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0521859751 - Educating English Language Learners: A Synthesis of Research Evidence
Fred Genesee, Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, William M. Saunders and Donna Christian
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Educating English Language Learners: A Synthesis of Research Evidence

The book provides an extensive review of scientific research on the learning outcomes of students with limited or no proficiency in English in U.S. schools. Research on students in kindergarten through grade 12 is reviewed. The primary chapters of the book focus on these students' acquisition of oral language skills in English, their development of literacy (reading and writing) skills in English, instructional issues in teaching literacy, and achievement in academic domains (i.e., mathematics, science, and reading). The reviews and analyses of the research are relatively technical with a focus on research quality, design characteristics, and statistical analyses. The book provides a unique set of summary tables that give details about each study, including full references, characteristics of the students in the research, assessment tools and procedures, and results. A concluding chapter summarizes the major issues discussed and makes recommendations about particular areas that need further research.

Fred Genesee is Professor in the Department of Psychology, McGill University, Montreal. He has conducted extensive research on second language education, including second language immersion programs for majority language students and bilingual education for minority language students. His research on bilingual acquisition focuses on the syntactic and communicative development of bilingual children with typical and impaired patterns of acquisition and addresses issues related to the capacity of the language faculty during the period of primary language development.

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary is Professor of Child and Adolescent Development at San Jose State University where she has taught for seventeen years. Her research interests focus on understanding the cognitive, language, psychosocial, and societal factors that influence student achievement, with a particular emphasis on culturally and linguistically diverse students. Kathryn has worked with dual language education programs for the past twenty years and during that time has evaluated more than thirty programs and helped to establish programs in more than fifty school districts in ten states.

William M. Saunders, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Fellow at CSU, Long Beach, at UCLA, and at LessonLab. He currently directs LessonLab's school-based programs for improving teaching, learning, and schooling. He has directed several research programs including longitudinal studies of the literacy development of English learners, clinical trials of discrete instructional components, and prospective studies of school improvement. Formerly a high school teacher and Director of the Writing Project at the University of Southern California, Saunders has conducted school improvement and professional development programs in the Southern California region for the past twenty years. He is the author of numerous papers and chapters on literacy instruction, school change, assessment, and English language learners.

Donna Christian is President of the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, DC. She has worked with CAL since 1974, focusing on the role of language in education, including issues of second language learning and dialect diversity. Among her activities, she has directed a program on two-way bilingual immersion, including a study for the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE), funded by the U.S. Department of Education. She is also a senior advisor to the Heritage Languages Initiative, the Biliteracy Research Program, and the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth.

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Preface

This book grew out of the work of the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE). CREDE was a center funded by the U.S. government[1] to conduct research, generate knowledge, and provide services to improve the education of students whose ability to reach their potential is challenged by language or cultural barriers, race, geographic location, or poverty. From 1996 to 2001, CREDE comprised thirty-one research projects around the country that sought to extend knowledge about the education of the diverse students who make up the U.S. school population, from kindergarten through grade 12. These research projects were organized around six themes that are integral to the education of diverse students: language learning and academic achievement; professional development; family, peers, and community; instruction in context; integrated school reform; and assessment. Researchers working on each theme gathered data and tested curriculum models in wide-ranging settings and with diverse student populations – from classrooms with predominantly Zuni-speaking students in New Mexico to inner-city schools in Florida to California elementary schools with large populations of native Spanish-speaking students.

Following the completion of the first phase of research in 2001, CREDE researchers extended the knowledge base that can be used to improve the education of diverse students by carrying out systematic, thorough, and critical reviews of research related to the themes. Seven synthesis teams were created, each involving researchers, practitioners, and policy experts, to survey and critique the available research on a theme and make

[1] This work was supported under the Education Research and Development Program, PR/Award R306A60001, the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence, as administered by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education. The contents, findings, and opinions expressed in this volume are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of IES or the U.S. ED.

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recommendations for future research agendas. The chapters in this volume report on the work of the team charged with reviewing research on the language and academic development of students who come to school with no proficiency or limited proficiency in English; that is, English language learners (ELLs). The volume reviews and summarizes scientific research on three fundamental aspects of the education of ELL students: their oral language development, their literacy development, and their academic development.

The team members, in addition to the authors, who guided the synthesis work consisted of Diane August (Center for Applied Linguistics), Gil Cuevas (University of Miami), Else Hamayan (Illinois Resource Center), Liliana Minaya-Rowe (University of Connecticut), Mary Ramirez (Pennsylvania Department of Education), Noni Reis (San Jose State University), Charlene Rivera (The George Washington University), Deborah Short (Center for Applied Linguistics), and Sau-Lim Tsang (ARC Associates). We also recognize and appreciate the assistance provided by individuals who co-authored specific chapters of this volume: Graciela Borsato, Gisela O'Brien, and Caroline Riches. Their assistance was critical in the successful completion of this work. Finally, we are grateful for the leadership of Roland Tharp, the director of the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) for developing and encouraging the synthesis process, and we thank Yolanda Padrón, assistant director of CREDE, for her support during the project.

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