

Legal and ethical issues confronting the education of english language learners c...

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LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES CONFRONTING THE EDUCATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

English was not always the language of instruction in schools across America as in the eighteenth century classes were conducted in different languages (Porter, 1998, para 2). In places such as Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Maryland and Virginia classes in some schools were conducted in German, French, Swedish, Dutch and even Greek. It was only after the First World War that English was made the language of instruction in American schools.

Bilingual education is an effort that seeks to help immigrant kids learn how to speak and write English by using their native language to do so. However this kind of education took a different turn in practice where focus was shifted from learning English to maintaining the ethnic culture of their families. Bilingual education was used up to three years after which the learners would be instructed purely in English (Porter, 2008, para 4). However there can be an extension of another three years upon a review that would recommend so.

In recent years, school funding has gone down which is quite unfortunate to ELLs because it means they have to take fewer English classes and time to learn English has reduced to 3 years. In Oregon, the legislators are considering passing a bill called Measure 58. This law would not allow students to learn in their native language (Manning, 2008, para 1). English will be the only language of instruction and the time to learn the language is only three years, one while in elementary school and the two while in high school. According to this law, if teachers decide to teach English to these

learners, they would face the law and the institution would risk losing funding. Clay elementary school in Georgia has found a way to teach ELL effectively without breaking the law. It does so by hiring and maintaining bilingual teachers to ensure communication with the learners is seamless and better than having the teacher using a language aid. This school also offers after school tutoring to help learners during their free time to grasp the English language while keeping parents of these students in the loop. This creates synergy and results in success.

References

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