



Council of Urban Boards of Education

District Workshops

Different Approaches to English Language Acquisition – Whole School vs. Separate Programs

Sponsored by the CUBE Racial Isolation Task Force

In the 2003-2004 school year there were over 5 million students in our nation's schools that were identified as limited English proficient (LEP). This represents over 10 percent of the total student enrollment in the United States and reflects a growth rate of 65% since 1994, compared with total enrollment growth rate during the same period of only 12%. Nearly a third of these children live in California, followed by Texas, Florida, New York and Illinois, with the rest spread out across the country, but mostly concentrated in urban districts such as Los Angeles, New York and Chicago.

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 brought a change in our nation's approach to educating LEP students and shone a new light of accountability on schools to educate this subgroup of students and ensure that they learn English and are able to meet state academic standards. The *Flores v. Arizona* case that we discussed yesterday shows just how far we have to go.

The challenges are great—not only because most LEP children live in families that are also linguistically isolated but also because more than half of them go to schools where more than 30 percent of the students are LEP, a result caused in part by continuing residential segregation by race, ethnicity and income. This means that schools that have high shares of LEP students have a heavy burden in trying to meet NCLB accountability standards—they are in urban areas, enroll large numbers of low income minority students, have less experienced administrators and teachers than schools with few or no LEPs and must find ways to involve LEP families in their children's education.

Because of the importance of meeting the challenges of providing a high quality education to LEP students, CUBE's Racial Isolation Task Force saw the need to focus our attention on these issues. To get a small snap shot of the landscape, a call for information went out this summer to CUBE districts about the number of LEP students they educate, the students' native languages, the instructional methods used to teach English to LEP children, the effect of English language acquisition programs on student diversity, and efforts being made to cultivate diversity within English language classrooms. We hope you will take some time to review the results which are included in your materials as they reveal some important information about the breadth of the challenge (for example, the number of languages spoken within many districts) and the efforts being made to help children learn English.

The discussion we have today is intended to expand CUBE's efforts to provide information and to learn from each other about how we can best ensure that children acquire the English language skills they need to succeed in school and to meet the challenges of our changing world.

Sources:

Batalova, Jeanne. *Spotlight on Limited English Proficient Students in the United States* (Migration Policy Institute, February 1, 2006), available at <http://migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=373>

Capps, Randy et al. *The New Demography of America's Schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act* (Urban Institute, 2005), available at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311230_new_demography.pdf