

# Abolition for bilingual education

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One half of United States children who are not proficient in English live in California, a state whose future depends on these three million children becoming fluent in English. In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act was passed with the theory that if you academically instructed students in their native language first, learning English would be better and faster in the long run. Since the passage of bilingual education, there has been a continuing debate over whether or not the programs are benefiting children.

Although there is not any research to support this conclusion, bilingual advocates believe that " bilingual students who first master Spanish and then make a transition to English, do at least as well academically in the long run as their English-only counterparts" (Netkin 1). Supporters feel that even if students are not gaining in English, the programs keep them from falling behind in content areas and also boost their self-esteem, which gives them the confidence to catch up later.

The search for some proof that the five hundred million dollar industry works to help immigrant children learn English, in order to prosper in a California society, continues with little success. For decades throughout California, bilingual education has been commended as a miracle for schoolchildren who are not proficient in English, but the programs have been proven to be unsuccessful and should be abolished. Research indicates that bilingual programs are not helping children, but instead are bringing about high drop out rates and low test scores.

There have been many struggles to educate children in bilingual programs. Teachers and instructional materials are hard to find, which makes

instruction in academics subjects to the great number and mix of children difficult. Highly transient students and the inability to involve parents in their children's education present a barrier to instruction. Bilingual programs require great amounts of money that California taxpayers should not have to provide because taxpayers should not be responsible for teaching immigrants the American language.

Proposition 227 was passed in June of 1998 that was to eliminate bilingual education and place children with limited English proficiency into classes where English is the only language spoken. This new law will enable California schoolchildren to succeed in America and taxpayers will no longer have to provide for a program that "actually keeps children from learning English, the language of their future, and hinders success in American society" (McCain). "63% of research shows no difference between bilingual education and doing nothing" (Research Evidence of Bilingual Education 4).

Each year, only five percent of the bilingual schoolchildren gain English proficiency. Scores on comprehensive tests reveal that students who move from bilingual classes to English-only classes are unable to perform. Latino children in bilingual classes "end up not speaking either Spanish or English well" (Netkin 2). They have the highest dropout rate, forty percent, of any ethnic group and have consistently scored the lowest on Scholastic Assessment Tests. Instructing children in their official language and not teaching them English is making the children unable to succeed in society.

Since this is an American country, children should be placed in English speaking classrooms in order to learn the language of the dominant group.

Educating children in bilingual programs is difficult. Schools cannot provide the proper bilingual instruction because teachers and materials are limited or unavailable. Students speak languages that are not historically represented in the United States so bilingual teachers and materials for the languages are nonexistent. Even in schools where all students speak Spanish, teachers are hard to find and have to be recruited from Spanish speaking countries.

However, sometimes the immigrant teachers cannot be certified to teach because they lack a college degree or simply cannot pass the English portion of a state teacher certification test. The California Department of Education estimates that about twenty-two thousand bilingual teachers are needed for instruction and studies predict that filling the need may be impossible.

Bilingual education cannot provide children with the instruction needed to prosper in California so the programs should be eliminated. Immigrant students are highly transient which makes continuous instruction difficult.

New students arrive to schools on a monthly basis, contributing to overcrowded classrooms that make teaching complex. Existing students move frequently or are regularly absent for long periods of time, disrupting their learning. Often times, students with excessive absences from school cannot be promoted to the next grade level or graduate, which makes the children discouraged and leads to them dropping out of school. Transient actions effect a student's ability to receive an education, contributing to the failure of bilingual programs.

Parental involvement is important for student achievement, but extreme struggles arise when trying to involve parents in their children's education.

Many parents are illiterate in their native language as well as English, making communication impossible. Translators are used successfully, but for uncommon languages, very few translators are available. Parental self-help classes are provided to parents who have trouble communicating. The classes have taught parents how to help their children in school, but several problems with parent involvement remain.

Without the five hundred million dollars a year that taxpayers provide to the federal government, bilingual education programs would not exist. Why should the taxpayer be responsible for immigrants learning the American language? Before entering this country immigrants know that English is the dominant language, therefore, they should be responsible for learning the language themselves. By not knowing English and being unable to communicate effectively, newcomers are only hurting themselves. Taxpayers should not be responsible for educating immigrants.

Learning English should be the responsibility of the person seeking to speak the language. Proposition 227 was passed to eliminate bilingual education. Children with limited English proficiency are to be placed into English-only classes where their native language is never spoken. This practice is called English immersion, a non-taxpaying system that will push children toward the quickest path to success in America. Students will learn English better and faster by being around the language all-day and everyday.

The quicker they learn the language the sooner the students will be able to join in with their peers and develop an education. Although Proposition 227 was passed in June of 1998 to eliminate bilingual education, the programs

remain in schools. " In Redwood City, south of San Francisco, the school district reports that eighty percent of Spanish-speaking children are still enrolled in bilingual" (Michels). Many other schools have confessed to not eliminating bilingual classes. The schools feel that the children need to be transferred to English-only classes slowly in order to avoid student confusion.

Bilingual supporters feel that the programs give children self-esteem and a better education. This is absurd. Separating children from others because they cannot speak English makes them feel insecure and different. If anything, the students loose self-esteem and pride, making learning difficult. Bilingual programs are a failure and schools should obey the law and abolish the instruction. " The students will gain whatever added self-esteem they need when they develop proficiency in English, the language in which their peers are learning, and the language that they will need to succeed in the United States" (Netkin 1)