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.

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Educating English Language Learners

A Synthesis of Research Evidence

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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

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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.