IN OUR SCHOOLS:
New Opportunities
for
Teaching and Learning

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As our country’s population becomes more diverse, naturally so does our school-age population. Researchers Gary Orfield and John T. Yun of Harvard’s Civil Rights Project recently noted, “The public schools in the U.S. foreshadow the dramatic transformation of American society that will occur in the next generation. We are a society in which the school-age population is much more diverse than the older population.” Think about this. Those of us in the field of education have an awesome responsibility and challenge ahead. How well our younger generation adapts to an increasingly diverse world may well depend on their experiences at school.

This issue of SEDLetter looks at some of the challenges schools will face with increasing diversity. We begin with an overview of the demographic changes in SEDL’s five-state region to help set the stage. Stories that follow take us to New Mexico and Arkansas to see how schools have successfully accommodated their growing populations of English-language learners. Another article updates us on the recruitment of minority teachers, a problem that was first discussed in the 1970s and continues to be a serious concern. We also take a look at how SEDL’s Organizing for Diversity Project provides teacher training on diversity issues and intercultural communication.

While discussing challenges and examining solutions is helpful, we shouldn’t forget there are many benefits and aspects to diversity to consider and take advantage of, as Gil Garcia, senior research analyst with the U.S. Department of Education, reminds us in his essay on page 10. As you read this issue, keep in mind some of the advantages a more diverse student population offers. Here are just a few:

- Students who have experienced positive relationships with culturally different students tend to be more open-minded, develop positive citizenship traits, and experience greater intellectual self-confidence and engagement than students who have not experienced these positive relationships.

- Incorporating a variety of instructional practices and assessments to accommodate a classroom that includes linguistically and culturally diverse students can help those struggling learners who previously may have been labeled slow.

- Transforming school norms and structures to embrace a wider variety of learning styles and cultures can help create a community of successful learners that includes more students than those who previously fit the “ideal” student mold.

Diversity has many meanings and can encompass many education issues related to equity, race, culture, and language. We invite you to use this edition of SEDLetter to encourage thought and discussion at your school with regard to the increasing diversity of our schools. The topic deserves much more conversation than we can only begin in these articles.

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A Changing Nation: The Impact of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity on Education

By Kathleen Trail

It’s a topic that comes up time and time again when discussing the state of education in the United States: the ever-increasing diversity in our schools and communities. But are the demographics of our nation really so different from what they were 20 years ago—or are we just becoming more aware of other cultures as technology brings the global community into our homes?

Not only has the makeup of the U.S. population changed significantly over the last two decades, the definition of “diversity” itself has undergone a transformation. The concept of diversity has grown to encompass more than just the commonly accepted determinants of ethnicity and race; cultural and socioeconomic factors play a large part in how a person interacts in society. Even the once clearly delineated check boxes of race are blurring. For the first time, the 2000 U.S. Census allowed individuals to indicate more than one race on the form, meaning that people of mixed heritages no longer have to decide which classification best describes them. All of these changes indicate a shift in the American perspective on diversity. The great American melting pot of the last century no longer exists; we are moving toward a society in which individuality is retained and valued, a cultural mosaic created from millions of unique pieces.

While linguistic and cultural diversity in our classrooms and communities has the potential to enlighten and expand our understanding of both others and ourselves, it also presents challenges, particularly for educators. Without question, the demographic changes in the United States will necessitate some shifts in how we educate our children. This article will look at some of the demographic trends related to linguistic and cultural diversity—across the nation and within SEDL’s region—and will also explore the implications of those statistics for educators.
Beyond the Numbers

It is important to note that studies show that the trend toward greater diversity “is strikingly unevenly distributed across the nation” (Hodgkinson 2000). Each region, state, city, district, school, and classroom faces a unique demographic situation. So how can national or even regional statistics help inform educators locally who are facing a different environment of diversity than that portrayed by the national profile? A rural district in Arkansas reported having 2,247 English language learners who spoke 16 different languages; in contrast, Houston Independent School District, the nation’s seventh-largest public school system, served approximately 58,000 English language learners, representing more than 80 languages. Are the issues really the same for an elementary teacher from rural Arkansas as they are for a district administrator in Houston? The answer is yes and no.

Yes, there are common trends for educators throughout SEDL’s region, but those trends can only paint a broad picture—a basis for beginning to understand the issues. Individual educators must appoint themselves as experts in their own districts and schools, working to build awareness and gather information about the impact of diversity that they deal with on a daily basis. Dr. Harold (Bud) Hodgkinson, director of the Center for Demographic Policy at the University of Texas at Austin, says, “teachers and administrators must first understand what kinds of diversity are important to them to understand what has an impact in their schools. In many cases, the race of a student matters less than the country of origin, the parents’ educational level, or the socioeconomic status of a child.”

Keeping abreast of the demographics on a local level is crucial for educators to make learning effective. Hodgkinson says, “You can’t just look at the numbers from 1990 and assume those figures are going to be true forever. With over 30 million Americans moving every year—there are five individuals moving to every one birth—diversity in the classroom more is a function of migration, from city to city, state to state, country to country, than a function of who was born in your community. The more specific and the more recent the data, the more helpful it is. Data for the school are better than data for a district, which are better than data for the county, and so on.”
A Regional View

In looking at some statistics taken from *Kids Count Data Book 1999: State Profiles of Child Well-Being* about how race and ethnicity will change for Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas (the five states in SEDL’s region), both differences and similarities among the states are apparent.

Several states in SEDL’s region have particularly high concentrations of certain racial and ethnic populations. Among these populations many people are multilingual or are English language learners. Texas, with its large Spanish-speaking population, faces the challenge of finding ways to include native Spanish speakers and their cultures effectively in the classroom and meet their educational needs. Likewise, Oklahoma, home to almost 20% of the American Indian population in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics 2000), faces issues specific to that group of students, such as the impact of troubled historical relations with the federal government affecting American Indian schooling, educational practices that ignore or devalue cultural ways of knowing and learning, and the lack of American Indian teachers.

Reaching a Diverse Population

Many of the linguistic and cultural issues faced by educators in SEDL’s region are mirrored in classrooms throughout the nation. The question of how to integrate the diverse cultures of students effectively in the classroom and curriculum needs to consider more than token gestures. SEDL program associate Pat Guerra comments, “The low academic achievement and high dropout rate of cultural and linguistically diverse students, you must work to connect with them on several levels. Communication with them can take time, but they offer an essential perspective that should not be ignored.”

Suzanne Ashby, SEDL program specialist, Language and Diversity Program

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### Project Increase/Decrease in Number of Children in SEDL Area States and United States, by Race/Ethnicity, 1997-2005 (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total No. of Children</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
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<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
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Source: *Kids Count Databook 1999: State Profiles of Child Well Being*
“There is a strong need for effective teachers of language minority students. Teacher preparation programs have a long way to go in this area, but many are beginning to emphasize the necessary skills as part of their standard curriculum.”

Joel Dworin, SEDL program associate, Language and Diversity Program

in a meaningful way, which involves recognizing the beliefs, values, and behaviors that characterize the various cultures of their students. Students themselves can be a valuable resource in learning about a culture. By encouraging children to talk about themselves and their families and building learning experiences around the students’ cultures, teachers can enrich the learning experience of all their students and reinforce the self-esteem of the individual student.

Increasing the pool of minority teachers is another effective way of reaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Minority teachers can serve as cultural intermediaries, connecting more immediately with students who might otherwise disengage. According to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (1987), “A quality education requires that all students be exposed to a variety of cultural perspectives that represent the nation at large. Such exposures can be accomplished only via a multi-ethnic teaching force in which racial and ethnic groups are included at a level of parity with their numbers in the population.” This is a lofty goal, given the current disparity between the two groups, but many teacher preparation programs are working to encourage higher minority enrollment and districts across the nation are actively recruiting minority teachers.

Students with specific language needs require quality minority language programs to ensure educational equity. This issue must be addressed on several fronts: teacher preparation programs, school policies, and professional development opportunities are three main areas that affect the availability and quality of minority language programs. Only a few teacher preparation programs currently emphasize skills in teaching minority language students as a part of their standard curriculum; however, most teachers will at some point work with students who require them to have these skills. On the local level, many schools are faced with insufficient or underdeveloped programs for their minority language students. Also, professional development for teachers should include training on skills for teaching minority language students—not just for teachers who head these programs, but for every teacher. Each of these areas will grow to address the linguistic needs of these students only if teachers, administrators, education majors, parents, community members, policymakers, and others work to educate others about the necessity for the resources for these students.

Children under 18 living in poverty

Compared with the 1997 national average of 20% of children under 18 living in poverty, each of the states in SEDL’s region had dramatically higher percentages (Annie E. Casey Foundation 1999):

- New Mexico 29%
- Oklahoma 25%
- Texas 26%
- Louisiana 30%
- Arkansas 26%

National average

20%
The Culture of Poverty

Perhaps the most significant trend in the diversification of the United States today is economic segregation: According to one source, “Racial desegregation has achieved only limited success, in part because the economic changes that were supposed to follow school desegregation did not occur. America is now most importantly divided along economic and educational lines rather than race” (Hodgkinson 2000). Southern states have some of the highest rates of children living in poverty.

In 2000, the Annie E. Casey Foundation also ranked the five states in the bottom third when measuring the status of children’s well-being, which is based on a combination of such factors as teen birth rate, child death rate, and percentage of high school dropouts. At-risk children are often unable to participate fully in the educational process, simply because they are facing issues much more complex than the multiple-choice questions on a math test. Another danger with at-risk students is that they are sometimes set apart in the minds of teachers and others who view them as “deficient” because they don’t fit the system. Educators must instead work to find where the system is deficient in meeting the needs of these students.

Although statistics of poverty seem to parallel many of the racial and ethnic demographics, there are other, perhaps more important, factors that help determine socioeconomic status, such as the educational level and marital status of a child’s parents. “Regardless of race or ethnicity, poor children are much more likely than nonpoor children to suffer developmental delay and damage, to drop out of high school, and to give birth during the teen years” (Payne 1998). Poverty functionally lessens access to mainstream culture, creating obstacles to learning in an education system that is based on middle-class norms.

Educators across the nation must work to break through the barriers erected by poverty. The educational and social opportunities of children are consistently subverted by this single factor. Although schools cannot be responsible for every aspect of their students’ well-being, there must be an awareness of and attempt to find creative responses that will allow students to benefit as much as possible from classroom instruction. Often, this means going outside the school for support and solutions to administrators, experts, families, and community members. A broad-based approach offers the greatest hope for getting to the heart of the problems and finding long-term solutions.

“Knowing who to call to get the electricity turned back on, where to go when the baby is sick, and making sure students have affordable homes in safe neighborhoods and enough food and sleep. All these things are considered by some as prerequisites for students to benefit from classroom instruction, but they have not traditionally been part of the school’s role. But increasingly, schools that succeed in spite of poverty barriers are thriving largely due to broad-based partnerships they have formed with community members and parents that work to make community services accessible. Sometimes these services are available on the school campus, with after-school programs organized to keep children safe and enriched, and sometimes even lifelong learning opportunities are provided for adults in the school community.”

Cathy Jordan, SEDL program manager, Program for Refining Educational Partnerships
“My work with various school districts in the region has consistently shown poverty to be a barrier to opportunity for growth among children and their families.”

Rosanna Boyd, SEDI program specialist, Southeast Comprehensive Assistance Center

Knowledge Is Power

The adage that there is strength in diversity holds true for education. By supporting diversity in our classrooms, we are teaching our children not only to value differences in others, but to value the differences in themselves. Exposing students to many languages, cultures, classes, and people prepares them for a world that is becoming more diverse every day. In a speech Secretary of Education Richard Riley gave in Washington in March, he spoke about diversity and its impact on education:

“We are already the most diverse nation in the world — and we have never been static in our diversity. But these kinds of demographic changes will involve almost every aspect of our society and require us to think still more creatively about the future. Communities across the nation . . . are being transformed by the changing population. Dealing with this change requires creative thinking and an eagerness to adapt and to incorporate cultural and linguistic differences into the learning process. There are no simple solutions . . . . The good news is that the understanding of what is required is growing. . . . A new paradigm for how to achieve this goal is on the horizon — a model focused on the assets of this community, rather than on the deficits (Riley 2000).

“Saber es poder” — knowledge is power. This maxim goes to the core of what diversity has to offer. Knowledge about how our world is changing allows us to overcome stereotypes and rise to meet the challenge of providing a high-quality education for every child in America.
By the year 2025, it is predicted that the population of the United States will be 21% black and 15% Hispanic (Marks 1998), compared with today's population, which is approximately 16% black and 8% Hispanic.

— U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

The number of Hispanic students enrolled in public schools increased by 61% from 1987–88 to 1995–96, the highest growth rate of any ethnic group. The black student population increased by 16% and other minority groups increased by 49%. White students represent the lowest growth rate—only 3% during that same time period.

— Texas Education Agency 1998

One-fifth of U.S. children under age 18 either are immigrants or members of an immigrant family.

— Coles 2000

Since 1980, the number of minority students enrolled in public education has been rising while the number of minority teachers has been falling. Minority students now make up nearly 30% of the elementary and secondary school-age population, while the number of minority teachers has fallen from 11.7% to 10.3% during the past fifteen years.

— Donnelly 1998

References


When diversity flourishes, the benefits to children and youth, to the schools they attend, and to their homes and communities are significant. When diversity is embodied in education, it provides the structures and support that are necessary to build and sustain student attitudes and self-esteem needed for a successful life. Regrettably in most of the education research literature, diversity remains too loosely, or in some cases too narrowly, interpreted and implemented.

We have made some progress — the manifestations of diversity have evolved from simply being viewed as cultural themes and events (like fiestas, typical foods, folk dress) of select subgroups in relation to their equivalent “American” themes and events. However, diversity issues are still frequently treated as separate components within organizational structures. For example, it is still common to see organizational charts that list diversity staff as a separate team. Worse yet, diversity staff are responsible for serving only the students considered diverse students, such as English language learners. Diversity issues are usually associated with minority students, their educational condition, and their “special” needs. Rarely are the key issues that frame the concept applied to their nonminority peers. Education literature rarely presents explicit conversations on the store of knowledge that each person brings into the classroom or of the impact of the knowledge base that the participants represent. For example, little has been documented about the adults in the classroom and what they learn from their students; likewise for the literature on any lessons learned about or by majority peers as a result of their association with minority and language minority peers. However, a multi-dimensional view of diversity per force lends itself to encompass and make use of the many perspectives of diversity.

The richness of the art and integration of diversity is seen in other arenas from which educators can learn. Delving outside of the education box reveals diversity’s multi-dimensional qualities. Consider, for example, what diversity now means in the world of corporate business. Though interpreted broadly and used as variously as in the field of education, in the business arena diversity has begun to define initiatives used to attract and retain highly competitive employees. Dell Computer and Pfizer Corporations are but two examples of companies that have instituted strong diversity policies. They are serious when they state that their workforce must be ethnically, racially, and gender diverse, but they take full advantage of diversity’s other dimensions when they intentionally look for employees with different types of personalities, experiences, and problem-solving approaches to suit their many work niches, from product development to quality control to marketing to diverse customers. Each company values diverse thought and perspective, seeing diversity as a necessity for a winning organization. They have implemented mentoring programs to teach new hires the ropes and to promote their careers in relation to their skills and expectations. The diversity
initiatives of companies such as these are designed expressly to attract and keep the best, and importantly, to promote a community spirit. These outreach efforts are neither accidental or poorly planned — each company intends to be the best and the most competitive.

Imagine a local public school district that instituted such policies. We might see the following statement: *It is the policy of this school district to ensure that we attract and sustain a diverse student body and a diverse workforce that is well trained and educated. If you come, we will serve and support you — whatever it takes to ensure your success as a student or employee. We intend to enhance our community’s collective diversity by creating a community of learners. If you accept the invitation to join our district, you promise to do your best. Your achievements are our profits.*

Here would be a school district that intends to do its best educating the children of the community. The policy would mean that parents and family groups, district staff at all levels, and students — in other words, everybody! — would be involved in the process of developing school plans in relation to community needs and expectations; the screening, hiring, and training of staff in relation to the goals of the learning community; and the diagnosis and assessment of students in relation to their needs, interests, and aspirations. It would give new meaning to phrase: *We’re building new bridges toward the future* as students leave school well prepared for participation in an increasingly diverse society.

The reality is that the dimensions, activities, and effects of diversity could and should be quite diverse. Effective educators will make use of the principles of diversity employed in other arenas to promote the services they offer and to enhance the lives of the people they serve. The only boundaries to our creativity in ensuring we make the most of diversity are self-made.
We would like to match the demographics of our student population with our teaching population — or at least get closer,” reported the superintendent for schools in Austin, Texas, Dr. Pascal “Pat” Forgione. “But,” he added, “over the last four years, while our Hispanic student population has continued to grow, three-fourths of our new teacher hires over the same period have been Anglo. It’s not because we’re not trying to increase minority teacher hiring. Few minorities are entering teaching.” Forgione made these comments at last year’s Symposium on Supply and Quality of Teachers, sponsored by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE).

The need to increase the diversity in the teaching workforce is an issue teacher preparation institutions have been dealing with since the seventies, according to Dr. Carl A. Grant, professor of teacher education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who is nationally known for his work in multicultural education. But the argument behind it, says Grant, is different today than it was three decades ago.

“Back in the seventies, we needed teachers of color for students of color,” explained Grant before a recent gathering of teacher educators at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. “The point is we need teachers of color for all children in this country, and until we begin to visualize this fact and think with a larger sweep, we reduce our argument.”

Stephen Marble, director of SEDL’s Eisenhower Southwest Consortium for the Improvement of Mathematics and Science Teaching (SCIMAST), explains, “We must change the way we think about diversity — from thinking about it as a problem to thinking about it as a virtue. Diversity creates more opportunities for everyone.”

For white students, having a teacher from a different culture or of a different race or ethnicity is an opportunity to learn about others and experience the cultural and social diversity that form the basis of our democracy. For culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse students, there are important pedagogical reasons for ensuring that students have the opportunity to be taught by teachers who reflect their ethnicity and culture. Kenneth J. Meier, professor of political science at Texas A&M University and author of The Politics of Hispanic Education: Un paso pa’lante y dos pa’tras (one step forward, two steps back), emphasizes that minority teachers have a positive influence on minority students, specifically in the areas of teaching styles, in serving as role models, and in the decisions about grouping, tracking, and disciplining students.

Phillip G. Eaglin, a SEDL program specialist with SCIMAST, says, “Teachers with a genuine understanding of the culture of the day-to-day lives of their students can introduce topics and examples that are important and meaningful to students’ experiences. In other words, instruction and content can be made more culturally relevant to students when their teacher has shared or lived similar cultural experiences.”

He adds, “Becoming familiar with students’ backgrounds or creating open-ended lessons and waiting for students to connect their cultural knowledge does not compare to teachers’ incorporating lived, shared, genuine cultural experiences into their instruction. Thus having shared backgrounds and cultures helps teachers construct authentic, meaningful opportunities for students.”

Eaglin describes opportunities that many of our minority students have yet to experience. The National Education Association (NEA) claims that, despite the success that some of the teacher preparation programs are having in recruiting minority teacher candidates, the current shortage in minority teachers presents a more difficult dilemma than in the past because the demand is rising and the supply is falling. Not only are there fewer minority teachers in...
schools today, but the shortage is more critical in certain geographical and subject matter areas.

It is no surprise that education-related occupations are currently among the fastest growing occupations and, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, are expected to grow 27 percent by 2005. However, only six out of ten trained teachers actually take teaching positions. Of those that do end up teaching, approximately half leave the profession within the first five years; some teachers leave to take jobs in the fields of engineering, natural science, mathematics, and computer science where better-paying job markets lure them from the classroom.

And it’s precisely in the subject areas of science and mathematics that high-poverty schools are in greatest need of minority teachers, especially in states experiencing the largest population increases. Across the nation, between 1996 and 2008, total enrollment in public high schools (grades 9 through 12) is expected to increase by 15 percent. In the Southwest, the expected increases in enrollment for the states of New Mexico and Texas are 16 percent and 24 percent, respectively.

“Our region — the U.S. Southwest — faces a growing shortage of qualified science and mathematics teachers and an even more critical shortage of teachers representing the language, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the broader student population,” says Marble.

To begin rectifying the low number of minority teachers Grant says, “We need to develop policies and programs that seek to increase the rate in which underrepresented populations enter four-year colleges, or transfer from two-year colleges to four year colleges; increase special programs for teacher aides who have worked in the school and getting them to move on and get their degrees.”

A review of the publication Promising Practices: New Ways to Improve Teacher Quality, produced in 1998 by the U.S. Department of Education, reveals that excellent examples of initiatives in recruitment for the teaching profession are emerging or currently exist as part of state programs.

Many of these initiatives include strategies that target diverse and talented middle and high school students as potential teaching candidates. These initiatives also stress the importance of providing support for teacher candidates in the critical first years and offering ongoing learning opportunities. Simply put, the strategies support the teaching career as a continuum, not a series of disconnected steps stacked on top of each other.
One of Grant’s stronger recommendations is that the conversation on diversity in the teaching work force be taken to a national level. “We need to frame this in a much larger discourse, it’s not about this state and that state; I think we need to come together and say how can we make a sustained, systemic argument,” claims Grant. To that end, organizations such as the Association of Teacher Educators, the NEA, the AACTE, the American Council on Education, the National Association for Multicultural Education, and others are supporting the need to create a national comprehensive and long range strategy to address the issue. These organizations are calling for a summit on teacher diversity to be held in Washington, D.C. for the purpose of involving educational organizations, the federal government, ethnic/racial minority organizations, national foundations and others in the development of a comprehensive and nationally supported plan.

As changes in demographics and economic forces continue to impact the teaching work force, and as American public schools continue to struggle with the limited supply of qualified teachers, teacher preparation institutions must refocus their efforts, not only on increasing the quantity of teachers, but recruiting and retaining qualified and diverse candidates for the teaching work force.

For more information about the proposed national *Summit on Diversity in the Teaching Force*,

please contact Armando R. Laguardia, Ph.D., the chairperson of the Association of Teacher Educators’ task force, Diversity in the Teaching Force.

Laguardia may be reached at Washington State University, Vancouver,

phone 360-546-9670 or email armando@vancouver.wsu.edu
It’s as simple as doing the math: an increase in students plus a deficit in the number of teachers equals higher education institutions looking for better ways to recruit and retain quality candidates for their teaching programs. Even more so, they seek teacher candidates who can mirror a diverse student population.

Last May, teacher educators from across the U.S. Southwest met at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to share information and ideas on how best to address the critical shortage of minority teachers. Diversifying the Science and Mathematics Teaching Workforce in the Southwest Region was the theme of the meeting organized by SEDL’s Eisenhower Southwest Consortium for the Improvement of Mathematics and Science Teaching (SCIMAST) in collaboration with the Ph.D. program in Science and Mathematics Education at Southern University.

SEDL program manager Stephen Marble, who is the director of SCIMAST, says the spring meeting was the first step in building a community of people and institutions committed over the long term to solving the problem of recruiting more minority math and science teachers. Marble believes having a strong community based on trust is key to being able to face the issues of race, culture, and equity that must be discussed in finding solutions to the teacher shortage. “You will never get past Equity 101 if you don’t build a community that can work together,” says Marble. “It is the only way to push people and institutions to really look at race, culture, and equity, and pay more than just lip service to those issues.”

Marble says the first meeting also helped define the minority teacher shortage as a regional problem. Educators who had been seeing the shortage as a problem particular to their college or their teacher education program were able to view the problem in a broader scope and find out what resources had been developed and what solutions were being tried at other institutions in the Southwest.

The meeting’s course was set by a presentation of data reflecting the patterns of student-to-teacher representation in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The numbers not only showed the problem—that there are three or four times as many minority students as there are minority teachers—but that the problem was becoming worse because of the increase in students and decrease in teachers. Information from each of the states about the math and science teacher pipeline also helped provide participants with a more realistic picture of the number of minority mathematics and science teachers exiting the pipeline and entering the workforce.

Participants heard presentations from Texas A&M University professor of political science Kenneth Meier and University of Wisconsin-Madison professor of teacher education Carl A. Grant. They also heard from regional institutions that currently have teacher recruitment programs in place, such as the Teacher Education Collaborative, and Collaborative for Excellence in Teacher Preparation (both of these funded by the National Science Foundation), as well as an African-American teacher student from Northwestern Oklahoma State University. Members of these programs discussed their recruiting strategies and the issues and obstacles associated with their efforts, and offered advice for dealing with teacher candidate recruitment.

One of the most important outcomes of the meeting was the creation of a network of teacher educators concerned about, and committed to, addressing the shortage of qualified science and mathematics teachers in general, as well as the shortage of minority teachers representing the diversity of the region’s student population. Participants also shared how they and their institutions would help in the diversification of the science and mathematics teaching workforce in their particular region. Commitments ranged from using distance learning and grow-your-own teacher preparation programs to creating more teacher preparation partnerships with organizations like the National Science Foundation and promoting nontraditional certification programs (such as the Teacher Cadet programs).

This spring, a second meeting of teacher educators from across the region will be held at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, an institution that primarily serves the Delta area. SCIMAST hopes this meeting will continue to grow the community of educators and institutions involved in solving the teacher shortage and that the meeting will result in the development of regional strategies. In fact, SCIMAST is committed to growing the network for the next five years—it will sponsor an annual meeting and continue to support concerted efforts to ensure all students have the opportunity to be taught by qualified teachers.
Language Minority Programs: A Primer

By Kathleen Trail

Most people don’t realize that the United States Constitution was almost written in German. When this idea was rejected, the drafters of the Constitution discussed a compromise of developing both German and English versions. Although the final decision was to draft the Constitution in English, this historical snapshot is just one example of how other languages have played and continue to play a significant role in our country. Today, U.S. residents whose primary language is a language other than English are often seen as being outside of mainstream culture. However, these people and their languages are a vital part of our nation’s culture, and programs specifically geared toward the needs of language minority students are essential in ensuring they receive a high-quality education.

A Brief History

The debate surrounding bilingual education is complicated, reflecting a wide spectrum of political and social influences, many of which began with the passage of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. Prior to this act, language minority students were often left to sink or swim in an environment of total English submersion where students were not given any support or instruction in their primary language. The 1968 act “brought an exciting yet controversial approach to educating language minority students to the attention of educators throughout the United States,” note Carlos Ovando and Virginia Collier in *Bilingual and ESL Classrooms: Teaching in Multicultural Contexts* (1998). They also note that “Educators and linguists in the area of English as a second language (ESL) had developed a substantial knowledge base in their field, since at least the early 1800s.” In spite of a long tradition of ESL and bilingual education in the United States, it was not until the early 1970s that the government sponsored a widespread approach to educating language minority students that provided an alternative to the sink-or-swim approach. Over the past 25 years, bilingual and ESL programs have made significant advances in meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse population.

Recent events indicate another shift for bilingual education however. In 1998, Californians voted to eliminate bilingual education, choosing instead to provide only one year of intensive English-language instruction for language minority students. Although the California proposition bans bilingual education in the state, several larger districts (San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose) obtained waivers to continue their bilingual programs, just one indicator that many feel these programs are well worth supporting.

The events in California may foreshadow difficulties for other bilingual education programs in the United States and intensify the debate over bilingual education. A discussion of the issues requires at least a basic understanding of the types of programs currently being offered in many schools.

An Overview of Language Minority Programs

The terms referring to language minority programs can be confusing, especially since usage and intent of meaning are not always consistent. Joel Dworin, a program associate at SEDL who has worked extensively with bilingual programs in a variety of settings comments, “People use terms in multiple ways. When someone says to me, ‘Hey, we have a great bilingual program,’ there may be a mismatch in our understanding of what bilingual education means.” These mismatches result from the variety and diversity of programs that serve linguistically and culturally diverse students. Each program’s scope and goals are determined by different demographic, political, and emotional climates. Although there is much variation in language minority programs, there are some common characteristics that define them.
English as a Second Language or ESL Programs provide instruction in English to English language learners, both for students to learn English and other academic subjects. ESL programs are typically used in schools with a small or a very diverse population of language minority students (that is, the students at the school are from a wide variety of language backgrounds). Teachers do not have to be proficient in the home language(s) of their students to teach ESL. Like all students, ESL students must be challenged in order to be successful.

Bilingual Programs are frequently found in schools or districts with large numbers of students who have the same language background. Teachers instruct in both the student’s home language and English, with the amount of time spent teaching in each language varying from program to program. Teachers must be proficient in both languages. Bilingual programs are frequently classified as early-exit (1–3 years before mainstreaming students) or late-exit (typically 4–6 years). Late-exit programs have the benefit of continued development of the primary language over an extended period, allowing students to use their native language as a base for understanding other academic subjects. It can be difficult for a student to learn a new math concept in a second language and the native language is often more conducive to developing a conceptual framework.

Also, many people do not realize that some bilingual programs have native English speakers in them, allowing these students to develop academically while they learn a new language. Dworin observes, “Unfortunately, historically — and even today — these programs have often been designed as ‘remedial’ programs, not geared toward ‘enrichment.’” Dworin also notes that all well-implemented bilingual programs have a component of ESL.

In another type of bilingual program, Dual-Immersion or Two-Way Programs, native English speakers are grouped with native speakers of another language, with language and other content-area instruction being provided in both English and another language. Students typically stay in dual-immersion programs throughout elementary school, with most of these programs promoting bilingualism and biliteracy for all the students. Classes can be taught by a single teacher who is proficient in both languages or by two teachers, one of whom is bilingual. Almost all dual-immersion programs divide the classroom 50-50 between English-speaking students and language minority students. There is some variance in how much time is spent using each language in the classroom, with many programs consistently dividing their instructional time equally among the two languages and other programs using the minority language 90 percent and English 10 percent of the time at the outset, gradually moving closer to using both equally in the later years of the program.

During the past 10 years, the number of programs for language minority students has grown significantly. “More than 90 percent of programs in schools today are early-exit bilingual programs, but the number of dual-immersion programs has risen dramatically over the past 20 years. In 1980, there were approximately 20 dual-immersion programs in the United States; in 2000, there are well over 250 programs,” says Dworin, referring to research from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL).
Characteristics of Effective Programs

Although programs for language minority students differ considerably from each other depending on the demographic makeup of the school or district and the goals for the program, there are some elements common among successful programs (Rennie 1993). In fact, these elements are universally important in any educational setting; here, they are discussed in the context of bilingual and ESL education.

• Support for programs from district, principals, and other teachers in school

“Support from the district is crucial,” comments Dworin. School districts can help ensure the effectiveness of these programs by providing resources (including time for staff development), allowing schools flexibility in establishing and running the programs, and advocating for the programs through both policies and actions. On the school level, support from all staff members helps establish whole-school contexts for these programs. According to Dworin, “It is important for teachers, staff, and principals to be able to explain the bilingual program at a school to parents and others so they will in turn support it.” He also feels it is essential for bilingual/ESL teachers to know how and why they teach the way they do: “Teachers and principals need to have a unity of purpose and a consistency in the quality and type of instruction” that align with the vision of the school.

• High-quality professional development for ALL teachers

Intensive, sustained, quality professional development is particularly important for teachers of English language learners. Many of these teachers deal with unique and challenging issues, and professional development is vital to their success in the classroom. Staff development focusing on these issues should not be limited to language minority teachers though. Almost every teacher will encounter English language learners in the classroom at some point, and skills and knowledge about meeting the needs of those students are relevant for all teachers. Dworin notes that a schoolwide approach to professional development in this area provides social and academic support for school staff involved in language minority programs, ensuring that they are seen as an integral part of the school community, not as an isolated group of “specialty” teachers.

• Teachers who are qualified and prepared

It can be especially difficult to find teachers with the skills and qualifications needed to teach in a successful bilingual or dual-immersion program. Not only must these teachers have fluency in both English and the language minority, they must have academic proficiency, allowing them to effectively communicate concepts about science, math, history, and other subjects to their students. “If you think about it, just because someone can speak English doesn’t make them qualified to teach English,” says Dworin. Teacher preparation programs have a long way to go in this area, although some are beginning to integrate skills specific to language minority cultures into their programs. “An example is Arizona State University, which requires every elementary teacher in its program to minor in ESL,” Dworin notes, “It’s a small step, but an important one. It indicates a serious commitment to addressing this issue.”

• Materials, resources, and preparation time for language minority teachers

Teachers are faced with significant challenges in obtaining quality resources in language minorities. There is a dearth of instructional materials available for language minority classes. Many teachers end up creating their own materials or adapting them from English-language resources, frequently a difficult and time-consuming task. Also, it is crucial to find classroom resources that reflect the students’ culture(s) and values. “Students need to see themselves in the curriculum and not just in a token way,” Dworin comments.

• High expectations for language minority students

The goals and expectations established at the outset for students in a language minority program have a significant impact on how well those students learn. Many programs are not successful largely because they fail to set the bar high enough. Unfortunately, this has frequently been a result of assumptions about language minority students’ capacity to learn, often related to biases about socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity. Many educators, regardless of their backgrounds, have viewed these programs as “remedial,” effectively limiting the academic opportunities for their students. The Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) has conducted extensive research showing that too many language minority students “are not challenged with the same content as
mainstream children. . . . As a result, such schools hold neither themselves nor their students to high standards, and this in itself constitutes an additional risk factor” for them. (Tharp 1997).

- **Involvement of minority parents**
  The support of the parents and other community members is vital in ensuring the program will thrive. Support can come in many forms, but perhaps the most important indicator of support is simply the continued presence of the students in the classroom. In addition to ensuring buy-in for the program, connecting with parents and community members provides greater insight into the students. “It may seem very obvious, but there is real value in teachers getting to know the students, their families, and their communities,” Dowin observes. “You don’t have to be a part of that community to do that — it just takes a sustained, concerted effort and a willingness on the part of the teacher to become a learner, embracing a truly multicultural approach in which the teacher educates himself or herself about the culture.”

With so much information available about these programs, this article can only scratch the surface of the topic. There are many resources available in print and on-line that discuss the various types of bilingual programs and the issues surrounding them in greater detail (see sidebar). With the help of well-designed and effectively implemented language minority programs, students from diverse language backgrounds can make the most of their educational opportunities and, through their language and culture, enrich educational opportunities for others.

**References**


Information about well-implemented bilingual programs may be found on the following Web sites and in the two documents listed below.

Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) http://www.cal.org

CAL’s Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) http://www.cal.org/crede/

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education http://www.ael.org/eric/ned/ned118.htm


Like most students, those at Martin Elementary School in Deming, New Mexico, look forward to recess and lunch. But instead of huddling in groups — segregated according to age and mastery of the English language — youngsters interact easily with each other, communicating in Spanish and English as they pursue the serious business of play.

“The positive thing I see about this approach is that everybody is equal. You’ll see the English speakers playing with the Spanish speakers, and a lot of cooperative learning is going on,” observes second-grade teacher Javier Milo at the end of his first year in the school’s two-way immersion bilingual program. “Both are going that extra mile so they can communicate with their friends,” he adds.

In fact, all of the teachers — kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade — involved in this dual-language reform effort at the southern New Mexico elementary school say they see a big improvement in student interest and performance — in all academic areas.

“Kids are getting more out of this program,” notes Helen Garcia, who teaches first grade. Her students are not only reading in Spanish, but are also “transitioning on their own” and beginning to select books written in English on trips to the library. “The interaction is amazing, and they are already writing sentences and stories,” Garcia says with a proud nod to students who are actively discussing an assignment in groups of four. “I don’t think I could ever go back to the old bilingual program.”

This new approach the teachers praise is known as two-way immersion (TWI) — other terms for this approach include bilingual immersion, a developmental bilingual program, or a dual language program. In practice, students learn two languages by receiving instruction in English and another language (in this case Spanish) in a classroom composed of monolingual speakers of both languages.

Martin Elementary, one of five TWI schools in
New Mexico, follows the 90/10 model: Spanish provides the vehicle for instruction 90 percent of the time in all content areas in kindergarten and the first grade, and as students progress in school, more class time is devoted to instruction in English. The ratio becomes 80/20 by the second grade, and in the third grade language arts is taught in English during the allotted 30 percent of instruction time. Classes are equally split in the fourth grade, and by the end of the year, students are not only bilingual, they are also biliterate. English dominates the 40/60 percentage of instruction by the fifth grade.

Since its implementation in 1998, the program has followed the first students enrolled as kindergartners, adding a grade level each year. Principal José Carrillo, who believes his students in dual language immersion classes are outperforming those in traditional bilingual classes, looks forward to the 2000–2001 school year as the third-grade classes convert and required New Mexico standardized assessments will offer real comparison data. But as far as Carrillo is concerned — and parents overwhelmingly agree — the reform is a success.

“In other bilingual programs, they push the program so quickly that students start falling behind and they’re not learning the language,” the principal explains. “Plus, the kids are segregated — even in the cafeteria — and they’re just not doing as well as they should be.” In comparison, he says, TWI encourages “learning from teachers and peers, and self-esteem is given a boost.”

Martin Elementary extends this cooperative approach one step further with its family-style cafeteria seating. Carrillo contends that bringing students of different ages, physical abilities, and language background together for lunch enhances learning opportunities and respect for others.

Among the 21 New Mexico schools that obtained reorganization funding through the U.S. Department of Education’s Comprehensive...
School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program, the school is using its three-year grant, combined with funds from the state and its regular bilingual allocation, to implement the Coalition of Essential Schools national reform model along with its two-way immersion for the entire school.

At the urging of teachers in the school, Carrillo researched statistics and approached the Deming superintendent with the bilingual immersion plan as a way to improve learning for the school’s heavily migrant population. After the staff had learned more about TWI and visited schools in New Mexico and Texas that used the program, their next step was convincing community members and the school board of its value. Carrillo says Martin’s staff welcomed public discussion because it educated people in the rural town about language immersion possibilities. As part of the education process, a group of about 17 visited the Alicia Chacon International School in the Ysleta school district near El Paso, and the opportunity to see TWI in practice heavily influenced the decision to implement this particular program. “I encouraged participants to talk to the kids. We spent the whole day observing and talking with teachers and students. When we came back, the board agreed,” he explains.

In fact, community and parental support have been enthusiastic. “I’m delighted with this school, the program, the staff. This is best time to learn to learn a language — children are so much more open,” points out Laura Jackson Pottorff, whose son Clay was a monolingual English speaker just a year and a half ago. He is among several students who travel out of district to take advantage of the TWI program.

Pottorff, one of the school’s active volunteers, describes her son’s progress from being an easily bored student who disliked going to school to one who now eagerly shares positive experiences and the Spanish language with his family. He even placed third in a districtwide competition for Spanish composition. “My son has a lot of confidence now,” she says. “And I think he really enjoys being able to communicate in two languages.”

Parents of monolingual Spanish speakers are noticing similar results, teachers report, and they are amazed at the progress their children are making not only in language but also in other subjects. “Parents are very engaged with their kids, and this is a big change. They are much more involved,” observes teacher Javier Milo.

In addition to these visible differences in student performance and school atmosphere, recent data suggest that the school just may be on the right track to help its 270-strong population achieve academically.

Among the success stories about TWI programs, one study, posted on the Center for Applied Linguistics Web site, followed a similar, but not identical, program instituted in
Massachusetts during the late 1980s. The authors concluded that English speakers possessed English skills as good as, or in many instances better than, that of students who are in an all-English program. They generally score higher in math and develop “an equally high academic performance in Spanish.” Spanish speakers experience these same outcomes.

Teachers at Martin concede that conducting dual language immersion classes can be exhausting and frustrating. As English-speaking students struggle to keep up during the early stages of the program, the teachers pretend they do not understand English and resort to a variety of methods to make themselves understood: pantomime, repetition, and activities centered around songs and games. But Spanish-speaking classmates offer their help, and when it comes time to switch classes for the English-instruction portion of the day, monolingual English speakers return the favor.

“We teach the language through content, and that is very challenging. Initially, the teachers were very tired; they needed to use a variety of modalities to reach the students. But now they are seeing the rewards and realize it’s very well worth the effort,” Carrillo observes.

Small class sizes — no larger than 20 — along with bilingual assistants ensure plenty of individual attention at this mostly Hispanic (94%) school. Classrooms have an intimate, nonthreatening climate and even the shy students feel comfortable contributing to the class. “No one is ashamed to speak English — these students love to be verbal,” offers second-grade teacher Patricia Tsougas. “You need to give them choices, you need to give them a way out, then they don’t feel intimidated.”

Because the school already had a large number of bilingual teachers before TWI was implemented, there will be little change in staff, Carrillo says. Those who cannot speak Spanish will simply take over the English component of the program. All take advantage of professional development opportunities at least twice a semester as they team up with the staff at the Alicia Chacon International School for problem solving and training sessions. Martin Elementary has become an educational laboratory of sorts for nearby Western New Mexico University in Silver City; teams of teachers explain the method to education majors, who also visit the classroom to study TWI in practice.

Although the Deming Public Schools want to implement a similar program in at least one more of their elementary schools, Principal José Carrillo acknowledges that “in reality, this program is not for everyone. Ours is a voluntary program, and if parents don’t want their children involved, they can be bused to another school.” But, Carrillo adds with a wide, satisfied smile, “we haven’t had any parents requesting a transfer.” That speaks volumes — in any language.
Arkansas District Welcomes

English-Language Learners

By John V. Pennington

Since the mid-1990s, northwestern Arkansas has enjoyed an economic boom. Headquarters to such companies as Wal-Mart and Tyson, Inc., the area has grown exponentially during the past decade, with much of the credit going to the state’s burgeoning poultry industry. Springdale-based Tyson, Inc., is the world’s largest poultry producer.

A low unemployment rate has drawn thousands of immigrants to the area in search of jobs. Transplanted from countries including Mexico, Laos, Vietnam, and the Marshall Islands, these newcomers to America quickly found prosperity in the Ozark Mountains.

The Challenge Posed by New Immigrant Students

Although this recent migration has been beneficial for the region’s economy, it has posed a challenge for area schools, according to Dr. Jim Rollins, superintendent of the Springdale School District. Many of the immigrant job seekers and their families speak languages other than English.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Springdale School District had virtually no language-minority students, Rollins reports. During the 1999–2000 school year, the district served 2,247 English language learners, who spoke a total of 16 different languages. Of those students, 1,811 speak Spanish, 272 speak Marshallese, and 122 speak Laotian.

“We weren’t all that prepared at first,” Rollins says. “We certainly had a wake-up call.”

As the district began enrolling large numbers of immigrant children, it worked with the local poultry plants to identify new immigrant families, how many children they had, and the ages of the children. The district then administered the Language Acquisition Skills (LAS) exam to the children to assess their English language skills on a scale of 1–5 (with Level 5 indicating fluency and Level 1 meaning a minimal level of English acquisition skills), according to Dr. Marsha Jones, Springdale’s assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

Says Dr. Rollins, “Once we know the students’ level of readiness, we are able to address their needs.”

Along with their language differences, many of the students had no educational background in their native countries, forcing the district to personalize the academic process to focus specifically on these students’ needs. The district has tried to keep student-teacher ratios low in order to provide as much one-on-one instruction as possible, he says.

“We’ve had to modify the way we deliver services based on the readiness of the children to deal with the material,” notes Rollins. “It’s much more than a language issue. Obviously that’s a challenge you have to deal with, but you also have to deal with the core content area and getting those kids on board [academically] as they’re developmentally ready.”

That developmental process includes more than just academics, Jones says. It includes overcoming the language differences to help ensure that the students’ basic needs are met.

“We teach them to understand basic questions like, Are you hurt? Do you need to go to the bathroom? Are you hungry? Are you cold?” Jones explains. Teachers also learn commonly used phrases in the student’s language so they can communicate basic instructions.

English-language learners are also taught skills that will help their families integrate into the community. They are given an orientation to the community so they will know where the post office and hospital are located and how to establish telephone and other utility services.

Rollins says the orientation is an ongoing process until a certain comfort level is established. He emphasizes, “We want people to know that we appreciate them, we respect them, and we welcome them here. We want to do all we can to help them become members of the

John V. Pennington is a freelance writer based in Hot Springs, Arkansas.
community as soon as possible.”

Each school in the Springdale School District brings in translators for parent/family nights at least once a semester to answer questions and to help immigrant families learn about the resources that are available to them in the community. According to Jones and Rollins, parents have attended those meetings quite well, and the staff at each school building has been involved in making these parents and students feel welcome.

“Virtually every caring adult in our schools is involved in trying to create a system by which a good transition can be made to our community. It’s a whole-school initiative,” reports Rollins.

A Look Into the English as a Second Language (ESL) Classroom

When they first arrive, English-language learners are placed into classrooms according to their level of performance on the LAS exam. Those with a need for additional language acquisition skills are placed into “sheltered” classes, according to Springdale School District Curriculum and Instruction Program Coordinator Judy Hobson. These classroom settings allow teachers to teach the state-mandated curriculum while developing a student’s English language skills.

“We have a different curriculum for ESL students only in the fact that we consider the LAS levels,” Hobson says. “You can’t expect a Level 1 first-grade student to get all the first-grade curriculum if they have to learn the language, too.”

The sheltered classes provide additional help to immigrant students according to their educational background. For example, some students may not have previously received the level of instruction required for the math taught at the grade level in which they have been placed.

Secondary students also benefit from the sheltered classes, since they provide further orientation to the American culture, Jones said.

“Students are expected to understand American history or civics because they are required courses,” she said. Teachers often must provide immigrant students with more background to such courses. “For example, we sometimes have to explain to them what the U.S. Constitution is — by high school, kids that have grown up here would have some notion about how our government is run.”

However, Jones points out that the English language learners in sheltered classes are not secluded from the other students. “They’re not taken out of the rest of the program, but they’re given more intensive assistance at the beginning of their career with us,” she explains.

At every step in the process, students are made aware of what the school expects them to accomplish, Rollins says. Although the school district holds ESL students to the same standard as students in the regular classrooms, he adds that teachers and staff are always there to help the English language learners.

“I think our families sense that, and barriers that would make this process even more difficult seem to come down when the children and their families understand that they’re welcome and that we see them as an integral part of our system. We want to do everything that we can for our kids who might be struggling with a language barrier or even the lack of content in terms of being ready to handle our standards.”

To help ESL students meet those standards, teachers must be aware of specific teaching strategies. Many teachers in the Springdale schools have had to adjust the way they ran their classrooms to accommodate the English language learners, but Hobson says that when the strategies are implemented in a classroom, every child benefits — from the special education student to the gifted student.

“ESL has benefited other learners, who in the past might have been left out,” she observes. “Language-needs students are being better served as well as learning-disabled children and slower learners.”
Hobson listed the following examples of ways Springdale teachers have modified their teaching methods to better serve ESL students:

- Speaking simply and clearly to the students.
- Using prompts, cues, facial expressions, body language, visual aids, and concrete objects (for example, when teaching math, use money or a calendar; when teaching social science, use maps, flags, and field trips) as much as possible.
- Using physical commands to enact an event. For example, pointing and nodding to an open door while saying “Please shut the door” is much more effective than giving the command in an isolated context.
- Establishing oral routines. Teachers should greet their students each morning and tell them good-bye at the end of the day to allow students to become familiar with and anticipate routine language experiences. Examples of this include: “Hello,” “Have a nice weekend,” “Bye-bye,” and “How are you?”
- Making the student feel comfortable in the classroom. A smile, hello, and a pat on the back give a student a needed feeling of support in an unfamiliar setting.
- Encouraging the student to use English as much as possible.
- Using songs and poems to teach meaningful and useful phrases. This will open a conduit for students to begin to communicate with each other. This method, called chunking, should be simple, meaningful, varied, and fun. Allow students to draw pictures to express what they heard or thought about the material.
- Continuing to talk to the students. It is normal for ESL students to be silent for days, weeks, or even months. Talking to the student through this period will help them develop the active listening skills necessary for further development.
- Providing the first and most basic need for ESL students—a feeling of safety and comfort. “Children who are the most successful are those who feel most welcome and feel safe about their learning,” says Jones.
- Including the ESL student in as many activities, lessons, and assignments as possible.
- Giving ESL students learning experiences and assignments that make them feel productive, challenged, and successful. These students need a variety of tasks and assignments that are closely related to what the students in the regular classroom are doing.
- Calling on the student in class as soon as possible. Even if the ESL student cannot speak English well, have the student come to the board and point to a map or circle a correct answer. Have him or her pass out papers and collect homework. These activities will allow the student feel special and useful.
- Maintaining high expectations. Be prepared for an ESL student’s success and progress and realize that these students are usually not a remedial population.
- Adapting a primary- or secondary-level mathematics test or textbook for the ESL student whose computational skills are well developed, but whose reading skills are not. This may involve deleting word problems completely.
- Allowing ESL classrooms to be noisy. Students do not learn how to talk unless they have the opportunity to use the language, Hobson explains. “They can’t learn anything if they never open their mouths. They can’t learn if they’re not allowed the freedom to speak without the fear of being intimidated or the fear of getting in trouble.”

Jones adds that the methods associated with ESL instruction are nothing more than fundamental language teaching skills. “Teachers who are experts in teaching reading and writing in primary grades are familiar with these strategies,” Jones says. “These strategies would be useful for teaching a child at any level or age, who is learning to read and write in English for the first time. ESL instruction is more a matter of just good teaching than it is a secret box of tricks.”
Fort Smith Public Schools Have Supported ESL Students for More than Two Decades

Unlike the Springdale School District, which has had to build its English as a Second Language (ESL) program over the past decade due to a recent influx of immigrants, the Fort Smith School District has been teaching ESL students since the mid-1970s. Located 77 miles south of Springdale, Fort Smith is home to Fort Chafee, a former refugee relocation center at the end of the Vietnam War. Thousands of Vietnamese and Laotian refugees were sent to the Fort Smith area during the 1970s. Many of the refugees permanently settled in the area and enrolled their children in school, according to Fort Smith School District superintendent Dr. Benny Gooden.

“As their children enrolled in schools, it was obvious that the school district was going to have to take a major role in helping them learn English and become proficient so that they could succeed academically,” he said. “Our focus has been from the beginning, and continues to be today, to help students become proficient in English at the earliest possible time.”

In the past that has been an uphill battle for the district, because it has always had a hard time finding qualified ESL teachers, Gooden said.

“The biggest challenge — it was a challenge in the early years, and it is a challenge today — is finding adequate personnel to teach those children.”

Although Fort Smith’s ESL program was not perfect, over time it proved to serve the Vietnamese and Laotian ESL students well. As years passed, several Vietnamese and Laotian immigrants to Fort Smith received teaching certifications and became licensed to teach ESL students. In the 1990s, the district’s population of English-language learners changed from being mostly Asian to being predominantly Hispanic. During the 1991–1992 school year, 43 Hispanic students were served by the district’s ESL program, compared with 183 Vietnamese and 423 Laotian students. During the 1999–2000 school year, 726 Hispanics were in the program, compared with 110 Vietnamese and 194 Laotian students. The district was faced with, and is still facing, a shortage of Spanish-speaking ESL teachers.

Gooden reports that while the district had a well-established system of teaching Laotian and Vietnamese students and had the infrastructure in place to serve English-language learners, it lacked the staff to teach students who were primarily Spanish speakers.

Until recent years, the demand for ESL teachers in Arkansas was limited, so colleges and universities in the state offered little in the way of preservice ESL training.

“In Arkansas, until the mid-1990s, they didn’t even acknowledge ESL certification,” Gooden says. “Only in recent years have we come up with an ESL endorsement or licensure for schoolteachers.”

In addition to attracting qualified teachers, there were other difficulties in being one of the few districts in Arkansas that supported English-language learners in the 1970s and 1980s. The state did not provide any ESL funding until the mid-1990s. Like Springdale, Fort Smith currently spends close to $1 million annually on its ESL program. Most of that money now comes from state and local revenues. Before the mid-90s, districts were dependent on federal dollars to fund their ESL programs, according to Gooden. He recalls that before that time Fort Smith was alone in its efforts to lobby the state legislature for funding ESL programs and had difficulty getting the funding he needed. However, Gooden notes that now his “friends in northwest Arkansas” are “glad to stand shoulder to shoulder with me when we talk about ESL funding.”

A Vietnamese dance is performed at Regional Parent Conference by Cultural Ambassadors of Northside High School, FSPS.
Diversity Training
Improves Intercultural Communication Skills

By Victor Javier Rodriguez

In an elementary school serving a large population of immigrant Hispanic families, a teacher waits for parents to pick up their children at the end of the day. When a mother arrives to pick up her child, the teacher greets her with “You should be proud of Juan. He completed all of his work for the day and got an A on the pop quiz.”

The mother firmly responds by saying, “We expect that from him every day.” The teacher insists, “But he deserves a pat on the back for it.” The mother simply smiles at the teacher, takes her child’s hand, and walks away without saying a word. The teacher watches them leave as she tries to understand why the mother doesn’t praise her child.

A teacher praising a child for his or her accomplishments is highly valued in an individualistic culture because it promotes self-esteem. However, in a collectivistic culture, parents don’t see the need to highlight a child’s accomplishments since this kind of behavior is expected from the child. Furthermore, parents from a collectivistic culture are more comfortable with constructive feedback because it keeps their children’s accomplishments in perspective. This type of feedback is not intended to be a put-down to children, but it can easily be interpreted that way by members of individualistic cultures.

This scenario, in which a teacher goes out of her way to praise one of her students in front of his mother, is an example of how the relationship between a parent and a teacher can be seriously affected when either one fails to understand each other’s expectations or intentions. And it is intensified by the lack of realization by either the teacher or parent that a cultural miscommunication or disconnect has occurred. Such disconnects or miscommunications are referred to in research literature as “culture clashes.”

Professional development in diversity and multicultural education has become increasingly important over the past decade as this nation’s school population becomes increasingly more diverse while the majority of teachers are monolingual, white, middle-class females.

From teachers to administrators, and office clerks to service providers, schools are training their staff and personnel to better deal with the issue of diversity. While much of the diversity
training implemented in public schools focuses on superficial aspects of culture, language inclusion, and community involvement, SEDL’s Organizing for Diversity Project (ODP) is seeking to help teachers enhance their knowledge and self-awareness of diversity issues and develop better intercultural skills for instructing and relating to culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in mainstream classrooms.

Organizing for Diversity Training Institute

Recently, SEDL invited 23 diversity trainers from across the United States to participate in an Institute for Diversity Training in Austin, Texas. The objective was to share what the ODP has learned in its study and to receive input from the group of educators on the training process SEDL has designed for teaching in a diverse setting.

“The idea for the institute was to establish a network of trainers who are willing to use the training modules we designed,” says SEDL program associate, Pat Guerra, who has led the work for the ODP. According to Guerra, this network includes people who have conducted diversity training and staff development, as well as teacher educators and private consultants who work with teachers.

The Institute’s three-day program began with an overview of the ODP program and a session on one of the program’s training modules.

“The idea, at least initially, was not to train them on the specific use of the modules, but on how to work with diversity in the classroom,” adds Guerra.

“On the second day we highlighted a classroom application by focusing on module activities, plus teachers participated in a panel discussion with educators who went through the training and helped develop the training modules,” she explains.

The panel included teachers Barbara Dray and Mary Ellen Alsobrook and school principal Sarah Nelson. It also included Shernaz Garcia and Phyllis Robertson from the University of Texas at Austin, who assisted SEDL with the project as one of the project’s lead researcher and consultant, respectively; and project evaluator Nance Bell, as well as Guerra.

Panelists observed that through the ODP training they discovered that teaching was more than just curriculum and instruction, that the training encouraged them to reflect on their practices and ideas.

“If anything, it challenges your own ideas and beliefs regarding your students, forcing you
to look inside as well as outside,” said Dray, a teacher who admitted being somewhat skeptical of the value of this kind of training when she first heard about the ODP.

For school principal Sarah Nelson, the program has had a long-lasting effect on her staff, although it’s been more than two years since a group of her teachers went through the training. Nelson, whose school is made up mostly of Hispanic students, is a firm believer in the need for cultural diversity training for teachers.

“I believe education and schools are driven by teachers’ beliefs and values,” Nelson emphasized. “Once teachers start examining and reflecting on these issues, then the cultural diversity training begins to have an impact on student learning.”

**ODP Training Manual**

During the three-day event, participants were given the opportunity to use the ODP training manual, which consists of 11 modules that actively engage teachers in a wide range of issues and helps them reflect on the values and assumptions they bring to the classroom.

These modules range from the importance of effective intercultural communication in the classroom and views of culture to cultural influences and the socialization of young children and understanding cultural variability in the classroom.

“The module that participants focused on during the training dealt with individualism and collectivism,” explains Guerra. “We had participants look at real-life scenarios and incidents of episodes in the classroom and then had them analyze these to see how they could be transferred to meaningful classroom practice.”

At the end of the three-day meeting, participants had developed an action plan — which included the use of one or more modules from the training manual — to be used in their own work with teachers. SEDL plans to monitor the training and use the findings that result from these.

Guerra says the institute was noteworthy because the high degree of participant engagement made it more interactive than many of the diversity training sessions offered. “We viewed this institute as a way to expand the ODP learnings,” she adds. “We gained as much from the participants as they gained from us.”

Panelists at the Institute share how the Organizing for Diversity Project helped them reflect on their practices and ideas.
Resources
for Greater Understanding of Diversity Issues

Minority teacher recruitment

The Policy Information Center of the Educational Testing Service has developed a series of reports, titled Teaching for Diversity: Models for Expanding the Supply of Minority Teachers, that underscore the need to increase the number of minority teachers in America as well as offers concrete recommendations for pursuing this goal. The studies also argue for the need for all teachers — regardless of their race and culture — to become more knowledgeable about diversity issues and better equipped to work with the changing student populations in their classrooms. Teaching for Diversity: Models for Expanding the Supply of Minority Teachers is available for $6.50, prepaid. Make check or money order payable to the Educational Testing Service. Send requests to the Policy Information Center, 04-R, Rosedale Road, Princeton, NJ 08541. A summary of the report is available at http://www.ets.org/research/pic/pr/teachdiv.html.

First published in 1996 and updated in 2000, the National Education Association National Directory of Successful Strategies for the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers provides introductory, summary, and contact information for specific recruitment programs operated by the states, universities, school districts, and education associations. Also included is a comprehensive bibliography of additional works of interest. More information about the directory and NEA’s efforts is available at http://www.nea.org/recruit/minority.

Teaching for Diversity is the report of a SEDL workshop that examined two related policy issues critical for teacher education: the need to prepare a teaching force able to work with and teach effectively an increasingly diverse student population and the need to increase the representation of teachers of color in the teaching force. This report can be read on-line at http://www.sedl.org/policy/networkshop9402.html.

In September 2000, the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education published Educating the Emerging Majority: The Role of Minority-Serving Colleges & Universities in Confronting America’s Teacher Crises. The 48-page paper discusses not only the role of minority-serving institutions (MSIs) in graduating minority teaching candidates, but the demand for teachers of color and the public policy challenges facing MSIs. It also includes case studies of teacher education programs at selected MSIs around the country. The paper may be downloaded from http://www.ibep.com/finaleTeacherEd.pdf.

Additional information on teacher recruitment issues, including minority and urban teacher recruitment, can be found at the “Recruiting New Teachers” Web site at http://www.rnt.org. Included at this site are issues of “Future Teacher” (http://www.rnt.org/quick/new.html), a newsletter about recruiting, developing, and supporting a qualified and diverse teacher workforce.

Digital divide

“While the number of Americans connected to the nation’s information infrastructure is soaring, minorities, low-income persons, the less educated, and children of single-parent households, particularly when they reside in rural areas and central cities, are among the groups that lack access to information resources.” This is the summation of the 1999 study Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide, the third and latest of a series of U.S. Department of Commerce reports on American’s access to telephones, computers, and the Internet. You can read it on-line at http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiabome/fttn99/contents.html. Other reports can be accessed via the department’s recently established Web site Closing the Digital Divide (http://www.digitaldivide.gov), a comprehensive clearinghouse for information related to efforts to provide all Americans with access to the Internet and other information technologies.

James S. Foster is a SEDL information associate. James can be contacted by email at jfoster@sedl.org.
“Even as digital technologies are bringing an exciting array of new opportunities to many Americans, they actually are aggravating the poverty and isolation that plague some rural areas and inner cities,” claim the authors of *Losing Ground Bit by Bit: Low-Income Communities in the Information Age*, a report of the Benton Foundation. This report is available on-line at http://www.benton.org/Library/Low-Income/ and highlights what is needed to alleviate the discrepancies in access to information technology and resources and profiles a series of programs and initiatives that are working in underserved communities.

The Benton Foundation, in association with the National Urban League, has also produced the *Digital Divide Network* (http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org/), a Web site designed to enable and facilitate the sharing of ideas, information, and creative solutions among industry partners, private foundations, nonprofit organizations, and governments focused on narrowing the growing gap between those who have access to technology and information skills and those who do not have such access.

**Equity**

Fund by the National Science Foundation, *Weaving Gender Equity Into Math Reform* seeks to assist staff developers, curriculum writers, and school leaders in expanding the equity content of their workshops, videos, and written materials for teachers. The project is investigating the specific question of gender equity in mathematics education reform, as well as the larger equity issues that these reforms pose for students from various academic, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds. The project has published a highly relevant set of materials, all available electronically at its Web site. Visit *Weaving Gender Equity into Math Reform* at http://www.terc.edu/wge/

*We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools* Published in 1999 by Teacher’s College Press, this book seeks to discover what it means to be a culturally competent teacher in racially diverse schools. Using stories from his 25 years of experience as an educator, the author engages the reader with the personal and professional transformations he faced as he explored his own perceptions of race, education, and society.

*We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know* was written by Gary Howard. It can be ordered at a cost of $20.95 by calling 1-800-575-6566. Additional information on this and other associated titles can be viewed on-line at http://www.teacherscollegepress.com

*A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League.*

Written by Wall Street Journal reporter Ron Suskind, and based on his Pulitzer Prize-winning series of articles, this universally acclaimed book tells the story of an inner-city child’s social and educational experience from high school through his first year at Brown University. With acute reporting and meticulous narration, Suskind paints a vivid portrait of minority issues, educational opportunity, economic hardship, and a young man’s intellectual struggles and successes.

*A Hope in the Unseen* was published in paperback in 1999 by Broadway Books and is widely available through bookstores. More information on this book can be viewed on-line at http://www.broadwaybooks.com

*Holler If You Hear Me: The Education of a Teacher and His Students*

Published in 1999 by Teacher’s College Press, this book couples the author’s transformation as a teacher with the first-person narratives of his students. Acclaimed for its attention to the voices of the students in a large urban school system, this book serves as a model for engaging diverse students and their creativity.

*Holler If You Hear Me* was written by Chicago public school teacher Gregory Michie. It can be ordered at a cost of $19.95 by calling 1-800-575-6566. Additional information on this and other associated titles can be viewed on-line at http://www.teacherscollegepress.com
Putting Technology into the Classroom Guide Available On-Line

Putting Technology into the Classroom: A Guide for Rural Decisionmakers is a resource for administrators of small, rural school districts who are just getting started on the road to integrating technology in classrooms. In simple, direct language, the guide includes pointers on developing a technology plan, allocating resources, strategies for supporting integration through staff development, and ensuring equitable use of technology. The English version of this product is available at no cost on-line at http://www.sedl.org/pubs/tec24/welcome.html. The guide is also available in Spanish (La implementacion de la tecnologia en el salon de clases: una guia para los que toman decisiones en las escuelas rurales) at http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/tec25.html.

New SEDL Video Helps Teachers Build Learner-Centered Classrooms Focused on Technology

What happens when teachers become the students? For the teachers who participated in the professional development highlighted on the video Classrooms Under Construction, sitting in their students’ seats gave them insight into how to make their classrooms more student-centered. The video, produced by SEDL’s Technology Assistance Program (TAP), shows student, teachers, and principals from culturally diverse schools across SEDL’s region in the process of creating learner-centered classrooms supported by technology. Several stages and strategies of this process are depicted on the 24-minute video: “Letting Go,” “Making Connections,” “Building Teachers’ Knowledge,” “Getting Support from Others,” “Integrating Technology,” “Giving Students Ownership,” “Changing Classroom Structures,” and “Creating Knowledge Together.” Armed with support from principals and a greater understanding of learner-centered instruction, teachers gain the courage, knowledge, and skills to make the transition from traditional teacher-centered approaches to a more dynamic and creative learning environment. Information about this video can also be found on-line at: http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/tec28.html.
Guide for Connecting School Reform and Diversity Available in Both Spanish and English

“Deliberation is people talking about learning together” say the authors of Public Deliberation: A Tool for Connecting School Reform and Diversity. Given that context, public deliberation can be defined as talking and learning together about issues of common concern — issues that affect more than any one single individual. Its goal is not simply consensus building or decisionmaking, but also a greater understanding of and respect for diverse views. This publication, available in both English and Spanish, discusses various processes of public deliberation in regard to school reform and diversity issues. The publication also includes descriptions of various dialogue formats and contact information for five national organizations that can help communities in the public deliberation process. More information about this product can be found at: http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/lc06.html.

Collaborative Action Team Tools Can Help School Communities

How can disparate members of the school community — businesses, organizations, agencies, and individuals — effectively unite to make a real difference in student performance? SEDL has developed a research-based process to help school communities build collaborations at the local level.

Recently, SEDL produced the Guide to Creating Collaborative Action Teams that individuals, school districts, and other organizations can use to build a partnership between home, school, and community. This boxed package includes two spiral-bound volumes (the guide and its companion toolkit), a loose-leaf set of transparencies and handouts, and a CD-ROM version of each of these items.
SEDL’s *Voices from the Field* Offers Strategies for Successful Reform

Many schools undertaking a comprehensive school reform program find implementation of their reform program overwhelming in the beginning. Working with noted education professionals and experts, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory has created a two-tape audio guide, *Voices from the Field: Success in School Reform*, to help schools successfully implement their chosen reform program. Both tapes in this series revolve around six key strategies for successful implementation of school reform. Tape one provides brief descriptions of each of the six strategies. Tape two offers ideas and guidance about putting the six strategies of reform to work in your school. On the tapes, we hear from Dr. Shirley Hord, a program manager at SEDL. Other education practitioners who talk about reform issues on the two tapes include: Dennis Sparks, the Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council; Wendell Brown, a middle-school principal in Lubbock, Texas, whose school is implementing the AVID school reform model; Sharron Havens, the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction in Lonoke, Arkansas, where schools are implementing the reform program “Onward to Excellence”; and Dr. Margarita Calderón, a researcher who works with many schools across the country implementing the “Success for All” reform program. Both tapes are designed to be used as interactive tools that can help your school solve problems, approach new challenges, and answer questions as you move toward your own comprehensive school reform.

**Voices from the Field: Success in School Reform**

- **Length:** 40 pages
- **Authors:** SEDL
- **Published:** 2000
- **Price:** $25.00 + shipping and handling

All items listed in this catalog are available directly from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory and can be obtained by sending payment to:

SEDL
Publications Department
211 E. Seventh St.
Austin, Texas 78701

E-mail order inquiries to:
products@sedl.org

Call in credit card orders to:
800/476-6861
Publications Department

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**Two booklets coming soon from SEDL in Spanish and English!**

**Building Support for Better Schools: Seven Steps to Engaging Hard-to-Reach Communities** is designed for schools or organizations who want to ensure all members of a community are represented in decisionmaking that affects public education.

**Family & Community Involvement: Reaching Out to Diverse Populations** will help educators — teachers, principals, and administrators — in their efforts to develop meaningful parent and community involvement in their schools.
Get Wired with Multicultural and Bilingual Resources

SEDL's Diversity Links Database is now on-line.

The database contains annotated Internet links to K–12 instructional resources for educators working with culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. It can link educators directly to lesson plans, content, and other materials for ESL, bilingual (English/Spanish), and multicultural curricula. The recently instituted companion to the database, Diversity Links Bulletin, is a monthly email newsletter that provides links for the new additions to the database. The most recent issue of Diversity Links Bulletin offered connections to ESL lesson plans and thematic units as well to lesson plans and readings that focus on multicultural topics and race relations.