of Mexican (77 percent, National Agricultural Workers Survey, 1997-98), Central American, Puerto Rican, or Haitian origin. Many of these migrant students will move through your school without ever finishing a grade and may or may not come back the following year after encounters with other schools. These students—whose English proficiency is often limited—face the chal-

lenge of adapting to a new school, new teachers, and new classmates many times each year. Many of the U.S.-born middle and high school migrant students are fluent in English, but they have trouble succeeding in school because of the many risk factors associated with their highly mobile lifestyle. Migrant children draw a lot of strength from their family, which is the focal point and the one constant in their lives.

An increasing number of migrant families are staying put as they seek more stable jobs in poultry processing or other agriculturally-related processing jobs. The eligibility for the federally funded migrant education program is three years from the time that a family has moved to your district. This means that you may have migrant students who are less mobile than the classic migrant previously described. In addition, there are fewer families migrating because the farm workforce increasingly consists of young, single males who are recent immigrants (NAWS, 1997-98).

As responsible members of the family, children are often called upon to fulfill adult roles such as babysitting, translating, getting a job, or transporting a parent to an appointment. These responsibilities sometimes conflict with the school system's expectation that each student must attend school unless he or she is sick. Along with learning responsibility early, children are taught to respect and obey adults, both within and outside of the family.

The middle and high school years are particularly difficult for highly mobile students who want to fit in with their peers more than anything. Migrant children who attend rural schools where there are few students they can relate to may feel isolated, incompetent, scared, and uncomfortable (in addition to the riot of emotions experienced by a typical teenager). They frequently feel caught between the two worlds of home and school—each with its own rules, language, and norms of behavior.

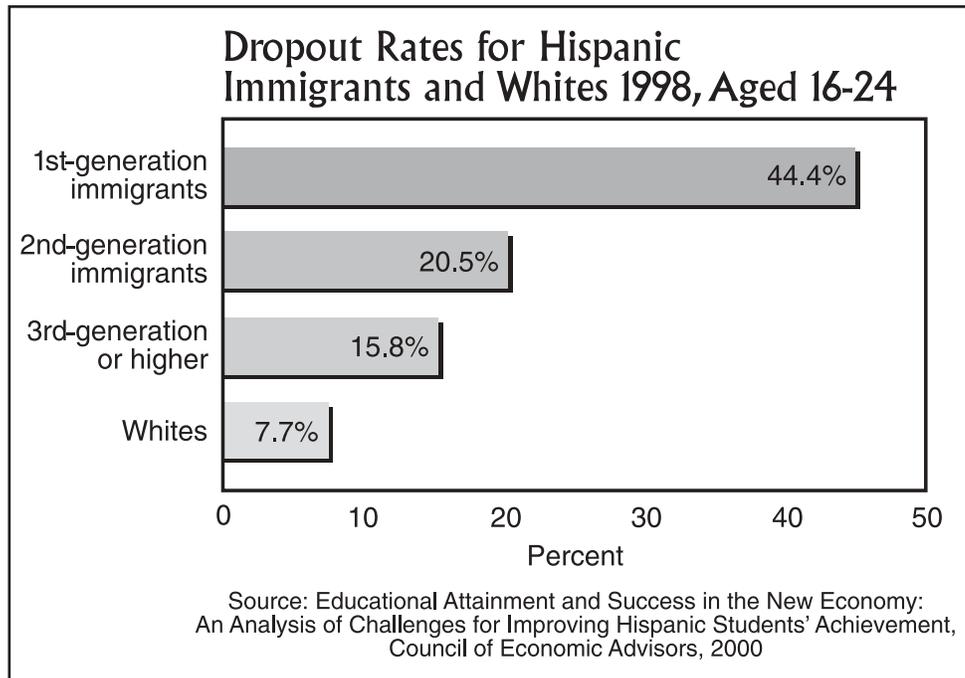
Some migrant students from rural areas of Mexico or Central America face a more challenging adaptation process because they may not speak Spanish (see “home language”), and they may be very unfamiliar with “mainstream” concepts of schooling. These students who speak an indigenous language at home often have a very reserved affect and tend to be extremely shy and uncomfortable when they are the center of attention.

Making an effort to overtly welcome and get to know your migrant teenagers and encouraging your other students to do the same will go a long way toward helping them feel accepted and good about themselves. It is essential to find out what each student knows both from schooling in the home country and schooling in the United States. In this way, you can contribute in a meaningful way to maintaining the educational continuity that is vital for these students to succeed.

Parents

The parents of migrant students work very hard, make little money (about \$8,000 a year on average), and often live in substandard housing. They tend to come from rural areas of their native countries or the U.S. and often have a marginal level of education because they had to begin working at a young age and/or schools were unavailable. The vast majority of migrant parents speak Spanish (84 percent), while some speak an indigenous language, Haitian Creole, or Vietnamese. They tend to know little about the requirements that your school system may have.

Education is highly valued by most migrant families. It is seen as a ticket to the future, providing the possibility of a job that promises better wages and is not subject to the whims of the weather and the marketplace. Migrant parents firmly believe in the importance of education and are convinced that it will offer their children opportunities that they did not have. However, believing in the value of education and actually providing ongoing support for the pursuit of education may result in two, often conflicting desires. Because the nature of migrant work involves the challenges of mobility and limited peak earning times, daily attendance at school may sometimes be considered a “luxury.” When survival ne-



cessitates that all who wish to eat must work, or when work comes to an end and stakes must be pulled up yet again, education may become secondary to survival. Many migrant families will try to delay their departure or leave before a harvest is complete in order to ensure that their children don't miss any school. Once they become aware of the importance of attending school regularly, parents often come up with special arrangements—such as leaving their school-aged children behind with a relative while they move to another district or state to obtain work.

The family is essentially patriarchal, at least to outward appearances. The roles of males and females are clearly defined—males are seen as the breadwinners, decision-makers, and disciplinarians. Although migrant women often labor next to the men and contribute financially to the family, their roles

are more often defined by homemaking and child-rearing. Initial concerns or difficulties may be discussed with the mother, but the father's approval must be secured before any significant decisions can be made.

You will probably need to ask a bilingual person to help you determine what language is used in the home, and the parents' level of awareness of school requirements and expectations. The bilingual person may be an ESL teacher or aide, a migrant education specialist, or a community volunteer. With the help of such a bilingual person, you can either send notes home or call in order to maintain contact with them. Remember, migrant parents want what's best for their children, and you should keep them informed and elicit their support whenever possible. (See Chapter 9, "Fostering Home-School Partnerships," for more in-depth information.)



“My family and I still do things together here; they are just different things from what we did in Mexico. When we first moved here, we all worked together. We worked in the cebollitas (green onion) fields. We worked as a family because it's faster. We helped each other. One person pulls the onion out of the ground, the other person shakes it, another cleans it, and then one of us ties them up together. I think doing things, working together, is important. It makes our family stronger. Sometimes we stay home, and I help my father work on our car. We try to eat dinner together, and when my parents aren't working too late, we go to church together. My parents don't think I should work in the fields when I get older. They tell me that I shouldn't lose a career like a lot of people in the fields. They've also told me that some people get sick because of the work they do in the fields. I think they tell me these things for my well-being, so that I'll study and finish high school.”

—Victor Machuca, a migrant student, talks about his family.
(*Voices from the Fields*, S. Beth Atkin, p. 50)

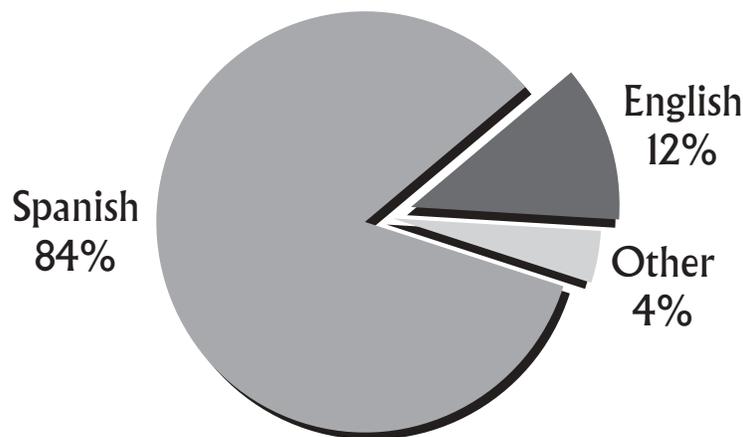
2. Home Language

In the homes of most migrant children, the principal language is Spanish. On occasion, the family members communicate using an indigenous language (Mixteco, Kanjobal), although they often know Spanish as well. This is important because you cannot assume that a Mexican or Central American student who enters school will be fluent in Spanish. Find out the language(s) used in the home and the child's schooling history to determine how much Spanish the student knows.

In the migrant community, the parents—as a rule—have limited proficiency in English. According to the most recent National Agricultural Workers Survey (1997-98), just one-tenth of foreign-born farm workers speak or read English fluently. Their literacy level in Spanish may also be quite limited—the NAWS report cites that 85 percent of farm

workers would have difficulty obtaining information from printed materials in any language. They often rely on their children who have learned English in U.S. schools to translate for them—thus placing their children in adult roles and situations very early. Generally speaking, the children who have lived in the United States the longest are the ones who use the most English, although their Spanish remains essential as a means to converse with their parents and older relatives. If a student starts to show signs of being ashamed of her knowledge of another language, this is a potential danger signal that she may lose her ability to use her native language even in the home. As a teacher, your support of a student's knowledge and use of a language other than English will help to ensure that he or she will grow up bilingual—an increasingly important skill in this global economy.

**Native Language of
U.S. Farmworkers**



Source: National Agricultural Workers Survey,
U.S. Department of Labor, 1997

3. The Bilingual Mind



Valdes and Figueroa (1989) point out that bilingualism is the condition of knowing two languages rather than one. Individuals who are bilingual to any extent have two language systems that both overlap and are distinct and that are relied upon in a variety of ways depending upon the linguistic and communicative demands of everyday settings.

In any given moment or circumstance, any bilingual student will have a temporarily stronger language. A bilingual student may have relatively greater fluency with the formal or informal style in either language; or may dream and speak, but not read or write, in one of the languages. Often, too, bilingual students switch back and forth from one language to another as they speak and think. These variations arise from such circumstances as their age of arrival in the U.S., the language(s) spoken at home and in the neighborhood, the frequency of television watching, and, of course, the language(s) emphasized in their classrooms.

In fact, many new immigrants settle in neighborhoods among others from their country of origin and after a time may not speak like a “native” in either of their languages. This is because features of the native language are often integrated into the English spoken in, say, a predominantly Hispanic or Chinese neighborhood, at the same time as English features become part of their spoken and even written native language. Similarly, most “bilingual classes” are places where the teacher and students switch back and forth between two languages, forming mental landscapes that are complex and unique mixtures of both language systems.

Excerpted from Assessing Bilingual Students for Placement and Instruction, Carol Ascher, 1990, ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education

What Are the Benefits of Learning Two Languages?

Throughout the world, knowing more than one language is the norm, not the exception. It is estimated that between half and two-thirds of the world's population is bilingual; the majority of people live in situations where they regularly use two or more languages. Knowing more than one language, therefore, is a skill to be valued and encouraged. Research

shows that continuing to develop a child's native language does not interfere with the acquisition of English—it facilitates the process!

The child who knows more than one language has personal, social, cognitive, and economic advantages, which will continue throughout his or her life.

Some of the benefits of bilingualism are:

Intellectual:

Students need uninterrupted intellectual development. When students who are not yet fluent in English switch to using only English, they are forced to function at an intellectual level below their age. The best way to ensure academic success and intellectual development is for parents and children to use the language they know best with each other.

Additionally, research shows that knowing more than one language increases a person's thinking abilities. Bilingual children have greater mental flexibility and use those skills to their advantage in figuring out math concepts as well as solving word problems.

Personal:

A student's first language is critical to his or her identity. Continuing to develop this language helps the child value his or her culture and heritage, contributing to a positive self-concept.

Social:

When the native language is maintained, important links to family and other community members are preserved and enhanced. By encouraging native language use, you can prepare your child to interact with his/her extended family and the native language community, both in the U.S. and throughout the world.

Educational:

Students who learn English and continue to develop their native language do better in school, and learn English better, than do students who learn English at the expense of their first language.

Economic:

The demand for bilingual employees in this global economy is increasing at a rapid rate. The ability to speak, read, and write two or more languages is a great advantage in the job market.

Excerpted from If Your Child Learns in Two Languages, National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 2000

4. Facts about Learning a Second Language

More than 10 million students currently enrolled in U.S. schools come from homes in which a language other than English is spoken. These students, often referred to as “language-minority students,” represent the fastest-growing segment of the school-age population. Language-minority students may know only their native language, or they may be able to use both their native language and English. According to the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, close to four million language-minority students do not yet have sufficient skills in English to be able to succeed in a traditional classroom in which English is the language of instruction. In many school districts, the term “English Language Learner” (ELL) is used to identify these students. Federal legislation refers to these students as “limited English proficient” (LEP).

Language, both oral and written, is the means by which knowledge is transmitted in homes, schools, and society. Therefore, language is a very important component of the instructional process in school. Research studies have provided the following results on the relationship between language and learning.

There are different degrees of language ability—conversational and classroom.

Conversational English (BICS—Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills)

Conversational English consists of knowing enough English to have a conversation with friends on the playground, with neighbors, or the cashier in the grocery store. It is often referred to as “survival English.” Students usually can attain this type of proficiency in one to two years—from watching television, listening to older siblings, or playing with friends.

Classroom English (CALP—Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency)

Classroom English can best be described as the language skills necessary to understand the academic language used in classroom instruction and in textbooks and the ability to use language to define terms and concepts. Classroom English is more complex and abstract than conversational English and is learned incrementally over time. There are few, if any, contextual clues—such as pictures, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, or body language—used to convey information. The language that teachers and textbooks use becomes more difficult at each grade level, which makes school even more challenging for older LEP students.

Research shows that it takes at least five and possibly up to ten years (Collier, Thomas 1997) to master classroom English. Unfortunately, many students are moved into all-English classrooms too early based solely on their conversational English ability. However, without mastery of classroom English, they will have difficulty competing academically in an all-English setting.

Students Cannot Learn if They Cannot Understand the Language of Instruction.

The language students hear must be comprehensible. If a child doesn't understand what the teacher is saying, s/he is not going to learn content subjects such as math, science, or social studies. Similarly, students will not learn English just by being in a mainstream classroom where the teacher speaks only English.

Excerpted from If Your Child Learns in Two Languages, National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 2000

Stephen Krashen (1981) uses the term “comprehensible input” to describe the type of linguistic data required for second language acquisition.

For input to be comprehensible to the second language learner, it must have the following characteristics:

1

It must contain language already known to the student with some language not yet acquired. This new language can be understood through

- Context
- Paralinguistic clues such as gestures
- Linguistic modifications such as intonation or reduction in rate of speech
- Use of the students' knowledge of the topic

2

It is not sufficient that input focus on messages rather than form. For maximum comprehensibility of the input, the messages must be intrinsically interesting to the students so that they are encouraged to persist in negotiating meaning. Stevick (1980) suggests that content becomes meaningful when it triggers the student's imagination and when it is explored in interaction with other students.

3

The focus on meaningful messages communicated in an understandable manner will ensure that the appropriate grammatical structures are included in the comprehensible input.

Providing students comprehensible second language input is not sufficient, however, for language acquisition to take place. For optimum acquisition to occur, the raw material of language (comprehensible input) must reach and be processed by the brain's language acquisition device. A number of affective factors, termed the “affective filter” (Dulay & Burt, 1977), may limit the amount of comprehensible input available for processing and impede or facilitate the student's production of language.

Such affective filters as low anxiety (Stevick, 1976), positive motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), and self-confidence (Krashen, 1981) have been shown to be positively associated with second language acquisition. Conversely, when students are anxious in the second language classroom, are not motivated to speak the new language, and lack self-confidence and self-esteem, acquisition will be impaired.

Excerpted from Basic Principles for the Education of Language-minority students: An Overview, California State Department of Education, 1982

The Importance of Using a Student's Native Language as a Resource

When a student's native language is used correctly in educational programs, it is of tremendous benefit. It can catalyze and accelerate second language acquisition. When we give students good instruction through their first language, we give them two things:

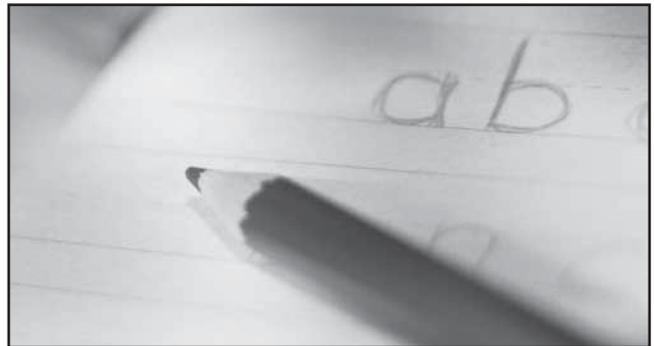
- First, we give them knowledge. This can be subject matter knowledge or knowledge of the world in general. The knowledge students get in their first language can make second language input more comprehensible. A student at grade level in math, for example, thanks to quality education in his

or her first language, will be able to follow a math class taught in the second language much better than a student who is behind in math. The first child will not only get more math, he or she will make more progress in second language acquisition because he or she will get more comprehensible input.

- Second, quality education in the primary language helps the student to develop literacy in the second language. We can distinguish two kinds of literacy—basic reading ability and problem-solving ability.

Basic literacy

Basic literacy is the ability to read and write. Showing how the first language helps develop basic literacy is a two-step argument: If we learn to read by reading, it will be much easier to learn to read in a language you know, since the print in that language will be more comprehensible. Once you can read, you can read. This ability transfers rapidly to other languages you acquire. If the goal is second language literacy, a rapid means of achieving it is building reading ability in a student's first language.



Ability to Use Language to Solve Problems

The second kind of literacy is the ability to use language—oral and written—to solve problems and make yourself smarter. Clearly, this kind of competence also transfers across languages. If you have learned, for example, to read selectively or have

learned that revision helps you discover new ideas in one language, you will be able to read selectively and revise your writing in another language. In other words, once you are educated, you are educated.

Excerpted from Fundamentals of Language Education, Krashen, S.D., 1992

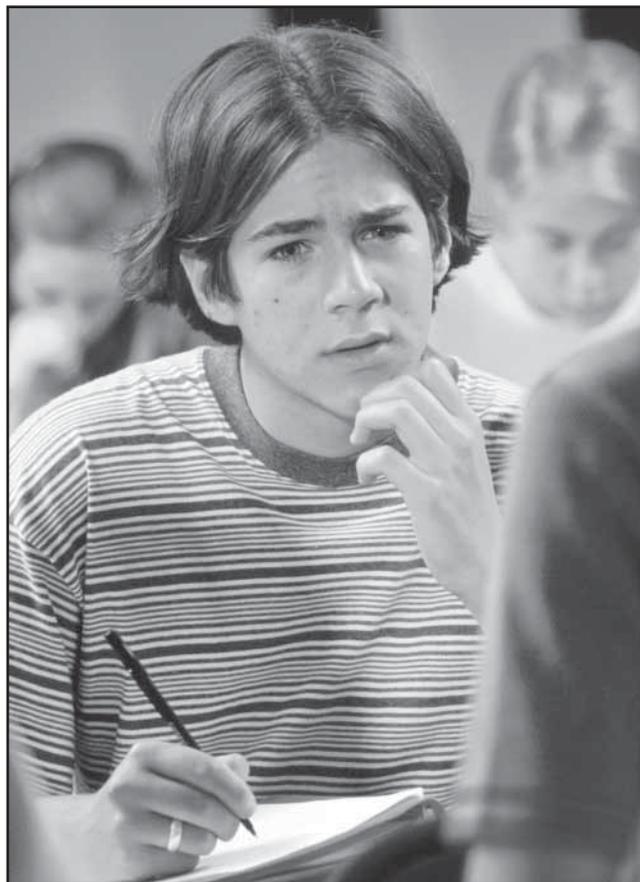
How Long?

One of the most commonly asked questions about the education of language-minority students is how long they need special services, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education. Under the U.S. Supreme Court's interpretation of the Civil Rights Act in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), local school districts and states have an obligation to provide appropriate services to limited English proficient (LEP) students, but policymakers have long debated setting time limits for students to receive such services.

The clear conclusion emerging from recent research is that even in two California districts that are considered the most successful in teaching English to LEP students, oral proficiency takes three to five years to develop, and academic English proficiency can take four to seven years. The data from two school districts in Canada offer corroboration. Indeed, these estimates may be underestimates because only students who remained in the same district since kindergarten were included. While critics of bilingual education have claimed that use of the native language delays acquisition of English, this is a claim that is without foundation in the academic literature on bilingualism.

The analysis also revealed a continuing and widening gap between LEP students and native English speakers. The gap illustrates the daunting task facing these students, who not only have to acquire oral and academic English, but also have to keep pace with native English speakers who continue to develop their language skills. The results suggest that policies that assume rapid acquisition of English are wildly unrealistic.

Excerpted from How Long Does It Take English Learners to Attain Proficiency? Hakuta, Goto Butler, Witt, 2000, Stanford University. Complete study available at <http://lmrinet.uscb.edu/index.html>



Impact of Student Mobility

Students who change schools frequently will take longer to master English and content-area material. It seems that such mobility presents a strong argument for the standards-based movement. In addition, providing migrant students with opportunities to catch up (after-school tutorials, summer school) will help them to bridge the achievement gap. Mobile students ought to have the same access to good teaching and high expectations wherever they are educated.

Issues around Continuity of Instructional Models

If you have highly mobile LEP migrant students, it would be useful to ask them what kind of instructional program they were in at their last school. Many migrant students as they move from state to state are subjected to not only differences in curriculum but also differences in methods of instruction. For example, a student may be in a transitional bilingual program in one state, but when she moves

to another state, there is no native language support available. This can be very disorienting for a student who is told in one school that she needs to maintain her native language and then told by her next school that she should use only English. Your school's ESL teacher, migrant education representative, or bilingual home-school liaison should be able to assist you in finding out this information.

You might ask the following questions about your student's academic background:

English:

- 1** What subjects did you study in your other schools? Which language did you study them in?
- 2** Which books did you use in your other schools? Which languages were the books written in?
- 3** Did you study in a bilingual program? If you did, which subjects did you study in your home language, and which subjects did you study in English?

Spanish:

- 1** ¿Cuáles materias estudiabas antes de venir a esta escuela? ¿En cuáles idiomas estudiabas?
- 2** ¿Cuáles libros de texto usabas en tus estudios? ¿En cuáles idiomas estaban escritos?
- 3** ¿Estudiabas en un programa bilingüe? En el programa bilingüe, ¿cuáles cursos estudiabas en español y cuáles en inglés?

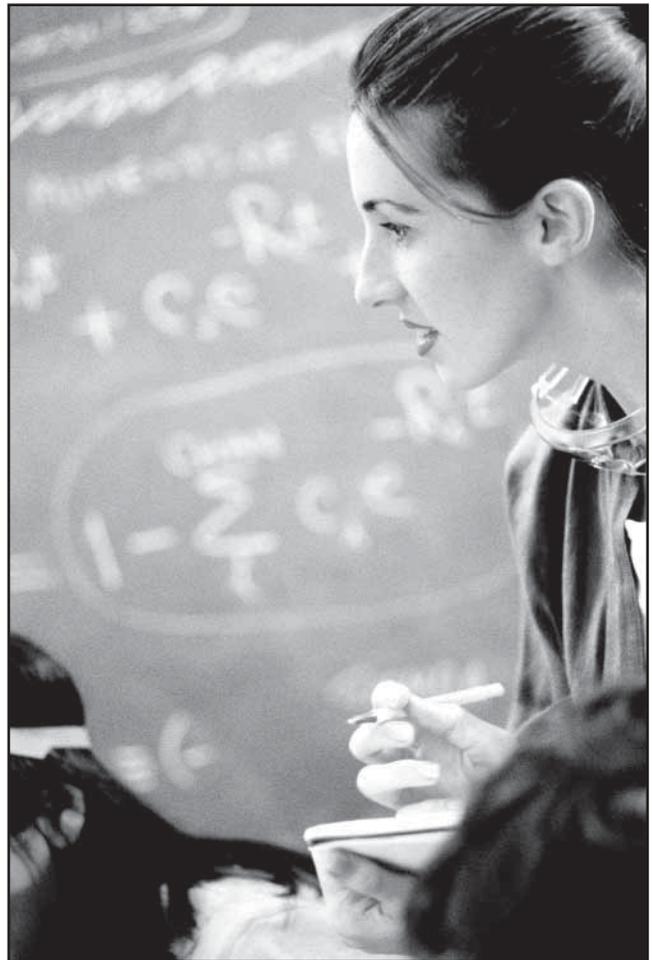
5. What Can I Do as a Teacher?

Students identified as limited English proficient (LEP) on objective assessments of language proficiency that measure listening, speaking, reading, and writing must be placed in a sound alternative and appropriate language program. ESL, structured immersion with ESL methodologies, and bilingual education are examples of alternative language programs that have been recognized as sound by experts in the field.

There may be little to no ESL support available at your school because of a low incidence of LEP students and/or you are in a rural school district where ESL support personnel are unable to deliver services efficiently. If this is the case, you can do the following:

- Learn from resources such as this kit and/or your district ESL staff about how language is acquired and what are recommended instructional and assessment strategies.
- Advocate for more ESL staff and teacher training for your district.
- Search out local volunteers who may be willing to meet with your LEP student to offer one-on-one help with key vocabulary and concepts.
- Ask if there is a local migrant education program, and contact them (National Hotline: 1-800-234-8848) to find out what kind of assistance they can provide (see explanation, Chapter 12, page 236).

Whether your LEP student is receiving direct instructional support or not, you should do whatever you can to convey the basic elements of your lessons to him. It is often advisable to enlist the help of other English-speaking students who may know the LEP student's native language. Be careful not to rely too much on a bilingual student who may be struggling academically in her own right. Students



who are literate in their native language will be able to work independently using tools such as bilingual dictionaries, textbooks, and software.

If your LEP student is only minimally literate in his native language, you will have to rely on oral English and visual aids and arrange for individual and/or small group literacy instruction. If teachers or tutors are available who know the student's home language, it is sometimes more efficient to build on his native language literacy than to embark immediately on English.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy?

The “self-fulfilling prophecy” phenomenon is based on the judgments teachers make about the academic potential of individual students in their classes. According to the literature reviewed by Villegas (1990), once a teacher forms a judgment of a student’s potential, expectations related to achievement are communicated both overtly and implicitly. The student, in turn, translates these teacher-based expectations into either positive or negative outcomes related to achievement, aspiration, and self-concept.

Some stereotypes that have been used to blame Hispanic students for dropping out of school suggest that they do not care about school, do not want to learn, do not come to school ready to learn, use drugs, belong to gangs, engage in violence, cannot achieve, have cultural backgrounds that are incompatible with schools, do not know English, are illegal immigrants, and in general, do not merit help or to be taken seriously. Complicating the issue, immigrants from rural areas in Mexico and who are children of migrant farmworkers may have had numerous absences and transfers because of their families’ migration patterns.

These stereotypes suggest that little should be expected of Hispanic children, as if providing them with challenging opportunities to achieve educa-

tional excellence will only drive them out of school in increasing numbers. Quite the contrary: The Hispanic Dropout Project found that Hispanic students are most likely to learn when curricular content is challenging and meaningful.

What basic skills and support do teachers need to be effective in a culturally diverse classroom?

- A self-awareness (of attitudes on multiculturalism and strengths and weaknesses in working with people from different cultural backgrounds)
- An ability to communicate effectively (written, verbal, non-verbal)
- An ability to think critically, analytically, and creatively
- An ability to challenge and stimulate students to learn to apply critical thinking skills
- A sensitivity to and appreciation of individual differences
- A positive attitude
- A willingness to integrate a multicultural perspective into the classroom and curriculum
- A willingness to build and strengthen curriculum bridges among home, school, and community



Excerpted from Appreciating Differences: Teaching and Learning in a Culturally Diverse Classroom, E. Ploumis-Devick, 1995, SERVE.

Do You Have Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students?

Most limited English proficient students speak another language in their homes. If you've ever studied a foreign language, you surely remember what a painstaking discovery process it is. A key point to keep in mind is that it generally takes from five to ten years for a second language learner to perform like a native speaker academically.

As a high school teacher, you may well ask: "How can we expect our LEP students to graduate within four years if it takes at least five years for them to become proficient in English?" An important first step is to find out the schooling history of your ESL students. They may have attended school in the U.S. for a number of years before entering high school. For those students who enter high school as recent immigrants, it will be helpful to find out their level of literacy in their native language. The degree of native language literacy is a powerful predictor of a student's academic success. Closing the gap within four years in this era of rising standards is a challenge that can be met by the following:

- Creating a hospitable classroom environment where students' distinctive attributes are treated as resources. Encouraging your students to share their home language and culture with you and your class is especially beneficial.
- Pairing ESL students with academically-able students who are willing to work with them, check their comprehension, and monitor their progress. Placing the students in cooperative learning groups is also helpful because they will have more opportunities to listen to and speak English in a comfortable setting.
- Focusing attention on key vocabulary. Using pictures, charts, graphs, story maps, and other graphic organizers to impart the lesson content in ways that don't require a grade-level knowledge of English.
- Checking comprehension frequently. LEP students are reluctant (or unable) to ask questions or even to admit that they don't understand. Non-English speaking students will sometimes pass through what is called a "silent period" that is a span of weeks or months during which the student will be reluctant to speak. This is a natural part of language acquisition, and LEP students will be able to comprehend more than they can produce for a number of years. It is up to you to make sure that they understand directions and the key points of your lesson.
- Providing students who are literate with materials in their native language. Many textbooks, novels, and software programs are available in Spanish. Bilingual dictionaries also enable ESL students to use their first language as a learning tool.
- Explaining and/or demonstrating anything that is assumed to be common knowledge (often culturally based) in the U.S. Some examples are: American heroes, folklore, holiday rituals, political figures, famous historical occurrences such as "Custer's last stand." This type of information has to be explicitly taught—especially if it is key to the lesson.
- Arranging for your LEP students to receive intensive help with English whenever possible (including after school and summer programs). Searching out volunteers (especially ones who speak Spanish) can help provide your students with crucial one-on-one assistance, and they can help clarify difficult concepts in their native language.
- Modifying and adapting assessments so that your LEP student will be held accountable for at least some major elements of a lesson. Students may be tested orally if their reading and writing skills are too limited.

Some Advice for Teachers of English Language Learners

- The degree of students' native-language proficiency is a strong predictor of their English language development.
- Whether learning English as a native or second language, a person can be expected to progress through a series of linguistic stages—from the simplest one-word utterances to (at fluency) the most complex grammatical constructions. The fact that a student is at a low linguistic stage in no way indicates that he or she is incapable of mastering more sophisticated language.
- Teachers should not expect ESL students to understand or react to statements spoken at a level much above their own speaking stage. Thus, listening to a lecture designed for 14-year-old native English speakers will do little for students whose linguistic level is within the lowest stages of development.
- The learner cannot be forced from one stage of linguistic development to the next before he or she is ready. Although, when prompted, the junior or senior high school learner can sometimes mimic elaborate grammatical structures, he will quickly revert to his natural level. Students should, nevertheless, be coaxed to move gradually from stage to stage.
- Phonological changes are difficult though not impossible to effect after age 12 or 13. "Accentless" speech above this age may be an impossibility, and to expect it may prove counterproductive.
- Vocabulary is very much a product of one's surroundings; since second languages are more often learned in school than at home, this vocabulary is bound to reflect the slang and catchwords of the day. Generally, those terms emphasized most and used most will be learned first.
- An important dimension is the age and concomitant cognitive skills of the second language learner. Because of their more advanced cognitive skills, older children acquire a second language at a more rapid rate than younger students.

Outcome Indicators

	Baseline Year	Hispanic	National
Percentage of <i>eighth</i> -graders who scored at or above the proficient level on the <i>reading</i> section of the NAEP test	1998	15%	33%
Percentage of <i>eighth</i> -graders who scored at or above the proficient level on the <i>mathematics</i> section of the NAEP test	1996	9%	24%

Source: Key Indicators of Hispanic Student Achievement: National Goals and Benchmarks for the Next Decade, U.S. Department of Education, 2000

What You Need to Know About Your Limited English Proficient Students

1. How many years (months) has the student been attending school in the United States?

(Research (Collier, Thomas, 1997) has determined that it takes from five to ten years to become proficient in academic English. A student's oral English will develop within about two years, but his or her ability to comprehend and produce the level of English necessary for content-area subjects will take considerably longer.)

2. How many years (months) has the student attended school in his or her native country?

(A student with a solid educational background will learn English and adapt to school routines more quickly than a student with a fragmented schooling history.)

3. Can the student read and write in his or her native language?

Yes, fluently _____

Yes, adequately _____

Yes, poorly _____

No _____

(Research (Cummins, 1981) has determined that students who enter school in the U.S. able to read and write in their native language will learn English more quickly and be able to use their first language as a learning tool.)

6. Grade Retention: A Common Yet Misguided Option

Studies show that students with a one-year age-grade discrepancy are 50 percent more likely to drop out of school, while an age-grade discrepancy of two or more years increases that probability to 90 percent. Hispanics are more likely than blacks and far more likely than whites to be two or more grades behind in school. By age 17, one in six Hispanic students is at least two years behind expected grade level, and two in five are one year behind. Migrant students continue to head the list of students older

than their classmates, many times through no fault of their own. Diane Mull, executive director of the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs, states that “a near majority of migrant students—45 to 50 percent—don’t graduate from high school.”

Sooner or later, you will meet a migrant student with a significant age-grade discrepancy on the brink of dropping out of school.

See if you recognize Daniel:

Daniel turned 17 during his second year of high school. He had earned only five out of a possible 9.7 credits, resulting in his being reclassified as a freshman. Daniel migrated with his family each June to Virginia and returned to Florida in late October. He was retained in third grade due to his lack of English proficiency and again in seventh grade because of poor grades. Although his family’s annual migration pattern often resulted in late enrollments, school interruptions, and poor attendance, these factors did not affect his grade promotion seriously until he entered high school.

Daniel enrolled in school in Virginia each fall, but he attended for such a short time that his teachers found it hard to grant him credit for the work done while in their classes. He then would return to Florida with no transfer grades to be averaged with the remaining semester grades. One year, he was placed in a course that he had already passed, causing him to lose .5 unit of credit. U.S. History offered in ninth grade in Florida was called American History and offered in tenth grade in Virginia. Although the error was brought to light, his guidance counselor was unable to grant him credit for passing the same course twice.

Finding himself several years older than his classmates, with little hope of ever catching up, Daniel began to seriously consider dropping out of school.

(See p. 208 for some solutions to Daniel’s dilemma.)

What Leads to Age-Grade Discrepancy in High School?

Studies show repeatedly that one of the most significant factors motivating students to stay in school is a teacher who believes that every student can succeed, no matter how many apparent barriers the student may face. A report submitted by the National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics (1984) contains many important findings and recommendations for middle and high schools with significant numbers of Hispanic students. One of the major findings of this report is: “Personal attention, contact with adults, and family involvement in schools improve the performance and retention of Hispanic students.”

(See Chapter 10: The Challenge of Meeting Graduation Requirements for more details on how you might help a student like Daniel make it through high school.)

Required Document and Transcript Issues and Concerns

- Loss or late arrival of transcripts
- Inability to consolidate partial credits
- Not having transcripts from attendance in schools outside the U.S.
- Credits from schools outside the U.S. not accepted by U.S. schools
- Transcripts withheld due to missing books or unpaid fees

Attendance Issues and Concerns

- Systematic discouragement from attending school—inadmittance
- Enrolling late or withdrawing early
- Missing semester exams, clock hours, or assignments
- Chronic health problems
- Familial responsibilities (working, babysitting, translating, transporting, etc.)

Placement and Scheduling Issues and Concerns

- Retention in the early grades
- Poor understanding of promotion requirements and school policies
- Placement in inappropriate schedule or program of study
- Inability to match schedule when transferring to new school
- No or insufficient ESL classes available
- Being placed below grade level due to limited English proficiency

Academic Issues and Concerns

- Low grade-point average
- Limited proficiency in English
- Need for more time to comprehend and complete assignments
- Different course sequencing from state to state
- Inability to come to school early or stay late or on Saturdays to participate in tutoring and other special programs
- Lack of access to various programs, services, resources due to mobility, lack of transportation, living in a rural area, responsibilities, work, etc.

Systemic Issues and Concerns

- Few mechanisms in place to make up missed requirements
- Lack of flexibility in areas of attendance, standardized test dates, etc.
- Lack of equal access to computers, libraries, and other needed resources

7. Helping LEP Students Adjust to School Routines

Explain, demonstrate, and anticipate possible difficulties with everyday routines and regulations whenever time permits. If there is a large ELL population in your school or district, perhaps volunteers could compile pictorial or bilingual guidelines or handbooks with details of policy and procedures. Depending upon the student's experience(s) with formal education, the need for explanations may vary greatly. Consider the following routines as "teaching opportunities" to prepare the students for American culture:

In School

- School passes and what they're used for
- Cafeteria routines: Line formation, lunch passes
- Fire drills
- Assemblies: Pep rallies, awards, awards ceremonies
- Contests and competitions
- Holidays: Festivities, traditions
- Fund raisers
- Routine health exams, screening
- Suspension
- Guidance counseling
- Disciplinary methods: In-school suspension
- Free lunch: Income verification
- Family life education: Sex education

After School

- Parent conferences and attendance
- PTA meetings
- Proms, dances, special events
- Field days
- After-school and/or Saturday tutoring programs
- Clubs, honor societies, sport activities
- Detention
- Summer school
- Standardized testing and exemptions



8. When Are Special Education Referrals Appropriate?

Specialists assume that approximately the same proportion of very bright individuals, cognitively limited individuals, and language disabled individuals will be found in any population. Statistically, about 12 percent of the language minority population in the United States may require special education. In some school districts, language-minority students are overrepresented in special education, while in other districts there may be an under-representation of handicapped language-minority students.

The Pre-Referral Process

This is a screening and intervention process that involves identifying problems experienced by students in the regular classroom, identifying the source of the problems (student, teacher, curriculum, environment, etc.), and taking steps to resolve the problems in the context of the regular classroom. This process seeks to eliminate unnecessary and inappropriate referrals to special education.

Assessment and Referral

A referral to special education should happen only after all other avenues have been explored, and you conclude that the student's needs cannot be met by the regular education program. Confirmation of a handicap and identification of its specific nature are provided by a comprehensive assessment of the student. All referrals of LEP students to special education should include the results of tests in the child's native language and in English and all records and reports on which the referral is based. Verify the appropriateness of the school's curriculum, the qualifications and experience of the teacher, and the appropriateness of instruction provided to the student (for example, continuity, proper sequencing, the teaching of prerequisite skills). Document the child's problems across settings and personnel, and provide evidence that the child's difficulties are present in both languages and that he or she has not made satisfactory progress despite having received competent instruction. However, because many of these children are losing or have not fully

developed first language skills, it may be difficult to ascertain that the learning difficulty exists across languages. The ESL teacher, bilingual education teacher, and classroom teacher who work regularly with the LEP student will have the most important school-based observations and input in the assessment process. This, coupled with input from parents and guardians, becomes the foundation for the assessment process.

Excerpted from Referring Language-minority students to Special Education, ERIC Digest, P. Olson, 1991, Center for Applied Linguistics

Why Migrant Students Are Under-Identified

Federal guidelines suggest that, like other populations, 12% of migrant students may need special education services. However, despite the fact that migrant students perform significantly below their non-migrant peers on measures of educational performance, educators report that migrant students are significantly under-identified and under-served in special education programs (National Center for Farmworker Health, 1997; National Commission on Migrant Education, 1992; Salend, 1997). Additionally, when identified, migrant students tend to receive special education services much later than their non-migrant counterparts. (Salend, 1998).

It is important to check whether a migrant student has an IEP from another school system so that your district may provide continuous and appropriate services. One of the most common reasons why migrant students are under-identified is that they leave a school system before an IEP has been fully developed. Or, a school system may refrain from assessing a migrant student because it knows that the student will not be in the area for very long. Being proactive, flexible, and seeking out information from previous schools is essential if a mobile student is to receive the special education services that he or she deserves in a timely matter.

Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students

Indicator	Cultural or Linguistic Explanation
Discrepancy between verbal and performance measures on I.Q. tests	Students not proficient in the language of the I.Q. tests are often able to complete non-verbal tasks correctly. (Cummins, 1984)
Academic learning difficulties	LEP (limited English proficient) students often experience difficulty with academic concepts and language because these ideas are more abstract. (Cummins, 1984)
Language disorders	LEP students often exhibit language disfluencies. These are a natural part of second language development. (Oller, 1983)
Perceptual disorders	Even the ability to perceive and organize information can be distorted when students are learning a second language. (DeBlassie, 1983)
Social/emotional problems	LEP students experience social trauma and emotional difficulties. (DeBlassie & Franco, 1983)
Attention and memory problems	LEP students may have few prior experiences on which to relate new information; they find it difficult to attend to and retain it. (DeBlassie, 1983)

Adapted from Mercer, C.D. (1987). Students with Learning Disabilities. Merrill. Columbus, OH

9. You Are Not Alone

It is very important to develop a working relationship with your English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual teacher. They have a great deal of knowledge about the students and their level of proficiency in English. They will also provide you with valuable information about a student's background and what kinds of instructional and assessment modifications will be the most effective. There is an example of a lesson that is team taught by a science teacher and an ESL teacher in Chapter 7 (page 132). ESL/bilingual teachers may only be in your school for part of the day, but they will do their best to help you. In this era of rising standards, it is more important than ever that subject area teachers work closely with ESL/bilingual teachers to ensure that ESL instruction is effectively supplementing the mainstream curriculum.

Two Major Goals of Collaboration:

1. Schools with bilingual/ESL programs will improve coordination between the regular classrooms and the bilingual classrooms in order to better serve LEP students.
 2. Teachers in both the mainstream classroom and the bilingual/ESL classroom will improve their competence in providing instruction to LEP students.
-

Why is Collaboration Worth the Trouble?

It's good for schools:

- Forming new partnerships to educate America's children is in the spirit of education reform.
- If curriculum and instruction are not aligned across the two programs, LEP students cannot receive a comprehensive and coordinated educational program.

It's good for teachers:

- Teachers often socially divide themselves into two groups: the mainstream teachers and the bilingual/ESL teachers. This type of school culture is isolating and can lead to infrequent communication and cause hit-or-miss education for LEP students.
- Often, there is no structure built into the teaching schedule to allow for teacher collaboration. This results in a school environment devoid of the social advantages of communicating about one's teaching.
- Regular conversations between mainstream and bilingual/ESL teachers can enhance discussion and increase knowledge of language and cultural influences on students' learning.

It's good for students:

- Integrating students through special projects and events will increase LEP students' exposure to English, ease their acculturation to the all English-speaking classroom, and result in increased cross-cultural understanding.
- Non-LEP students will be enriched by the experiences embedded in interaction with culturally and linguistically diverse classmates.

It's good for parents:

- If bilingual and mainstream teachers collaborate to communicate with language-minority parents, home-school relationships will be strengthened.

How Do Your Schools Rate?

Please consider the following list of behaviors and activities. Rate them in rank order from one to nine (using each number once).

One = Least frequently observed

Nine = Most frequently observed

1. _____ ESL and mainstream teachers jointly develop curriculum and instruction.
2. _____ Mainstream teachers understand and are sensitive to cultural differences.
3. _____ ESL and mainstream teachers observe each other's classes.
4. _____ Multicultural concepts are infused into the mainstream curriculum.
5. _____ LEP and non-LEP students jointly participate in school events, projects, and activities.
6. _____ ESL and mainstream teachers hold joint parent conferences.
7. _____ ESL and mainstream teachers regularly discuss LEP students' progress.
8. _____ The school's physical environment reflects a variety of heritages.
9. _____ Mainstream teachers utilize strategies to develop English proficiency.

Ideas for Collaboration

- ESL/bilingual and mainstream teachers hold regular meetings to discuss individual students' progress.
- ESL/bilingual and mainstream teachers participate jointly in field trips.
- Cultural information is shared at regular teacher meetings for the purpose of clarifying students' behavior and sensitizing all teachers to cultural differences.
- ESL/bilingual and mainstream teachers of the same grade plan units of instruction together based on an integrated thematic approach to learning.
- ESL and general program peer tutoring projects pair LEP students with non-LEP students of the same age across classrooms.
- Peer and cross-age dialogue journals between LEP and non-LEP students help improve LEP students' writing in English.
- Cross-age "big brother/big sister" projects bring together English proficient eleventh- or twelfth-graders and LEP ninth- or tenth-graders for the purpose of sharing knowledge, mentoring, helping with schoolwork, etc.
- The school's physical environment reflects the different cultures of the LEP students.
- The music curriculum is revised to incorporate songs and musical elements from a variety of cultures.
- Team teaching and joint classroom activities and projects integrate LEP and non-LEP students.

10. What Does the Law Say?

Federal policy guidelines for meeting the needs of LEP students

In the United States, all children have the right to attend school and to receive a quality education. It is the responsibility of the schools to provide an equal opportunity for that quality education to all students, including students who are learning English as a second language. The federal government does not mandate any single approach to teaching limited English proficient students. However, various civil rights laws and court decisions establish that schools must provide some type of assistance to enable limited English proficient students to progress academically while they are learning English.

Special Alternative Language Programs

As part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Congress enacted Title VI prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance. In 1970, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) interpreted Title VI to require school divisions receiving federal aid of any kind to provide special alternative language programs to ensure that limited English proficient (LEP) students have meaningful access to the schools' programs. The May 25th OCR Memorandum stated in part:

Where inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students.

In 1974 the *Lau v. Nichols* suit was brought by parents of Chinese-speaking students against the San Francisco school system, alleging that those students suffered from discrimination because of the school district's failure to provide special instruction for them, as required by the 1970 decision of the Office for Civil Rights. The case was decided in favor of the plaintiffs, but no specific remedies were mandated. The case eventually reached the Supreme Court, whose unanimous decision established that:

Equality of educational opportunity is not achieved by merely providing all students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education. Basic English skills are at the very core of what these public schools teach.... We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful.

In *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 94 S. Ct. 786 (1974), the Supreme Court upheld the Office for Civil Rights' interpretation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requiring school districts to take affirmative steps to rectify language deficiencies that have the effect of excluding national origin minority children from participating in the educational program offered.

Compliance Standards

In *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981), the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals set forth a three-part test for determining whether a school district has taken the appropriate actions to overcome language barriers confronting language-minority students. The three parts of the test are:

1. Whether the school system is pursuing a program based on sound educational theory
2. Whether the program based on the theory is actually in practice
3. Whether the program is succeeding and produces the results that indicate the LEP student's language barrier is actually being overcome

By the mid-1980s, OCR redesigned its Title VI compliance standards. The new, and still current, OCR policy permits school districts to use any method or program that has proven successful or that promises to be successful.

Excerpted from Clarification of Legal Responsibilities for Limited English Proficient Students, Virginia Department of Education, 1992

The United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights recommends ways that school districts can be sure that all students are provided an equal and quality education.

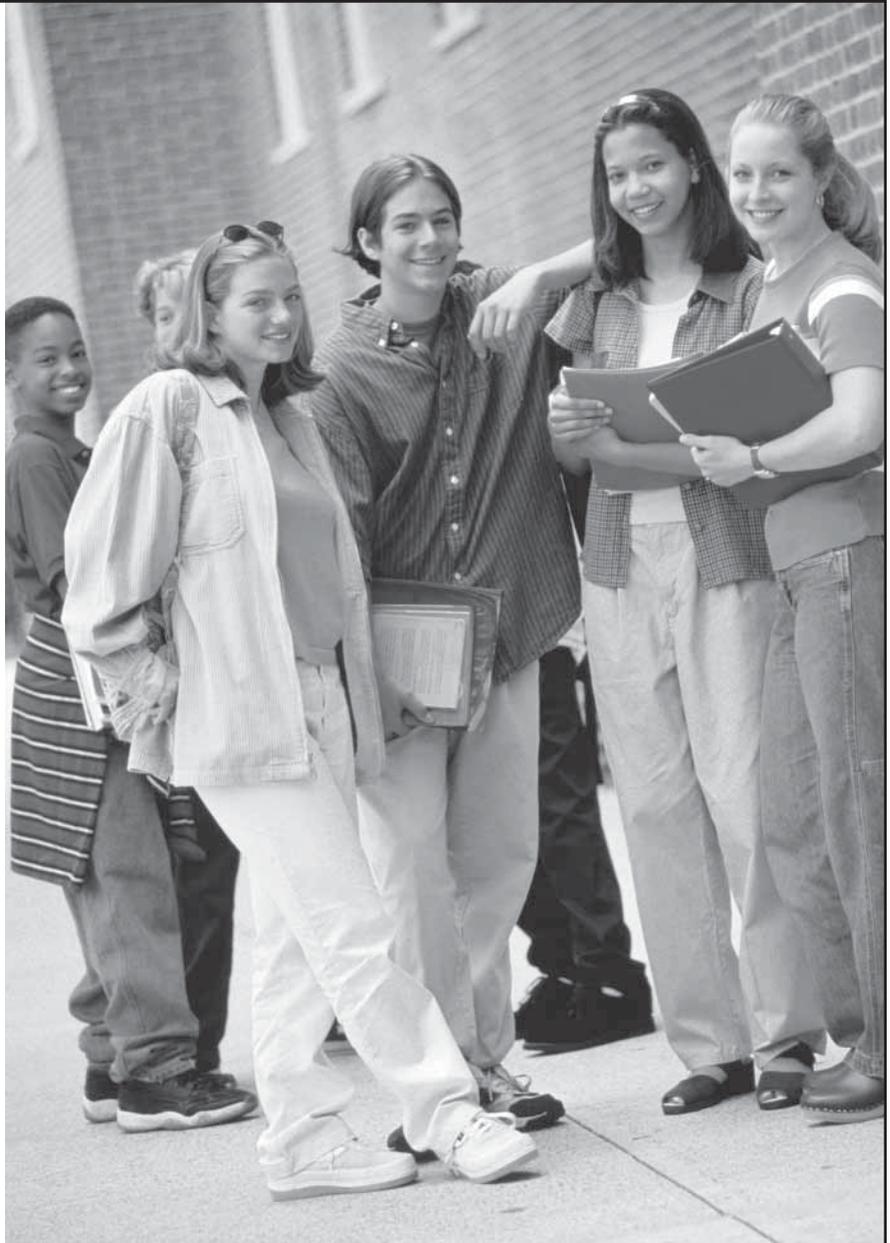
1. School districts must know how many limited English proficient children are in their schools.
2. School districts must ensure that all LEP students are being taught to read, write, speak, and understand English.
3. If students are not proficient in speaking, reading, writing, and understanding English, testing them in English may not accurately show their abilities or what they have learned. Furthermore, districts must make sure that LEP students are not assigned to classes for the mentally disabled just because they are not proficient in English.
4. School districts have the obligation to notify all parents of school activities. In order for limited English proficient parents to be included, notices should be in a language they understand.

Excerpted from If Your Child Learns in Two Languages, NCBE, 2000

**Students
at Hispanic
Dropout Project
Student Leaders
Forum, New York:**

“My life, my heritage
has been a cycle of
poverty, of goals that
were never achieved;
I want to break
that cycle. I want
to achieve for my
family, so that my
parents can be
proud of me.”

“I want to be a
change agent. Things
don’t have to be like
these stereotypes.”



11. Do You Want to Learn Some Spanish?

If you studied Spanish in high school and/or college, here is some vocabulary that may refresh your memory. If you never studied Spanish, it is never too late to start!

One way to ensure that your Spanish-speaking students will feel welcomed and that their language (and therefore who they are) is valued is by attempting to communicate with them in Spanish. You do not have to be fluent to show an interest in your students' home language. A gesture as simple as asking them how to say in Spanish something that is part of the lesson will help them to feel comfortable and accepted.

Make sure that you ask each student the name that he or she prefers to be called—some students prefer their Spanish names and others prefer an Americanized version. Getting the name right seems like a small thing, but remember what it feels like to you when someone mispronounces or misspells your name.

Some of these everyday words and vocabulary expressions may come in handy if you find yourself without a translator. So, have some fun, and your students will help you with pronunciation.

Good luck! ¡Buena suerte!

Spanish—Español

Spanish Phrases: Basic Vocabulary

Office / En la oficina de la escuela

chair	la silla
counter	el mostrador
desk	el escritorio
envelope	el sobre
lunch ticket	el boleto del almuerzo
note	la nota
paper	el papel
form	la forma
pencil	el lápiz
table	la mesa
ticket	el boleto
telephone	el teléfono
bus	el autobús

In the halls / en los corredores

downstairs	abajo
drinking fountain	la fuente
floor	el piso
left side	el lado izquierdo
right side	el lado derecho
stairs	las escaleras
upstairs	arriba

Classroom / En el salón de clase

teacher	el maestro, la maestra
book	el libro
chalk	la tiza
pen	la pluma, el bolígrafo
homework	la tarea
chalkboard	el pizarrón
clock	el reloj
door(s)	la puerta, las puertas
eraser	el borrador
wall(s)	la pared, las paredes
window(s)	la ventana, las ventanas
ruler	la regla
bathroom	el baño
page	la página
paragraph	el párrafo
permission slip	el permiso
Math	la clase de matemáticas
Science	la clase de ciencia
Social studies	los estudios sociales
English	la clase de inglés
Geography	la clase de geografía
Art	la clase de arte
Music	la clase de música
PE	la educación física

Colors / Colores

red	rojo
yellow	amarillo
black	negro
brown	café
green	verde
blue	azul
white	blanco

Days of the week / Días de la semana

Monday	lunes
Tuesday	martes
Wednesday	miércoles
Thursday	jueves
Friday	viernes
Saturday	sábado
Sunday	domingo

Months / Meses

January	enero
February	febrero
March	marzo
April	abril
May	mayo
June	junio
July	julio
August	agosto
September	septiembre
October	octubre
November	noviembre
December	diciembre

Helpful phrases / Expresiones útiles

Hello	Hola
Good morning	Buenos días
How are you?	¿Cómo estás?
What is your name?	¿Cómo te llamas?
My name is	Me llamo
Do you understand?	¿Comprendes?
Yes, I understand	Sí, comprendo
No, I don't understand	No, no comprendo
Where is?	¿Dónde está?
Where is your note?	¿Dónde está tu nota?
You have to bring a note when you are absent	Tienes que traer una nota cuando faltes a clase
Please fill out this form	Favor de llenar esta forma
This way, please	Por acá, por favor
That way, please	Por allá, por favor
Get up	Levántate
Work	Trabaja
Let's go outside	Vamos afuera
Read	Lee
Sit down	Siéntate
Speak	Habla
Be quiet	Silencio
Write	Escribe
Stop, quit it	Quita, Deja
Draw	Dibuja
Eat	Come
Open your book	Abre el libro

Close your book	Cierra el libro
Take out your homework	Saca la tarea
Turn in your homework	Entrega la tarea
Where are you going?	¿Adónde vas?
Don't hit anyone	No le pegues a nadie
Don't run	No corras
Go to your class please	Vete a tu clase por favor
Please	Por favor
Many thanks	Muchas gracias
Good, fine	Bien
Very good!	¡Muy bien!
Goodbye	Adiós
See you tomorrow	Hasta mañana
Please don't come to school before 8 a.m. (8:30)	Favor de no llegar a la escuela antes de las ocho (ocho y media)

Commands

Listen	Escucha
Look	Mira
Give me	Dame
It's time to:	Es la hora de:
It's time to (work, study, read)	Es la hora de (trabajar, estudiar, leer)

Numbers

1—uno

2—dos

3—tres

4—cuatro

5—cinco

6—seis

7—siete

8—ocho

9—nueve

10—diez

11—once

12—doce

13—trece

14—catorce

15—quince

16—diez y seis

17—diez y siete

18—diez y ocho

19—diez y nueve

20—veinte

30—treinta

40—cuarenta

50—cincuenta

60—sesenta

70—setenta

80—ochenta

90—noventa

100—cien

1000—mil

5000—cinco mil

100,000—cien mil

1,000,000—un millón

12. How Schools Can Help Hispanic Students Succeed

Much of what Hispanic students need to succeed academically applies to all students regardless of ethnicity. But beyond basic school reform, there are some strategies schools can use to help both Hispanic students and their parents not only survive the secondary school years, but also thrive. Here is a synopsis of researchers' recommendations for improving Hispanic student achievement:

- **Emphasize prevention of problems.** Most students show warning signs when struggling academically or considering leaving school. If, for example, a student has two unexcused absences in a row, schools should contact parents directly.
- **Personalize programs and services for Hispanic students.** Connecting with adults and establishing mentoring relationships can make a significant difference, particularly for high school students. Some strategies for achieving this include reducing class sizes, creating separate houses or academies within a large high school, teachers “adopting” a group of students, and older students mentoring younger ones.
- **Make schools accessible to parents.** This may require providing transportation to meetings, going to homes to meet with parents who do not have phones, providing translators, and sending home correspondence written in Spanish and in a way parents can understand—clear and free from jargon, acronyms and “educationese.”
- **Provide parents with frequent feedback about their children’s academic progress.** Many Hispanic parents are unaware of the school’s expectations for their children. Standards must be communicated clearly and repeatedly.
- **Provide after-school tutoring and enrichment related to in-class assignments.** Trained volunteers offer another opportunity for adult-student interaction. Extended day programs that supplement classroom instruction are crucial to ensuring that English language learners and migrant students close the gap as quickly as possible.
- **Set high academic and behavioral standards for students.** Hispanic students should be actively recruited into the highest level classes and provided extra support as needed.
- **Provide intensive academic counseling that includes parents.** Encouraging college attendance requires early and regular attention to courses taken and preparation for standardized testing, as well as parental support and input.
- **Incorporate Hispanic culture and traditions into the classroom when possible.** Students should feel that their cultural background is welcomed, appreciated, and respected at school.
- **Replicate programs that have proven effective.** In school districts across the country, targeted efforts are improving Hispanic achievement and lowering dropout rates. Schools do not need to start from scratch. The Hispanic Dropout Project’s 1998 report, for example, lists nearly 50 successful programs nationwide. *No More Excuses: The Final Report of the Hispanic Dropout Project* is available on the Web at www.ed.gov/offices/OBEMLA/hdprepo.pdf, or by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Excerpted from The Harvard Education Letter, September/October 1998 References

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