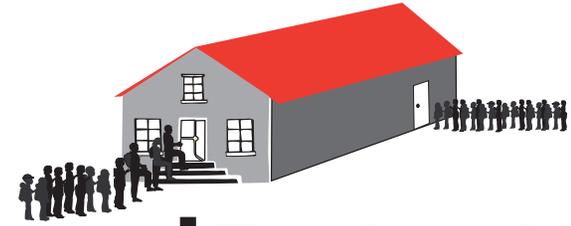


WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

- California should help districts develop dual language programs that serve English learners as well as English speakers, and which guarantee that all children will be proficient in two languages.
- The State should guarantee that teachers have appropriate materials for teaching English learners. It should provide instruction for students and their parents both in English and in the primary language in order to strengthen literacy skills.
- Teachers and counselors must have the preparation and credentials to teach and advise English Learners. The State should set standards for teacher education that are high enough to ensure teachers are qualified to teach EL students.
- The State should provide more instructional time for English learners to learn English and academic skills, and should stop placing these students in year round schools with fewer days of instruction. In addition, the state should ensure access to rigorous coursework that will prepare them for college.
- In place of the tests currently being given, California should develop valid assessments of academic achievement for English learners. In addition, it should monitor placements of English learners into special education to make sure they are appropriate.

References are available at:
www.ucla-idea.org



Unequal Treatment of English Learners in California's Schools

In California's schools there are approximately 1.5 million students who have been identified as English Learners. The term English Learner (EL) refers to students who speak a language other than English, and are still working to become fluent in English. 80% of California's school-aged English Learners speak Spanish as their native language. Despite the fact that English Learners make up one-fourth of the entire public school population in California, the state has done little to ensure they receive a high quality education.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- English Learners are highly segregated among California's schools. The schools that they attend are often the poorest in the state. Many of them have inadequate facilities and are overcrowded. Even though English Learners must acquire a new language at the same time as learning new academic skills, many attend year-round schools with fewer school days.
- English Learners are also much more likely than English speakers from the same socio-economic group to be taught by uncredentialed teachers. This is partially due to the poor working conditions present in the schools that ELs attend. English Learners are even less likely to have a teacher who has been specially trained and authorized to address their exceptional needs.

- English Learners also have less access to quality instructional materials than English speaking students from similar socio-economic groups. In a recent survey, almost half of the teachers of English Learners said they did not have enough books or any books in students' primary language(s). Teachers in schools with the highest percentage of ELs also rated their textbooks and instructional materials as being of much poorer quality than did other teachers.
- English Learners are required to take the same standardized tests as students whose primary language is English. These tests do not accurately measure their abilities or content knowledge and in many cases may even hurt them academically.
- English Learners are disproportionately placed in special education and remedial courses when their special language needs are misidentified as learning disabilities.
- English Learners have inequitable access to rigorous coursework. This is true because:
 - High school counselors seldom speak the language of the students, limiting the information ELs and their parents receive about graduation and college-going requirements.
 - Many schools offer an inadequate number of courses designed to meet the needs of their ELs. As a result, many ELs have short schedules that do not prepare them, even for graduation.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- When there are high concentrations of English Learners in schools and classrooms, students have few opportunities to interact and learn with English speaking peers. This not only makes it difficult for them to learn English, but it also makes it more difficult for them to achieve academically.
- A large body of research has established that teachers with good professional preparation make a difference in students' learning. Having a qualified teacher is even more critical when students, like ELs, have special needs that will not likely be met by an untrained teacher.

- When students do not have access to quality instructional materials or to textbooks written in a language they can read, they are denied the opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills required in higher education settings.
- Students who are not yet fluent in English are unlikely to perform well on standardized tests in English. Because English tests are the only variables used to determine school rank and high school graduation, English Learners suffer a clear disadvantage.
- When ELs are funneled into remedial courses that address only their language needs without building broad academic knowledge, EL students' chances of going to college are greatly diminished.

WHAT IS THE STATE DOING?

- The State has allowed English learners to be segregated in the poorest facilities with the worst conditions for learning.
- California does not provide guidance about what materials are appropriate for English learners and does not collect information on the availability of these materials. It allows books written in the primary language of students and their parents to be routinely removed from the schools.
- The State fails to ensure that English Learners have teachers who are credentialed to teach them. It provides no guidance on the qualifications these teachers need, and in fact has lowered standards for English Learner teacher certification. In addition, the state limits the freedom of teachers who have been trained to work with English Learners from using students' primary language to help them progress academically.
- California does not collect information on the disproportionate placement of English learners into special education and does not make any effort to remedy this unfair pattern. The state does not ensure English Learners' access to rigorous coursework or to academic counselors who can help them prepare for college.
- The State continues to assess English learners with a standardized test given in a language they do not understand, even though the results on this test do not accurately reflect these students' academic progress.