

Third National Research Symposium on Limited English Proficient Student Issues:
Focus on Middle and High School Issues

Gaining Access to the Core Curriculum in Intermediate Schools: A California Study

Catherine Minicucci
Minicucci Associates

Laurie Olsen
California Tomorrow

Abstract

In 1988 the California Legislature commissioned a study of programs for limited English proficient (LEP) students in the state (BW Associates, 1992). The study, which focused primarily on exemplary programs at the elementary level, included an exploratory study of programs in grades 7 to 12. This paper draws from information gathered in the secondary study reported in Minicucci and Olsen, 1992, presents findings on intermediate schools in greater depth, and extends the analysis of bilingual middle schools as a means of providing access to core content in science, math, and social studies to language minority youth.¹

Introduction

Historically, in California, the focus of state policy in bilingual education has been at the elementary level. The emphasis is understandable. There are more limited English proficient (LEP) students in the elementary years than in the secondary years, and the early research on second language learning focused on elementary school-age children. However, the number of LEP students in secondary schools has grown rapidly, suggesting the need for policy attention at the secondary level. In 1990, almost one-third of the states' LEP population was enrolled at the secondary level—a quarter of a million students (California Department of Education, 1990).

The exploratory study was designed to answer two questions:

1. What services are typically provided to California LEP students in grades 7 to 12? What program options exist and how are they staffed?
2. How are programs for LEP students structured within the typical departmentalized secondary school?

The exploratory study methods relied on several data collection strategies including a telephone survey, visits to five schools with extensive programming, a literature review, and interviews with local school district and State Department of Education personnel. Study methods for the research on intermediate schools reported in this paper included:

- **Telephone survey:** Fourteen intermediate schools, seven junior high schools, and seven middle schools in California were included in a telephone survey in the fall and early spring of 1990-91. The

sample schools were selected to reflect the concentration and numbers of LEP students enrolled in schools throughout California and the geographic region. Given the limited resources available for this exploratory study, the sample was not statistically representative. At each school interviews were conducted with the LEP coordinator, the principal, or another person designated by the principal as the most familiar with the LEP programs at that school.

- **Site visits:** In the spring of 1991, the research team visited two intermediate schools in California, one middle school, and one junior high school. The schools were selected to represent the different program models defined in the course of the telephone surveys. At each site, we interviewed: the principal, the vice-principal, the site LEP Coordinator, one or two counselors responsible for scheduling LEP students, three to six ESL teachers, content area department chairs, and five to ten content area teachers who teach classes with LEP students enrolled. A small sample of LEP student program records were pulled at random to examine typical student programs and grades. At each school, we observed ESL classes, sheltered English content classes, and bilingual classes (if they were offered). An additional visit to a second bilingual middle school was conducted in the spring of 1992 for the preparation of this report.
- **Advisors:** after preliminary findings from the telephone survey and site visits, a group of advisors—experts from the school, district, and state level—was convened to discuss the findings and implications. The advisors were convened in the spring of 1991.

The Challenge of Secondary Limited English Proficient Students

The challenge of educating secondary school age children from immigrant families in California arises from the growth and diversity of this group of students and their diverse academic and social needs.

Demographic Context

California is in the midst of a profound demographic upheaval. In the past decade, California's total population grew 26 percent, faster than in any other state in the nation. This growth was fueled by high birth rates and by the forces of immigration. The 1990 Census counted 6 million foreign born residing in California—the result of a major immigration wave in which immigrants from every continent and from dozens of different cultural and language groups have joined an already diverse California population to form an unprecedented mixture of linguistic, cultural, national, and ethnic diversity. Almost two-thirds of those arriving in California this past year were immigrants. From 1980 to 1990, the number of Californians of Asian descent grew by 118 percent and the number of Latinos increased 69 percent. This incredible diversity and demographic change is being felt profoundly in the secondary schools in the state. Almost one quarter of a million LEP students are enrolled in California's secondary schools—96,060 in grades seven to eight, and 164,338 in grades nine to 12 (California Department of Education, 1990). By analyzing CBEDS and Language Census data, we obtained a profile of California secondary LEP enrollment by district and by school. Tables 1 and 2 present information on statewide enrollments and concentrations of LEP students in intermediate schools.

Table 1
Concentration of LEP Students in Secondary Schools, 1987-88

| Percent LEP | Intermediate Schools |
|-------------|----------------------|
| 0% | 43 |

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| 0.1 - 5% | 386 |
| 5.1 - 15% | 327 |
| 15.1 - 30% | 163 |
| 30% + | 57 |
| Total | 976 |

Source: California Department of Education, Language Census, 1988.

Table 2
Number of LEP Students in Secondary Schools, 1987-88

| Number | Intermediate Schools |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 0 | 43 |
| 1 - 25 | 327 |
| 26 - 100 | 343 |
| 101 - 200 | 150 |
| 201 - 400 | 73 |
| 401 - 1,000 | 38 |
| 1,001 + | 2 |
| Total | 976 |

Source: California Department of Education, Language Census, 1988.

Statewide, 220 intermediate schools have LEP concentrations of over 15 percent. Among the state's 976 intermediate schools, 263 have more than 100 LEP students. In the past decade, there has been a threefold increase in the number of LEP students in California's K-12 school system. While numerically the greatest growth has been among elementary age children, statewide there has been a dramatic growth in secondary LEP students as well. Between 1987 and 1990, grades seven to eight LEP counts increased 42 percent. Ten of the fourteen intermediate schools surveyed reported growth in their LEP student population.

There is tremendous language and cultural diversity among this secondary LEP population. Statewide, 96 different language groups are represented among the LEP population in the schools. In grades seven to eight, 76 percent of LEP students speak Spanish and 16.5 percent are speakers of Asian languages; the remaining 6.5 percent speak other languages. Table 3 shows the survey middle schools and junior high schools, the percent that LEP students make up of the total school population, and whether the LEP students are from a single language group or represent multiple languages.

Table 3

Concentration of LEP Students in Survey Intermediate Schools

| Pct LEP | ALL | Junior High | | | Middle School | | |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|--------------------|----------|
| | | Single Language | Multiple Languages | Total | Single Language | Multiple Languages | Total |
| 5-10% | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10.1-15% | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 15.1-20% | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 20.1-30% | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 31% + | 9 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Total Schools | 14 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 7 |

The seven middle schools and seven junior high schools in the California study are similar in regard to their average enrollment, the percent that LEP students makeup of the school population, and the total number of LEP students enrolled in the school. Table 4 compares the two groups of schools. The junior high schools and middle schools were large schools; the average enrollment for both middle schools and junior high schools was over 1,000 students. The middle schools as a group had a more diverse population of LEP students representing more language groups. Seventy-four percent of the LEP students in the junior high schools were Spanish speakers compared to 60 percent of the LEP students in the middle schools.

Table 4
Intermediate Schools in the Telephone Survey: Demographic Information

| | Junior High Schools N=7 | Middle Schools N=7 |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Average Enrollment | 1,179 | 1,119 |
| Range | 700-2,000 | 520-1,900 |
| Average Percent LEP | 34% | 38% |
| Range | 9%-74% | 13%-48% |
| Average Total LEP Students | 481 | 439 |
| Range | 69-1475 | 110-844 |
| Average Percent that Spanish LEP made of total LEP | 74% | 60% |
| Range | 43%-100% | 5%-100% |

Student Academic Needs

That secondary LEP students are increasing in such great numbers present a complex array of academic and social needs that go far beyond their lack of skills in the English language. It is the combination of these needs that present such a challenge to the secondary schools in California.

English Fluency

By definition, LEP students are not fluent in English. At every grade level in secondary schools, there is a wide range of English language fluency within the LEP population. Some are orally fluent LEP students from elementary schools in the United States who are weak in English reading and writing. Although schools surveyed do not maintain accurate records of the numbers of "continuing" LEP students, staff estimate that it is a large portion of the secondary LEP population. LEP students who are newly arrived immigrants with no prior exposure to English or to American culture, need to learn to speak, read, and write English.

Prior Schooling

Monolingual English speaking students are diverse in their academic performance, but their years of education usually match their grade level in school. LEP students of similar age enroll in U.S. schools with drastic variations in their years of schooling. As a group, LEP students' previous schooling ranges from no prior schooling to excellent continuous schooling. It is not uncommon for LEP students to enroll at age 12 with little, if any, prior schooling. In the telephone survey, respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of LEP students who entered secondary schools having previously attended schools in the United States, and to identify the percentage who enroll in secondary schools as newcomers to the United States. Respondents were asked to estimate the continuity and degree of prior schooling for both of these groups. School respondents were unable to estimate the percentages of students in these groups but described the existence of three distinct groups with quite different academic needs: those with little prior schooling and lacking basic literacy skills; students with excellent previous schooling (within or outside the United States); and a large (apparently the largest) group who have some gaps in their schooling.

Those with excellent continuous schooling prior to immigrating to the United States are well prepared in many respects, but face difficulties due to being educated in national schooling systems quite different from our own. The curriculum content and sequence, the teaching pedagogy, and the particular skills that are emphasized may differ radically from the U.S. schools. Thus, even those who arrive as adolescents with strong academic backgrounds face what can be a difficult transition to our form of schooling and unexpected academic gaps, particularly in subjects such as social studies and history. However, these students (usually from industrialized urban centers of the world and from middle class or professional families) possess self-confidence in their ability as students, and strong academic and study skills to apply to new content. Their greatest academic obstacle is learning English.

At the other end of the spectrum is a growing, highly visible group of students with little or no prior schooling—students from poor, rural regions of Mexico or Central America or Southeast Asian refugee camps. Four of the 14 intermediate schools surveyed spoke of the complexity of serving the needs of preliterate students. Secondary schools' curriculum assumes prior skill and literacy levels. Addressing the needs of LEP students with little or no prior schooling requires an approach to develop basic literacy and to

fill gaps in academic content in an accelerated fashion. ESL alone does not meet the preliterate students' needs.

In between the two extremes is a large group of continuing LEP students who have some oral English fluency and academic skills. Descriptions of this group vary, but most of our surveyed schools report that the average continuing LEP student has a two to three year gap in academic skill level when he or she enters intermediate school. "Continuing LEP students" have been gloomily labeled "ESL Lifers" by staff. Within this group are immigrant students who have arrived in the United States with some gaps in their schooling and continuing LEP students from elementary schools who are still designated LEP. Schools estimate that these students comprise from 10 percent to 90 percent of their LEP population.

The presence of such a large group of continuing LEP students in secondary schools is an alarming problem. Teachers and counselors suggest that these students have failed to make progress because of transience and mobility that has resulted in repeated, large blocks of missed schooling in the earlier grades. We examined records of LEP students who, for example, had been in five schools by sixth grade, and who missed 20-30 days of school per year. In addition to transience and its attendant problems, these students have been enrolled in many different, and sometimes conflicting pedagogical approaches to LEP programs.

Social Needs Of Immigrant Teenagers

Language minority students from immigrant families face more than academic challenges. The legal and economic pressures of immigration, the pressures of adapting to a new culture, and the pressure of health and mental health problems all affect participation in school.

Legal and Economic

Immigrant secondary students come to school with a host of legal, economic, family, social, health, and mental health needs which affect their participation in school. Because a very large percentage of immigrants to California are undocumented (some estimates run as high as 70 percent), it is likely that a significant percentage of secondary immigrant students are undocumented. Undocumented secondary level students can fear divulging family information that can lead to someone being detained or deported, and feel tremendous legal pressures on the family (which may result in a great deal of moving and changing schools). Many immigrant adolescents have to stay home to take care of younger siblings so parents or other adults can work. These families' responsibilities are vitally important to family survival and are valued in the culture of many immigrant families (see Olsen, 1988).

Cultural Changes

Adapting to life in the United States for teenagers who have spent their childhoods in other nations and cultures can be difficult as well. Trying to make comprehensible a new culture, language, and way of life, they walk into schools where even the logistics can be problematic. Bells ring and everyone moves around, lockers need to be opened, and food bought in a cafeteria. With learning processes shaped by different cultural and national backgrounds, they need to figure out how we teach and learn in our schools. Speaking out in class, participating in discussions, the relative informality between teachers and students—all of these are foreign. And trying to bridge two cultures, particularly for a teenager, can be painful and difficult. Juggling culturally different expectations about what it means to be a mature and responsible person, and dealing with culturally different sex role expectations is difficult. Immigrant students are caught between

two worlds. Trying to feel part of the new culture, facing the pull toward the old, they ask themselves, "How American can I be, and still be me?" (Olsen, 1988, chapter three).

From relatively homogeneous cultures, the immigrant adolescent has to learn to live in our heterogeneous and racially stratified society. In many communities, the new immigrant and the limited English speaker are at the bottom of the social ladder—they look different, they act different, they do not speak the language. Most experience the social world of school as hostile and unwelcoming. A recent Attorney General's report documented the extent of hostilities, tensions, and racially motivated hate crimes in schools and among young people. According to the Attorney General's report, many of these school-based hate crime incidents are anti-immigrant, (California Department of Justice, 1990).

The rise of immigrant youth gangs is now part of the landscape surrounding schools in most urban areas of this state. Half of the surveyed schools report some immigrant involvement in gang activity. Gangs evidently recruit among newcomer English learners. For safety, for a sense of community and connection, newcomer students respond. At one junior high school, an ESL teacher asked her beginning ESL students to draw a picture to represent who they are. Among the varied 50-60 students' drawings, two boys drew identical gang representations to identify themselves. The boys were recent immigrants from Mexico.

Attendance

Due to the economic and legal pressures on many immigrant and language minority families, as well as transient patterns associated with migration, school attendance problems are common for immigrant students. With mobility comes changes in schools, with attendant problems in adjustment, peer attachment, and interruptions in curricular sequence. One middle school in our sample, concerned about its attendance problem, has assigned a special counselor to track down LEP students who have missed more than 10 days in a month. The attendance counselor reported she had 200 students on her "watch list" for missing more than 10 days that previous month.

For Mexican American immigrant students, another aspect of their family life contributes to attendance problems. Due to the close proximity of Mexico and the relative porousness of the Mexico-United States border, families who have immigrated from Mexico often are able to maintain close ties with their families and communities in Mexico. Family occasions (deaths, weddings, and so on) and holiday periods lead to trips back and forth between the two nations—resulting in missed school. Teachers report that beginning around Thanksgiving, many Mexican American immigrant students leave school to return to Mexico for the holidays, returning to school sometime in January or later. At the secondary level, students who miss more than 10 days of any one semester lose credit for the full semester in many districts.

Absence of Support Services

Secondary level English learners have a host of needs which must be addressed if they are to fully participate in school. Many administrators, counselors, and teachers we interviewed acknowledged the need for a network of support services within schools and communities. Providing the support to ensure that students come to school and are able to remain there is a prelude to offering instruction.

Intermediate School Programs for LEP Students in California

Assessment Procedures

English learners present diverse academic needs in three main dimensions: English, primary language literacy, and academic skills. Assessment of English learners in these dimensions is critical for individual student placement into programs and for overall program planning. The survey gathered information on current assessment practices to determine what is being assessed and how it is being assessed. In general, assessment practices were limited to two main dimensions: English oral fluency and English achievement measured on standardized tests.

In California, a home language survey is given to the student and parent in which the language used at home is determined. If a student comes from a home in which another language is spoken, the student is tested on an approved instrument to assess English oral fluency; the Language Assessment Scales (LAS), IDEA Oral Proficiency Test (IPT), and Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) are common choices.

In addition to oral English fluency, LEP students' English academic skills are tested. Common procedures include testing on CTBS or some other English standardized achievement test. Some districts augment these two basic assessments by testing academic skills in the primary language and/or interviewing the student and parent in the native language to determine previous schooling. Table 5 summarizes the practices found in the survey schools.

Table 5
Summary of Assessment Practices: Survey Results

| Assessment | Junior High Schools | Middle Schools |
|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| | <i>Number of Students</i> | |
| Oral English Fluency | 7 | 7 |
| English Achievement | 7 | 7 |
| English Writing | 4 | 3 |
| English Reading | 2 | 0 |
| Academic Skill in L1 | 2 | 3 |
| Previous Schooling | 1 | 1 |

At the survey schools, the two areas consistently assessed include: English oral fluency and English achievement on standardized tests. English writing is assessed at half the surveyed intermediate schools. Five intermediate schools assess academic skills in the primary language, and two schools attempt to determine previous schooling or supplement standardized English reading tests with individually administered English reading instruments. Three of the surveyed intermediate schools reported that they send staff to the feeder elementary schools in the previous spring to assess incoming students and talk with LEP teachers at the elementary level. Middle schools and junior high schools did not differ significantly in assessment practices, but more junior high schools than middle schools assessed English reading and writing.

Content class teachers told us that they do not receive results of LEP students' assessments. The teachers do

not know the students' English reading level, primary language reading level, or history of previous schooling. Content teachers and ESL teachers do not routinely share information on LEP students, nor is it common for a plan to be prepared for each LEP student.

Ideally, assessment results should be used to help schools design effective programs, make placement decisions, and help teachers plan instruction. Yet the link between assessment and appropriate placement options appears weak, primarily because of the difficulty of creating placement options that speak to the complexity of academic need. Furthermore, current assessment efforts are far from ideal because of the narrowness of the current assessment and the lack of effective means for classroom teachers to utilize assessment results.

Models of Secondary LEP Programs

Secondary LEP programs implemented in California appear to divide into four basic models. All of the schools surveyed in the study offer two types of classes to LEP students: ESL and selected electives in the mainstream taught in English such as physical education or music. Beyond the two common elements, schools vary in the approach to teaching content to LEP students. Some schools use the primary language of LEP students to teach some content classes, some schools use sheltered English, some offer both primary language and sheltered English, and some do not offer either sheltered English or primary language, but place LEP students in mainstream classes.

Sheltered English is an approach to teaching English learners in which content instruction is offered in English to classes composed solely of English learners. The term "sheltered English" was coined by Stephen Krashen (Edwards, et al., 1984) to mean instruction in subject matter made comprehensible for English learners. In the sheltered English classroom the focus is on subject matter and the students' attention is on the message (content), not the medium (language). Krashen stressed the fact that native English-speaking students are excluded from the sheltered class so that instruction can be directed at the English learners' level of comprehension. Sheltered English classes use special instructional strategies, including: (1) emphasis on extralingual cues (visuals, props) to help the students understand what is being communicated, (2) linguistic modifications (pauses, repetition, elaboration), (3) interactive lectures in which there is continuous teacher-student dialogue, and (4) focus on central concepts rather than on details.

The four models of secondary LEP programs are:

- **Model A—Sheltered English Only:** programs use sheltered English exclusively to deliver academic content instruction to all-LEP classes. LEP science, for example, is taught by a teacher using sheltered English techniques.
- **Model B—Primary Language:** programs use the primary language of students to deliver academic content instruction to all-LEP classes. In intermediate schools, parallel textbooks in English and Spanish for math and science enable teachers to offer a full curriculum, at grade level, for students who can read Spanish as their primary language. This model was observed exclusively for Spanish speaking LEP students.
- **Model C—Primary Language combined with sheltered English:** programs use primary language instruction for some academic content classes and sheltered English instruction for other content classes. Primary language instruction may be used with Spanish speakers while sheltered English is used with mixed groups of languages. Or, primary language instruction may be used with students with less developed primary language skills and sheltered English instruction reserved for LEP

students with more advanced primary language literacy.

- **Model D—Mainstream Placement:** programs place LEP students in mainstream content classes rather than creating special academic content classes exclusively for LEP students. They may or may not be clustered by language group and with other LEP students in these classes. In some cases, native language aides may be used. Commonly, LEP students in Model D programs receive only ESL and electives until they reach an intermediate fluency in oral English, at which point they are placed in mainstream content classes.

The second distinguishing feature among secondary programs is the extent of content coverage provided to LEP students. Within each model there are different levels of coverage of science, math, and social studies. We describe them as full, partial, and sparse.

- **Full Content Coverage:** all subject areas are taught in classes designed to address the needs of LEP students, and there are offerings at all grade levels. LEP students in full content programs are enrolled in a complete menu of classes in ESL, math, science, social studies and electives.
- **Partial Content Coverage of all Subject Areas:** LEP students enroll in a few classes in all subject areas. There are insufficient class openings to accommodate all LEP students in content classes. LEP students in partial content programs receive a short schedule of classes—typically ESL and one or more content classes. The remainder of the school day is spent in study halls or in additional elective courses. LEP students may have math but no science or science but no math.
- **Sparse Content Coverage:** there are *big gaps* in subject matter coverage. One whole subject area is not scheduled for LEP students, such as science or math, and/or entire grade levels are missing. LEP students in sparse content programs are enrolled in ESL and electives. They do not take science or math, or are limited to course offerings in a few grade levels in the school.

Table 6 shows the number of intermediate schools in the sample by content approach model and subject matter coverage level. Eight of the intermediate schools used sheltered English to teach content classes exclusively to their LEP students. Primary language was used exclusively in three intermediate schools and in combination with sheltered English in three intermediate schools. Five of the seven junior high schools relied exclusively on English-based instruction. One junior high school used both primary language and sheltered instruction for content courses. Two of the middle schools offered full bilingual content coverage and one offered content classes in primary language and sheltered English. The two bilingual middle schools are described more fully at the end of the paper.

Table 7 shows the number of junior high schools and middle schools offering full, partial, limited, and no content to LEP students with all models combined. The table demonstrates that, regardless of the approach taken to teaching content, very few schools offer a full menu of academic content classes to LEP students. Only four of the 14 schools surveyed offer a full program to LEP students. Three of the four intermediate schools offering full content coverage were middle schools; one was a junior high school.

Table 6
Models of Secondary LEP Programs
Survey Results: Approach to Teaching Content

| Model | | Junior High Schools | Middle Schools | Total |
|-------|--|---------------------|----------------|-------|
| | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Model A: Sheltered English | Full Coverage | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Partial Coverage | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| | Sparse Coverage | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Model B: Primary Language | Full Coverage | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| | Partial Coverage | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Sparse Coverage | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Model C: Sheltered English and Primary Language | Full Coverage | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Partial Coverage | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Sparse Coverage | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Model D: Mainstream | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | | 7 | 7 | 14 |

Table 7
Content Instruction for LEP Students
Survey Results: All Models Combined

| Content | Junior High Schools | Middle Schools | Total |
|------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|
| Full Coverage | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Partial Coverage | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Sparse Coverage | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| No Coverage | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 7 | 7 | 14 |

One third of the intermediate schools have major gaps in their offerings or no possible offerings at all to English learners. The schools with partial coverage offer limited courses to English learners but cover all areas: science, math, and social studies. In all, five of the 14 intermediate schools have either no content or big gaps in content instruction. One middle school placed all LEP students in content classes in the mainstream with support of a "buddy" who was a fluent bilingual student (Model D).

ESL Programs

The goal of ESL classes at the secondary level includes development of oral English, reading, and writing skills. All of the intermediate schools surveyed have ESL programs and all but one offer more than one level of ESL. In all schools surveyed, assessment results are used to place LEP students in ESL classes. Initial ESL placement is based solely on oral English fluency in four of the 14 intermediate schools. Five intermediate schools consider English reading level and oral English fluency in ESL placement. Once a student is placed initially in ESL, movement from level to level depends primarily on teacher judgment. In a departmentalized secondary school, early levels of ESL are usually taught in two back-to-back class periods. Advanced ESL and transition classes are typically one class period. The practice of offering three-hour ESL classes is called "saturation" ESL and is not regarded as a sound pedagogical approach. The few schools in our survey with three-hour ESL blocks provide few or no content courses for LEP students.

Although there is a great deal of diversity in the number of levels of ESL taught in survey schools, the most common number is three. Five intermediate schools offered three levels of ESL, five schools offered four or five levels, and four offered one or two levels of ESL. Schools with more than three ESL levels usually offer an introductory or newcomer level of ESL and end the ESL sequence with a transition class taught in the English Department or the ESL Department. Schools with larger numbers of immigrant students have developed more course offerings in ESL. Schools with smaller numbers of immigrant students are more constrained in the number and level of ESL classes they offer.

Placement policies for English learners in ESL have important consequences on ESL class composition. When oral English and English reading are used as criteria for placement, then students who are orally fluent but lack reading comprehension are placed in the same class with new immigrants. Orally fluent English learners may sit through oral English development activities that they do not need, taking up time needed for reading and writing instruction. Or, nonorally fluent English learners cannot comprehend teacher instruction in English which is comprehensible to students who speak English but need more skills development in English reading. When oral English is the sole criteria for placement in ESL, ESL classes will contain wide variations in students by age, previous schooling, and primary language literacy.

Advanced ESL classes stress literature and writing skills. Preparation of students for district writing proficiency exams is becoming a common spring activity for advanced ESL students in recognition of the difficulty writing poses for second language learners. Transition classes are taught in the English or ESL departments for students who have completed the ESL sequence. Transition classes are a relatively recent offering in many schools and have been developed in response to the failure of LEP students who have completed the ESL sequence in mainstream English classes.

Students are placed in content classes on the basis of their ESL level in five junior high schools and three middle schools; the remaining two junior high schools and four middle schools consider ESL level and other academic factors in content class placement.

Content Area Coverage

Aside from the extent of overall content coverage discussed above, the study team explored how subject areas were structured in LEP programs—the track (general versus college prep), grade levels, and approach to instruction (primary language, sheltered English, or mainstream). Table 8 shows results for junior high

schools and Table 9 shows results for middle schools. Table 10 presents all survey intermediate schools.

Track

At the intermediate school level, most of the math, science, and social studies classes for LEP students in survey schools are in the general track. One middle school offered some college prep math and one junior high offered college prep science to LEP students. Two middle schools provide self-contained, bilingual, nontracked content instruction.

Grade Level Coverage

Intermediate schools cover social studies at all grade levels at eight of the fourteen schools surveyed. Next came science, with six schools covering all grade levels, and math, with five schools covering all grade levels.

Table 8
LEP Subject Matter in Survey Junior High Schools

| | Math | Science | Social Studies |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Track | | | |
| Self-Contained | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| General | 6 | 4 | 7 |
| General and College Prep | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| No Offerings for LEP | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Grade Level | | | |
| All Grades | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Some Grades | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| No Offerings | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Mode of Instruction | | | |
| Sheltered English | 5 | 4 | 6 |
| Primary Language | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Sheltered English and Primary Language | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mainstream | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No Offerings* | 1 | 2 | 0 |

* LEP students not placed in mainstream classes.

Table 9
LEP Subject Matter in Survey Middle Schools

| | Math | Science | Social Studies |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Track | | | |
| Self-Contained | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| General | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| General and College Prep | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| No Offerings for LEP | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Grade Level | | | |
| All Grades | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Some Grades | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| No Offerings | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Mode of Instruction | | | |
| Sheltered English | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Primary Language | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Sheltered English and Primary Language | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mainstream | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| No Offerings | 1 | 1 | 1 |

* *LEP students not placed in mainstream classes.*

Table 10
LEP Subject Matter in Survey Intermediate Schools

| | Math | Science | Social Studies |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Track | | | |
| General | 8 | 7 | 11 |
| General and College Prep | 1 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| No Offerings for LEP | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Grade Level | | | |
| Some Grades | 6 | 4 | 5 |
| No Offerings | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Mode of Instruction | | | |
| Primary Language | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Sheltered English and Primary Language | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mainstream | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| No Offerings | 2 | 3 | 1 |

** LEP students not placed in mainstream classes.*

Instructional Approach

Tables 9 and 10 show that survey intermediate schools are using a variety of approaches to teaching content. Sheltered English predominates in the junior high schools as the preferred approach to content instruction. The students' primary language is used in one junior high and three middle schools for math and social studies. Primary language instruction is used exclusively with Spanish speakers.

There appears to be a striking difference in access to curriculum content between middle school content courses using students' primary language and courses using sheltered English. Middle schools differ from junior high schools in that they offer more self-contained classes and rely less on a departmental structure. For example, middle schools may offer a combined "core" class for language arts and social studies, taught by trained bilingual teachers. Middle schools that have adopted a bilingual model have access to parallel textbooks that adhere to the California curriculum frameworks printed in both English and Spanish. Availability of parallel textbooks enables bilingual middle schools in California to have a comparable math, science, and language arts curriculum for LEP students who can read Spanish and have sufficient previous schooling to benefit from the curriculum.

Secondary school LEP programs that teach content in sheltered English are experiencing very serious gaps in materials and ambiguity in curriculum content. Sheltered English courses use approaches such as:

- using a different English science textbook that is easier to read than the one used by non-LEP classes, but judged to be inferior in subject content;
- using standard English texts identical to the non-LEP students, moving slower with aides assisting in translation; or
- using teacher-made materials exclusively.

Curriculum Coverage

Four middle schools and one junior high school out of the 14 intermediate schools surveyed offer Spanish

for Spanish speakers. Three intermediate schools offer no science, two offer no math, and one offers no social studies to LEP students. In one middle school, there are no LEP content classes per se, but the LEP students are placed into math, science, and social studies classes taught in English. In this middle school, support is provided by pairing up a LEP student with a bilingual student who translates for the LEP student as needed during the day.

The pattern of content areas offered and those not offered to immigrant students varies tremendously from school to school. One intermediate school would offer no math, another no science. Thus, a student's access to particular subject matter is determined largely by what school he or she attends.

Factors Affecting Immigrant Students' Access to Core Content

Programs for English learners in departmentalized secondary schools adhere to a common model. Several levels of ESL are provided to reflect the varying English competency levels of English learners. Content classes in science, math, and social studies are offered as the training of teachers and the schedule permit. Beginning and intermediate ESL students receive special content classes for LEP students. Advanced ESL students are typically placed in mainstream or remedial track classes. In many of the secondary schools we surveyed, the supply of content classes for LEP students is exceeded by the number of LEP students who need the classes. As a result, some students will get only science, others will get only math or social studies. The factors that appear to be influencing the nature and extent of programming for immigrant students at the secondary level are: district leadership, site leadership, staff availability, staff willingness to teach English learners, and the impact of the departmental structure.

District Leadership

District leadership is expressed in master plans for second language programs, in assessment policies and services, in training activities and incentives for teachers to take training to teach English learners, in support for ESL department chairs, and in resource personnel on the school site. District second language program directors urge secondary school administrators to add offerings for English learners and encourage teachers to get training. District incentives and training opportunities are publicized to school staff. Despite the efforts of second language directors at training and compliance, most directors reported feeling frustrated at the slow pace of progress in the development and implementation of secondary LEP programs in their schools, particularly at the high school level.

Site Leadership

The uneven pattern of course offerings in science, math, and social studies is closely related to school site leadership. The scarce literature on effective secondary programs for immigrant students suggests the importance of a schoolwide emphasis and shared responsibility for student learning. Site leadership is critical if a school is to envision an overall program for immigrant students—perceiving their academic needs and developing the school's response. Such leadership was exhibited in a variety of ways: regular monitoring of the progress of immigrant students, arranging for a broad menu of staff development opportunities related to working with a second language population, meeting with content area department heads and the bilingual/ESL coordinators to develop comprehensive programs for English learners, including immigrant issues in the overall mission statement of the school, and so on. There appeared to be more content coverage in the schools in which a site administrator took an active leadership role than in

sites in which the ESL chair or a counselor took responsibility for LEP programs. In the four intermediate schools with full content coverage, the principal or a LEP site coordinator with the support of the principal exercised significant leadership over programs for LEP students.

Staff Availability

Availability of teachers trained to offer either primary language instruction or sheltered English academic content instruction to immigrant students is a major factor in determining what courses will be offered in a secondary school. Survey respondents told us they were reluctant to give LEP content classes to unwilling and untrained teachers, fearful that it would not be a good experience for the students. For example, if a science department of six teachers has two teachers who are trained to teach English learners, then science offerings will be limited to the space available in classes of those teachers scheduled to teach "LEP science." Teachers become trained because they voluntarily take advantage of district-offered training programs. If four of the six science teachers refuse to take training, that may limit the science offerings for English learners in the school.

Increases in the enrollment of immigrant students sometimes results in unwilling and untrained teachers being assigned ESL classes. In several schools, staffing assignment shifts became necessary due to changes in student populations and fiscal constraints on new hiring. As immigrant students comprise a greater proportion of the secondary school population, more English teachers must be assigned and prepared to teach them ESL in lieu of standard English classes. One ESL coordinator described the situation at his school:

The school overall is actually losing population now, but our ESL population is increasing. This means that our school is losing teaching positions, but we don't have enough qualified ESL teachers. Do you know what that means for the teachers here? It means either they begin to teach ESL students, or they have no jobs. The resentment is palpable. As the program grows, we can't hire new teachers, even though we'd like to be bringing in K11 or BCC teachers. So increasingly, our kids get placed with mainstream teachers. They don't want them, they don't know what to do with the LEP kids, they [teachers] feel frustrated because their world is crumbling.

Teacher Willingness

Willingness of secondary teachers to participate in special training programs is an important limiting factor for secondary programs for English learners. Most districts we surveyed have a state-approved plan to remedy the shortage of staff trained to teach English learners. They offer a range of incentives, paid training opportunities, and special bonuses to teachers to take second language program training. If teachers do not respond—or if the teachers in a particular department in a junior high school for example, do not respond—there is no mechanism to compel teachers to take the training. We were told that it is common for new monolingual teachers to be given the LEP content class assignment as a condition of their employment. Teachers with fluency in Spanish but no special training may be required to teach LEP content classes.

Teachers drafted into teaching immigrant students may or may not be willing to get training. Some fear that if they get the training, they will be "trapped" into teaching immigrant students on an ongoing basis. These teachers perceive the LEP content class assignment as undesirable. Other teachers are intrigued by the challenge of immigrant students and want to get trained. Because of the limited nature of the exploratory study, it is not possible to tell what proportion of secondary teachers are willing to be retrained. High on the

list of many of the administrators' concerns about developing LEP programs was the relationship between a mainstream teaching force and the desire for a trained staff to meet the needs of immigrant students.

Impact of School Structure

The departmentalization of most secondary school faculty and content areas has major repercussions for the programs of immigrant students. In the typically departmentalized junior high school, no one is in charge of a comprehensive approach to programs for English learners. The ESL department may be in charge of language acquisition, but it is up to each content area chair to respond to the academic course needs of the English learner. Availability of content courses for these students, the assignment of teachers, and grouping and clustering of students in content areas most often fall to the content area chairpersons. Some are more assertive in developing a program for immigrant students, some are resistant. Thus, in one school we found only one basic science class was available to LEP students. In another, a fairly full menu of science offerings was available to LEP students, but math was not. Reliance on content area chairs to create the courses for LEP students means that faculty with no particular commitment to or knowledge of the academic needs of immigrant students make crucial decisions about course availability.

The priorities and philosophies about whether and how to serve immigrant students could and often did vary markedly across departments within a school. The result is limited and uneven access to content courses. In one school a science department chair explained: "They have to learn English first. That's the most important thing. Let them learn English, and we can teach them science after." In the same school, the math department chair had added 10 new sheltered English courses to the department's offerings in the past year, fighting hard to arrange the funds to provide sheltered instructions training for math teachers.

In some secondary schools, tension between the bilingual/ESL department and the content area departments was evident. Some content area faculty felt that the ESL teachers were trying to "coddle" the LEP students and hold them back. Some ESL faculty felt that the content area faculty were refusing to deal with the academic needs of the LEP students. As the Chair of one ESL department explained:

The department chairs don't believe in bilingual classes in our school. They won't go searching for the textbooks, they don't try to figure out the proper levels for placing kids. I asked them to cluster the lower level ESL kids together in a single class so maybe a bilingual aide could work with them, but the department heads all refused. They would rather scatter the kids throughout all the classes so it puts less burden on any one teacher. It's a constant struggle to make this an issue of *kids' needs and not of teachers' needs*.

This tension was exacerbated in those schools where the principal did not articulate an overall philosophy or vision for the LEP program.

The structural rigidity of departmentalized secondary schools is particularly unsuited to the educational needs of immigrant students. These students enter school with diverse levels of English skills (oral, reading, and writing), different ages, different levels of previous schooling, and variations in literacy in their primary language.

The Bilingual Middle School Model

In the exploratory research two bilingual middle schools were identified which offered full access to

science, math, and social studies to English learners in the primary language. This section of the paper describes the bilingual middle schools' community context, and describes how the model addresses the factors affecting access found in the larger study.

Background

The bilingual middle school model, in which full access to core subjects is offered to English learners in the primary language, relies on several key organizational features:

- departure from the traditional departmentalized structure of the secondary school;
- core classes combining subjects (language arts and social studies, for example);
- trained bilingual teachers; and
- textbooks in both Spanish and English.

The community context of the two bilingual middle schools is important to describe. Both bilingual middle schools are located in the same school district and serve urban communities of blue collar families—densely populated neighborhoods of small single family homes and apartment buildings mixed in with industrial enterprises. The communities are almost exclusively Hispanic ethnicity, home to new Mexican and Central American immigrants and long time residents. A person could shop, go to the doctor, watch television, or visit with neighbors and friends speaking only Spanish. However, in order to get a skilled job, people need to learn English and staff at the middle schools assured us that the parents of the middle school children want their children to learn to speak, read, and write English fluently. Both schools serve incoming students from elementary schools with well-developed bilingual programs. The schools are large (1,700 and 1,900 students) and operate year-round on a four-track plan. Bilingual programs are available on three of the four tracks. The two bilingual middle schools were able to offer access to the core curriculum for new immigrants and students who were continuing LEP students entering from feeder elementary schools.

Entering LEP students are placed into transitional or bilingual program options at the middle school. In the bilingual program, core content in language arts, social studies, and math are taught in Spanish using Spanish language books. Science is taught mainly in English, but Spanish versions of the texts are available and the classes are taught by trained bilingual teachers. All LEP students receive access to the full core, regardless of their English language fluency.

Both bilingual middle schools in the study use state adopted books in English and Spanish for science and math. The middle schools adopt separate English and Spanish versions of social studies texts because there is no Spanish version of the new social studies series yet for grades seven and eight. In language arts, Spanish literature books published in Spain and Latin America are used by bilingual programs in grades seven to eight.

Earlier in this paper, five factors were identified as influencing the extent to which LEP students receive access to core content: district leadership, site leadership, teacher availability and willingness to be trained, and the impact of school structure. The bilingual middle schools varied from many other schools in the study on each of these factors.

District Leadership

The district in which two bilingual middle schools have been developed evidenced a high degree of district

leadership. The district had developed a late-exit bilingual model in the elementary schools which develops literacy in the primary language as well as English. Entering middle school students have either exited from those well-developed elementary bilingual programs or entered as newcomer immigrants with oral Spanish fluency and varying levels of Spanish literacy and previous schooling. While both bilingual middle schools were similar in design and implementation, they each adapted the model to suit their unique circumstances. District leadership was evident in the assistance and the latitude to develop their models given to both schools.

Site Leadership

At one bilingual middle school, the model emerged as a new principal sought to revitalize the school and increase student performance. The middle school model was designed to break down the isolation of LEP students at the school who were segregated with six bilingual teachers, received no science or higher math, and did not have the opportunity to participate in band or art. The planning for the bilingual middle school was done by a group of teachers in cooperation with the principal; the goal of multicultural education, in which each student's language and culture would be valued, was at the heart of the effort. "We wanted to give every student a voice," stated the principal. The school stresses collaboration, school-based decision making, and empowerment of faculty.

At the second bilingual middle school, a LEP site coordinator provided leadership for the program, with the support of the principal. The LEP site coordinator adjusts the program offerings annually to meet the needs of incoming students, monitors student placement, and assesses overall program needs and resources. The LEP coordinator said:

Our goal is to prepare our students for high school, ready for all English instruction, with sound academic skills. We want them to like school when they leave here.

Staff Availability

In contrast to most of the intermediate schools in the study, both the bilingual middle schools in the study have sufficient trained, fluent bilingual teachers to offer core content instruction to LEP students in Spanish. There are 25 bilingual Spanish teachers at each site. Aside from teachers, the bilingual middle schools have bilingual personnel in important roles: at the administrative level (principal or vice principal), counselors, attendance clerks, and classified staff including janitors and school secretaries. Signs on the school grounds are in both languages as are parent newsletters, school brochures, and report cards. PTA meetings have translators and Spanish-speaking parents are both leaders and participants in the PTA program. By employing bilingual personnel at every level and using both languages in communication about school programs, the bilingual middle school conveys to the English learners and their parents that their language is valued.

Teacher Willingness

By using trained bilingual teachers to offer primary language instruction in content courses, the bilingual middle school avoids the practice of "drafting" unwilling teachers to teach English learners. Despite the plentiful supply of bilingual teachers at the two bilingual middle schools, however, monolingual English teachers are encouraged to take training classes in Sheltered Instruction techniques in order to enhance the school's instructional program in elective subjects.

School Structure

Middle schools seemed to enjoy greater latitude in designing their overall structure and programs for English learners than do departmentalized junior and senior high schools. The organization of the two bilingual middle schools illustrates this flexibility. The two bilingual middle schools place LEP students into all-LEP classes, taught by a bilingual teacher for at least a two-hour block of time. This conserves the bilingual teachers for teaching content, and provides more adult-student contact with one teacher rather than their having to change classes five times in a day. One bilingual middle school offers three choices per grade level: mainstream English instruction, bilingual instruction in which content is taught in Spanish and ESL instruction is given, and transitional bilingual instruction in which both Spanish and English are used, with increasing use of English as the year progresses. In the bilingual option, a bilingual teacher teaches a three period core: language arts, social studies, and math. For the remainder of the day, the students are mainstreamed into electives, including science taught in sheltered English. In language arts, literacy in English is developed and literacy in Spanish is maintained. Two hours of time each day are devoted to exploratory classes with English only (EO) students: shop, art, music, drama, and science alternating with computer education.

Transition to English is accomplished in a variety of ways at this school. In-class transition is done by the bilingual teacher with students judged ready to go to English mainstream classes. There is a special 10 week pull-out for advanced transition in English writing and reading comprehension. The class contains 10-15 students and is taught for one period every day by a special transition instructor—a former bilingual teacher. The pull-out transition program is offered at all grade levels in the middle school.

The second bilingual middle school is organized somewhat differently. There are four options: primary language, transitional, sheltered English, and English only for monolingual English speakers. For all students, there is a 150-minute core period devoted to language arts and social studies. In the bilingual program, the core is taught by a bilingual teacher. ESL is taught within this time period. A bilingual teacher teaches math to bilingual program participants during a separate period. Science is taught using sheltered English by a bilingual teacher who is fluent in Spanish and has Spanish books available. The remainder of the day is spent in elective classes with monolingual English students.

The second bilingual middle school receives a continuous stream of new arrivals throughout the year and places them into a special three-week newcomer class for academic assessment, immunizations, and health check ups prior to placement. This helps to stabilize the classrooms for teachers and assists in the assessment of student needs.

While the bilingual middle school model offers superior access to core content classes in the primary language, the English learners who attend these schools have a variety of educational and other needs which have yet to be met. The science offerings in both schools were limited for all students, including English learners. As one bilingual middle school teacher said, "The biggest thing these students need is more time in school to learn." That teacher teaches an additional 90-minute period of ESL two afternoons a week for students who wish to attend. School staff also identified the need for greater attention to English oral development for their bilingual program students. The LEP coordinator stated:

They need more ESL, more oral development in English. They need more time in school, they would benefit from attending school year round. We are forced by tight resources to choose between equally important goals, academic development and additional English. We have opted for academic development as the

absolute priority, but we will add more English development at the first opportunity.

Health, mental health, and other social services were lacking in both middle schools.

Summary

To summarize, secondary schools in California implement four models of programs for LEP students. All of the models offer ESL and electives taught in English and offered in the mainstream. Schools vary in the approach to teaching content (whether sheltered English or primary language is used) and the extent of content coverage. Six schools used primary language in at least some content areas and eight schools taught content areas exclusively in English. Regardless of the approach to content instruction, only four of the 14 schools surveyed offered a full academic program to LEP students. Five of the 14 schools (or roughly one-third) offer no content or have big gaps in content instruction for LEP students. All the schools offered at least one ESL class and five of the 14 offered three levels of ESL. Five of the intermediate schools offered more than three levels of ESL, including introductory or newcomer programs and transition classes for advanced ESL students. The pattern of course offerings appears to relate to: nature of district leadership, site leadership, staff availability, staff willingness to take training, and the decentralized decision-making in the departmentalized secondary school.

The impact of the nature of secondary programs on immigrant students is that many students do not receive instruction in academic content areas. This limits their ability to prepare for high school, go to college, or be prepared for employment opportunities. School staff feel that many immigrant students drop out of high school.

Two bilingual middle schools were identified that provided access to the core curriculum in the students' primary language. The bilingual middle school model offers some solutions to the problems identified in the exploratory study of LEP programs at the secondary level. Whereas most of the intermediate schools had difficulty providing access to core content in math, science, and social studies, the bilingual middle school is able to do so using the primary language and parallel, state-adopted textbooks in Spanish and English.

The barrier to instruction in core subjects for LEP students in most of the intermediate schools was a lack of schoolwide vision for the LEP program. Responsibility for developing a comprehensive program was blurred by the departmental structure. The bilingual middle schools offer more flexibility in school organization and, in both cases, site leadership was provided by a site administrator. The barrier to access posed by unwilling English monolingual teachers to take training in sheltered instruction was overcome by hiring bilingual teachers with expertise in second language learning and fluency in the primary language. Finally, the problem that many LEP students face of isolation in a school and the resulting alienation is addressed at the bilingual middle school by having bilingual staff in all key positions (administrator, counselor, aide, secretary), bilingual communication with the home and providing parents with staff members with whom they can communicate.

The critical factors of site leadership and district leadership and a supply of trained bilingual teachers enabled the school district to develop the bilingual middle school model. State leadership in providing parallel textbooks in Spanish and English enabled this school to offer primary language content classes at appropriate skill levels for LEP students. The bilingual middle school model merits further exploration by other communities as a possible means of addressing the needs of secondary school age children from immigrant families.

Endnotes

1. The term "limited English proficient" is an official term defined in California law as a child whose native language is not English, who requires special instruction in order to profit from the curriculum. Currently, the California Legislature is considering legislation to change the term LEP to "English learner." The term LEP will be used in the paper when its precise legal meaning is needed for clarity.

References

BW Associates. (1992, February). *Meeting the challenge of language diversity: An evaluation of programs for pupils with limited proficiency in English*. Report R-119, Berkeley.

California Department of Education. (1987). *Caught in the middle: Education reform for young adolescents in California public schools*. Sacramento.

California Department of Education. (1990). *Language census*. Sacramento.

California Department of Justice. (1990, April). *Commission on racial, ethnic, religious and minority violence: Final report*. Sacramento.

Edwards, H., Wesche, M., Krashen, S., Clement, R., and Kruidenier, B. (1984). Second language acquisition through subject matter learning. A study of sheltered psychology classes at the University of Ottawa. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 41, 268-282.

Lucas, T., Henze, R., and Donate, R. (1990, August). Promoting the success of Latino language-minority students: An exploratory study of six high schools. *Harvard Education Review*, 60, 3, 315-340.

Minicucci, C., and Olsen, L. (1992). *Programs for secondary limited English proficient students: A California study*. Focus Occasional Paper No. 5. Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education

Olsen, L. (1988). *Crossing the schoolhouse border*. San Francisco: California Tomorrow.