Open Call for Papers: UC LMRI and ASU College of Education Conference Conference Dates: May 3-5, 2007 • Submission Deadline: December 1, 2006

The University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute (UC LMRI) and the Arizona State University Linguistic Minority Research Initiative (ASU LMRI) of the Mary Lou Fulton College of Education announce a Call for Papers on the topic of “Immigrants, Education, and Language.”

More than 10 million school children in the United States are first or second generation immigrants. One of the traditional functions of U.S. public schools has been to help prepare immigrants for successful integration into American society. This not only includes teaching them English, but also providing academic and social supports to meet the increasingly high standards for subject matter competency, high school graduation, and college access. Yet the immigrant achievement of students, even those who have mastered English, lags behind those of other students

UC LMRI and ASU LMRI are accepting papers addressing important issues of policy and practice concerning the education of immigrant students, with a focus on language to be presented in Phoenix, Arizona at the 20th Annual Conference. Papers may address such questions as:

• What are the educational challenges in meeting the needs of immigrant students?
• To what extent are those needs related to language versus other factors?
• What educational practices are most effective in meeting those needs?
• What skills and competencies do teachers need to successfully educate these students?
• What educational policies are needed to promote effective practices?

For more information visit: http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/events/07_conf/

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Invited Essay

Ensuring Academic Success for English Learners

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Since passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, English learners have become an increasingly focused concern as educators struggle to implement instructional approaches and programs to ensure achievement for these students. In most cases, teachers are doing so without sufficient knowledge of language development, without access to research on effective practices, and in a climate without consensus about the role of schools in EL education. The purpose of this essay is to provide an overview of research and knowledge that educators can use to create schools in which English learners thrive and achieve at high levels.

What Are English Learners Faring in School?

While some English learners move quickly to English fluency and academic mastery at all grade levels, many do not. Most English learners make academic progress in the primary grades, but around fourth grade, when academic and cognitive demands require higher levels of comprehension and engagement with text, the patterns change. Many struggle to learn academic English and to access grade-level curriculum which is taught, in most cases, in a language they have not yet mastered. Despite major policy efforts to impact EL achievement, the gap between English learners and English-fluent students has remained virtually constant in the past decade.

English learners are more likely than their English-fluent peers to drop out of high school. Although there are no direct measures of dropout rates by language status, dropout rates for Hispanics provide a reasonable indicator because two-thirds of all Hispanic students, and more than two-thirds of all language minorities, are Spanish-speaking. Nationally, Hispanic students are twice as likely to drop out of high school than White, non-Hispanic students. In California, beginning in 2006, students must pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to earn a high school diploma, even if all other requirements for the diploma have been fulfilled. At the end of the eleventh grade, only 51% of English learners in the senior class of 2006 met CAHSEE requirements, compared to 78% of all students.

What Do English Learners Need to Succeed in School?

Over the past three decades, a solid body of research has been amassed on second language acquisition, bilingual brain development, effective programs, and “best practices” in instructional strategies. This research provides guidance to schools seeking to create powerful programs for English learners.

The first step in creating an effective program is knowing who the students are and looking beyond the single label “English learner” to understand the very different needs of the students who arrive at the schoolhouse door. Beyond the shared challenge of an English language barrier, English learners differ in the languages they speak and the degree of fluency in English, in cultures they come from and in the social status they hold, in the type of prior schooling they have had as well as in the experiences of coming to the United States. Particularly relevant “types” include: under-schooled students, newly-arrived highly educated adolescents, and long-term English learners who have been in U.S. schools for six years or more.

As a result of this diversity, no single EL program model fits all populations and contexts. Instead, schools need to craft the particular set of program components and support services that are needed for the specific population of English learners enrolled, based on available resources, capacity, and educational goals. Effective programs begin with understanding their English learner students. A school with large numbers, for example, of newly-arrived students will need to provide orientation and transition services; whereas a school that is primarily serving students who have been in the United States for a long time would not need a newcomer program, but would likely need to emphasize engaging curriculum and individualized interventions.

While there is no single program model that fits all EL
1. High Quality and Accessible Preschool Education

In this standards-driven era, there is increasing pressure for children to enter kindergarten with a strong foundation for school success. High quality preschool provides such a foundation and can reduce disparities and longstanding achievement gaps among groups of students.

For English learners, these programs must be culturally and linguistically responsive and deliver a developmentally appropriate and language-rich curriculum as the basis for later literacy and successful academic learning. Conceptual language is best developed in the child’s home language. Effective early childhood education programs support and build upon a child’s home language, and provide intentional support and access to opportunities to learn in both the home language and in English. While the educational involvement of families is important in children’s lives throughout their school years, in the early years of development, family, culture, home language and family engagement in school are absolutely central to healthy development. Young children learn best in a safe, affirming preschool environment that respects and integrates the home culture and language, recognizes the key role of a child’s culture and language to her development, and supports young children in bridging across and integrating home and school contexts.

2. Supports for Newcomers to Meet Needs of Transition

Many English learners are immigrants. They enroll in U.S. schools where the culture, behavior expectations, types of activities, and relationships are foreign. English learners, walking into this culture for the first time, need support as they learn the rules of their new land. In the first year, newcomers will benefit from an array of services to address the culture shock and transitional issues that will impact their participation and success in school. Transition services should include:

- Comprehensive home language and English assessments and evaluations of prior educational backgrounds, and health screening with referrals to linguistically accessible and culturally appropriate services to meet the needs of students and families.
- A welcoming orientation system and materials designed for positive integration into the school system.

3. A Comprehensive Program of English Language Development

By definition, English learners need to learn English and are not able to access the English-taught curriculum without supports. In the words of the landmark Lau v. Nichols Supreme Court decision: “There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbook, teachers and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.”

In 2006, the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth released a long-awaited comprehensive synthesis of research on literacy attainment. It concluded that approaches to reading and literacy that are effective with English-fluent students are not sufficient for teaching language minority students to read and write proficiently in English, and that those approaches must be adjusted to have maximum benefit for language-minority students.

English learners need a comprehensive, dedicated and standards-aligned English Language Development (ELD) curriculum, strategies to promote English skills throughout the academic curriculum, and intentionally designed opportunities to use English with their peers for social and academic purposes.

A quality program:

- Actively develops all domains of language.
- Students need structured opportunities to learn, engage, and use English in all four domains (reading, writing, listening, speaking).
- A strong foundation and development in each domain strengthens the other. Students at lower levels of fluency particularly need a very strong program of oral language development.
- Addresses varying levels of English fluency.
- English learners vary in their mastery of English. Some have had no prior exposure to English. The sounds, words and efficiently, and pro-actively lead their schools toward developing the structures, policies, programs, instruction, support services, and climate that are needed for English learner success.

Build a meaningful accountability system for English learners.

The past decade has seen major reforms to build accountability systems that will ensure all students have educational access. Strong content standards stipulate what students should learn at each grade level. Data-driven accountability has focused educators toward explicit, standards-based curriculum and a commitment to annual progress in closing those gaps. California needs a new assessment that can inform parents, students, teachers, and community about what English learners know and can do.

For English learners, tests of academic achievement in English are currently inadequate. The creation of primary language achievement tests in the major languages of the state are needed for students who cannot be reliably assessed in English. Linguistic modifications of achievement tests in English are needed to reduce linguistic complexity and increase the opportunities for English learners to demonstrate what they know.

Neither students nor schools should be penalized for the failures of English learners to demonstrate academic achievement on tests in English that are inadequate. The accountability system should include measures of inputs that can assess whether students have been provided the opportunity, conditions, and supports to learn material they are expected to learn.

Assure that educators have the materials they need to deliver high quality English Language Development.

Policy-makers, educators, the courts, parents, and students are in virtually unanimous agreement that schools need strong, effective programs to help students learn English. The state’s English Language Development Standards are still not widely known or implemented, and there is confusion in schools and in policy circles about whether ELs need a specific curriculum and set of materials to learn English. In many classrooms, teachers do not have English Language Development materials. A recent study found that across the grade levels, teachers identified the need for better ELD materials as a top priority. Investment in professional development institutes to support teachers in aligning teaching to the standards and using appropriate English Language Development materials would affirm and support stronger ELD practice.

Demonstrate new models of successful schools for English learners.

Research has identified many areas of best practices in EL education, but there are few schools that comprehensively and coherently demonstrate the full complement of components needed for English learners to make accelerated progress towards English proficiency and achieve to high levels. Such models are needed to inform program and school design, and to support professional development of administrators and teachers in a laboratory setting.
9. Schools Structured to Meet the Particular Needs of English Learners

English learners face challenges in success related to their life circumstances—challenges that can be addressed by restructuring schools in new ways.

One challenge is academic. In fact, English learners face a double academic challenge: not only do they need to master grade-level academic curriculum like their English-fluent peers, they need to master English. For the 90% of English learners in California who are not receiving content instruction in their home language, they struggle to access and master the academic content in a language they do not understand. As a result, the majority amass academic gaps that need to be overcome before the fixed deadline of high school graduation.

The structure of U.S. schools can present a problem for English learners: most are based on a fairly rigid age-grade system, defined as a 12-year program after kindergarten, with the expectation that students will graduate at the end of the 12th year. English learners—particularly those who enter as newcomers in adolescence—often need more time than they are granted: time to master English; time to overcome academic gaps; time to master the curriculum. Schools can structure innovative ways to create extra time and enhance the opportunity for English learners to successfully complete their K-12 education.

Strategies for increasing time in the system include the use of extended day programs, summer intensive programs, small autonomous schools, and innovation in organizing education. Effective strategies include adjusting the yearly school calendar to accommodate migration patterns, independent study options, curriculum kits that can be used to complete units, and transcript and curriculum alignment across nations.

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Policies Needed to Facilitate English Learner Success

A sufficient knowledge base exists for how to create, implement, and deliver effective schooling for English learners. The greatest challenge is how to make that knowledge base known, and how to support educators in implementing what is known to be effective. Many schools that could and should be addressing the needs of ELs have been significantly undermined by insufficient resources, unprepared teachers, ignorance or lack of attention to the research on effective models, political battles over the education of immigrants and English learners, and lack of will. These are issues of policy.

The success of English learners in California schools requires a commitment of leadership, political will, and district and state level action to address the following four policy goals:

Invest in building a qualified educator workforce.

The knowledge and skill required for teachers to implement the curriculum, instruction, and learning environments discussed in this paper are significant. Teachers need to be well prepared to provide instruction that reflects an understanding of second language development, to integrate language development and content instruction, to teach in ways that create connection across diverse cultures and languages, and to be able to communicate with students and engage with students’ families. Policies are needed that provide the leadership, resources, and facilitative supports to mount high quality professional development. Effective professional development builds communities of practice, is long-term and site-based, and is built in to the daily life of schools. It focuses on the skills, understanding, and instructional strategies that teachers need to effectively teach English learners. It includes workshops, readings, and presentations to deepen content knowledge; opportunities for application, mentoring, and classroom coaching; peer observation; ongoing participation in learning communities; teacher inquiry and reflection; self-assessment; and hands-on planning. Administrators need coaching, leadership development, and learning community networks in order to be able to systematically:

- Develop age-appropriate and context-appropriate language, including an emphasis on academic English.
- Develop language fluency by the purposes of communication, and the context in which language is used. What is considered English fluency for a five-year-old on the playground is different from the English fluency expected of a teenager in a history debate. ELD should be geared towards the grade and age level of the student, and include an emphasis on academic English as well as social language. Academic English is the vocabulary of specific academic disciplines, and the rhetorical processes of academic discourse—how things are organized, discussed, and written about in those disciplines.
- Students cannot succeed in academic curriculum unless teachers integrate English Language Development strategies for reading, writing, vocabulary, and discourse into their [academic content].
- Includes opportunities for English learners to interact with native-speaking peers.

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In secondary schools, longer blocks of time (block scheduling) allow teachers to spend more time with each student over longer periods of time, allowing teachers to see fewer students each day for longer periods of time, allowing teachers to see fewer students each day for longer periods of time. The structure of U.S. schools can present a problem for English learners: many schools that could and should be addressing the needs of ELs have been significantly undermined by insufficient resources, unprepared teachers, ignorance or lack of attention to the research on effective models, political battles over the education of immigrants and English learners, and lack of will. These are issues of policy.

The success of English learners in California schools requires a commitment of leadership, political will, and district and state level action to address the following four policy goals:

4. A Program Providing Full Access to Challenging Curriculum

In addition to a comprehensive program of English language development, schools need to provide English learners with a well-articulated and age-appropriate curriculum that is cognitively complex, coherent, and challenging. English learners need to establish norms of inclusion and respect in the classroom, and use instructional strategies that enable an EL to participate. For example, extended wait time after asking a question gives ELs an opportunity to find the words and construct their response. Cooperative learning strategies support positive social interactions, a sense of community in the classroom, and promote English use, as students communicate with each other to complete their assignments.

The National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth concluded that oral proficiency and literacy in the first language facilitates literacy development in English:

“The research indicates that instructional programs work when they provide opportunities for students to develop proficiency in their first language. Studies that compare bilingual instruction with English-Only instruction demonstrate that language minority students instructed in their native language as well as in English perform better, on average, on measures of reading proficiency than language minority students instructed only in English.”

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Many educators and parents elect all-English instruction because they feel urgent about helping their students develop English proficiency as quickly as possible. They mistakenly equate more time in English with faster progress in English. Academic outcomes are not necessarily tracked with amount of time spent in English instruction; beyond a threshold, there is no added benefit. Access to the curriculum through home language instruction for students at lower levels of English proficiency, if accompanied by a strong ELD program, does not compromise the rate of progress towards English proficiency.

As students become increasingly English-fluent, they are more able to understand and participate in an English-taught curriculum, but still need significant adaptations to support their language development. A “simultaneous” program combining ELD with academic content classes in the student’s primary language is the most efficient and direct means of ensuring access to high-level academic content. Although a great deal of controversy exists about the use of primary-language instruction, a number of recent reviews of research studies based on rigorous, randomized experiments have found that English learners who received bilingual education performed at least as well, and often better, on standardized tests in English than similar children taught in English-only programs.

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learners differ from school to school and year to year. Designing an appropriate program and set of services requires assessing the needs of students and tasks. A recent evaluation of California’s Proposition 227 (which severely limited bilingual education) found that a major factor impacting English learner achievement was the degree of schoolwide focus on English learners, and shared priorities related to delivering a consistent program. Too often, English learners are bounced from program to program each year, experiencing fragmented and inconsistent schooling. For academic success, they need a coherent and well-articulated program with consistency across the school day and from year to year.

For an English learner to have full access to the core curriculum, ALL courses must be available and designed to address the language needs of this group. In secondary schools, this includes college preparatory and advanced level classes. Sharing bilingual teachers across campuses, using technology to access on-line resources in other languages, providing college-age tutors, and ensuring high-level home language resources, are also useful strategies.

5. High Quality Instruction and Materials

The quality of instruction is a major determinant of whether English learners actually access and learn the curriculum. This is true whether the instruction is in primary language or in a secondary language, but it is particularly so for ELs instructed in English. English learners who have a threshold level and good foundation of English can access grade-level curriculum taught in English if teachers effectively use a repertoire of SDAIE instructional scaffolding strategies, and have resource materials and instructional support in the home language that students can use to assist in comprehension. SDAIE strategies are structured, paced, and delivered based upon the specific English fluency levels of students. What might be sufficient to enable a fully proficient English-speaking student to understand a new idea may not provide the English learner with enough scaffolding, time, or explicit language development to succeed.

SDAIE strategies:
- Systematically access and activate students’ prior knowledge.
- All students learn through making connections between what they already know and the new experiences, perspectives, and information they encounter. Making connections to students’ lives is a major component of effective instruction that helps students develop a meaningful way of understanding what they are learning. Making connections of the familiar to the unfamiliar improves both comprehension and engagement in learning.

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As students become increasingly English-fluent, they are more able to understand and participate in an English-taught curriculum, but still need significant adaptations of instructional approach. For these students, SDAIE with home language support is effective (e.g., primary-language assistance tutors, reference materials, texts). Schools that serve primarily ELs at the higher end of English fluency, with multiple language groups, with small numbers of ELs, or lack of teachers to provide primary-language instruction, can usually mount a program of SDAIE instruction with primary-language supports. Programs without the capacity or will to provide any primary-language instruction or support essentially offer a “sequential” program that immerses English learners in English academic instruction from the start. Because it takes four to seven years until students are sufficiently fluent to gain full access to the English-taught curriculum, careful monitoring and accelerated interventions are needed to avoid the accumulation of academic deficits in the years before students have gained English fluency.

The success of any program is correlated with consistency and quality of instruction. A recent evaluation of California’s Proposition 227 (which severely limited bilingual education) found that a major factor impacting English learner achievement was the degree of schoolwide focus on English learners, and shared priorities related to delivering a consistent program. Too often, English learners are bounced from program to program each year, experiencing fragmented and inconsistent schooling. For academic success, they need a coherent and well-articulated program with consistency across the school day and from year to year.

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The knowledge and skill required for teachers to implement the curriculum, instruction, and learning environments discussed in this paper are significant. Teachers need to be well prepared to provide instruction that reflects an understanding of second language development, to integrate language development and content instruction, to teach in ways that create connection across diverse cultures and languages, and to be able to communicate with students and engage with students’ families. Policies are needed that provide teachers with the leadership, resources, and facilitative supports to mount high quality professional development. Effective professional development builds communities of practice, is long-term and site-based, and is built-in to the daily life of schools. It focuses on the skills, understanding, and instructional strategies that teachers need to effectively teach English learners. It includes workshops, readings, and presentations to deepen content knowledge; opportunities for application, mentoring, and classroom coaching; peer observation; ongoing participation in learning communities; feedback; teacher inquiry and reflection; self-assessment; and hands-on planning. Administrators need coaching, leadership development, and learning community networks in order to be able to systematically, effectively achieve and participate in the other. Moreover, travel and migration do not necessarily coincide with the semester school ends. Teachers need to establish norms of inclusion and respect, and have some fluency. All are in the process of learning the language. Along the continuum from non-English proficiency to fully English-proficient, students have different needs. Quality ELD differentiates curriculum and instruction by the English fluency level of the student, and provides students with the specific skill development and scaffolding needed to move to the next level of English fluency.

Develops age-appropriate and context-appropriate language, including an emphasis on academic English.

Language fluency is defined by the purposes of communication and the context in which in language is used. What is considered English fluency for a five-year-old on the playground is different from the English fluency expected of a teenager in a history debate. ELD should be geared towards the grade and age level of the student, and include an emphasis on academic English as well as social language. Academic English is the vocabulary of specific academic disciplines, and the rhetorical processes of academic discourse—how things are organized, discussed, and written about in those disciplines. Students cannot succeed in academic curriculum unless teachers integrate English Language Development strategies for reading, writing, vocabulary, and discourse into their academic content.

Includes opportunities for English learners to interact with native English-speaking peers.

English learners need to interact regularly with students and teachers who are good English-language role models, so they hear the language used in daily life. If students have to use English to work together for authentic learning tasks (as well as social interactions from an early age through siblings and peers), they will have some fluency. All are in the process of learning the language. Attention must be paid to both the need to group students by language proficiency for providing access to the core academic curriculum: primary language instruction, SDAIE without primary language support, or dual immersion. The National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth concluded that oral proficiency and literacy in the first language facilitates literacy development in English:

“The research indicates that instructional programs work when they provide opportunities for students to develop proficiency in their first language. Studies that compare bilingual instruction with English-only instruction demonstrate that language minority students instructed in their native language as well as in English perform better, on average, on measures of English reading proficiency than language minority students instructed only in English.”

4. Program Providing Full Access to Challenging Curriculum

In addition to a comprehensive program of English language development, schools need to provide English learners with a well-articulated and age-appropriate curriculum that is cognitively complex, coherent, and challenging, and to be effective need to be provided with instructional support in the classroom, and use instructional strategies that enable an ELL to participate. For example, extended wait time after asking a question gives ELLs an opportunity to find the words and construct their response. Cooperative learning strategies support positive social interactions, a sense of community in the classroom, and promote English use, as students communicate with each other to complete their assignments.

Recognizes the role of primary-language development.

Literacy skills are not language specific; they can be learned in one language and transferred to another language, drawing upon a common cognitive base. English learners enroll in schools with a home language that should be developed and built upon as a foundation for literacy in English. It is easier and more efficient to learn to read and write in one’s own language because the oral foundation and vocabulary already exist.

UC LMRI News

Students cannot succeed in academic curriculum unless teachers integrate English Language Development strategies for reading, writing, vocabulary, and discourse into their academic content.
populations and local contexts, all English learners need a
cognitively complex, coherent, well-articulated and meaningful
standardized curriculum taught in a comprehensible manner
and a program that will enable them to learn English quickly
and fluently enough to participate fully in grade-level
academic curriculum.

A comprehensive system of schooling for ELs includes the
following nine elements:

1. High Quality and Accessible Preschool Education

In this standards-driven era, there is increasing pressure
for children to enter kindergarten with a strong foundation for school
success. High quality preschool provides such a foundation and
can reduce disparities and longstanding achievement gaps among
groups of students.

For English learners, these programs must be culturally
and linguistically responsive and deliver a developmentally
appropriate and language-rich curriculum as the basis for later
literacy and successful academic learning. Conceptual language
is best developed in the child’s home language. Effective early
childhood education programs support and build upon a child’s
home language, and provide intentional support and access to
opportunities to learn in both the home language and in English.

While the educational involvement of families is important
in children’s lives throughout their schooling years, in the early
years of development, family culture, home language and family
engagement in schooling are absolutely central for healthy
development. Young children learn best in a safe, affirming preschool
environment that respects and integrates the home culture and
language, recognizes the key role of a child’s culture and language
to her development, and supports young children in bridging across
and integrating home and school contexts.

2. Supports for Newcomers to Meet Needs of Transition

Many English learners are immigrants. They enroll in U.S.
schools where the realities of relocation, new cultures, expectations, types of activities
and relationships are foreign. English learners, walking into this
culture for the first time, need support as they learn the rules of their
new land. In the first year, newcomers would benefit from
an array of services to address the culture shock and transitional
issues that will impact their participation and success in school.
Transition services should include:

- Comprehensive home language and English assessments
- Evaluations of prior educational backgrounds, and health screening
- With referrals to linguistically accessible and culturally appropriate services
to meet the needs of students and families.

A welcoming orientation system and materials designed for
positive integration into the school system.

Individualized placement and pacing in a curriculum that allows
for entry at various levels, regardless of age, and for entry at any
point in the school year.

- Special intensive literacy and accelerated programs for under-
schooled immigrants who arrive with large gaps in their prior
education.

- Culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible counseling
and support services related to culture shock, Post-Traumatic Stress
Syndrome, and the stresses of family separation and integration.

To support a smooth transition, assessment, placement, referral,
and orientation services can be centralized for an entire district or
be housed in high impact schools.

3. A Comprehensive Program of English Language
Development

By definition, English learners need to learn English and are not
able to access the English-taught curriculum without supports. In
the words of the landmark Lau v. Nichols Supreme Court decision:

“There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students
with the same facilities, textbook, teachers and curriculum, for
students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed
from any meaningful education.”

In 2006, the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority
Children and Youth released a long-awaited comprehensive
synthesis of research on literacy attainment. It concluded that
approaches to reading and literacy that are effective with English-fluent
students are not sufficient for teaching language minority students to
read and write proficiently in English, and that those approaches must be
adjusted to have maximum benefit for language-minority students.

English learners need a comprehensive, dedicated and
standards-aligned English Language Development (ELD)
curriculum, strategies to promote English skills throughout the
academic curriculum, and intentionally designed opportunities
to use English with their peers for social and academic purposes.

A quality program:

- Actively develops all domains of language

Students need structured opportunities to learn, engage, and use
English in all four domains (reading, writing, listening, speaking).

A strong foundation and development in each domain strengthens
the others. Students at lower levels of fluency particularly need a
very strong program of oral language development.

- Addresses varying levels of English fluency.

English learners vary in their mastery of English. Some
have had no prior exposure to English. The sounds, words and
phonics.

- Efficiently, and pro-actively lead their schools toward developing
the structures, policies, programs, instruction, support services, and
climate that are needed for English learner success.

Build a meaningful accountability system for English
learners.

The past decade has seen major reforms to build accountability
systems that will ensure all students have educational access.
Strong content standards explicate what students should learn at
each grade level. Data-driven accountability has focused educators
toward improvements and a guaranteed annual progress in closing those gaps. California needs a
yearly assessment that can inform parents, students, teachers, and
community about what English learners know and can do.

For English learners, tests of academic achievement in English
are currently inadequate. The creation of primary
language achievement tests in the major languages of the state
are needed for students who cannot be reliably assessed in
English. Linguistic modifications of achievement tests in English
are needed to reduce linguistic complexity and increase the
opportunities for English learners to demonstrate what they know.

Neither students nor schools should be penalized for the
failures of English learners to demonstrate academic achievement
on tests in English that are inadequate. The accountability
system should include measures of inputs that can assess
whether students have been provided the opportunity, conditions,
and supports to learn material they are expected to learn.

Assure that educators have the materials they need to deliver
high quality English Language Development.

Policy makers, educators, the courts, parents, and students are
in virtually unanimous agreement that schools need strong, effective programs to help students learn English. The state’s
English Language Development Standards are still not widely
known or implemented, and there is confusion in schools and in
policy circles about whether ELs need a specific curriculum and
set of materials to learn English. In many classrooms, teachers
do not have English Language Development materials. A recent study
found that across the grade levels, teachers identified the need for
better ELD materials as a top priority. Investment in professional
development institutes to support teachers in aligning teaching to
the standards and using appropriate English Language Development
materials would affirm and support stronger ELD practice.

Demonstrate new models of successful schools for English
learners.

Research has identified many areas of best practices in EL
education, but there are few schools that comprehensively and
coherently demonstrate the full complement of components needed
for English learners to make accelerated progress towards English
proficiency and achieve to high levels. Such models are needed
to inform program and school design, and to support professional
development of administrators and teachers in a laboratory setting.
Call for Proposals: UC LMRI Individual and Dissertation Grants  
Deadline: October 1, 2006

Individual Grants:  
* For UC Researchers * One-year awards up to $25,000  
* For UC Graduate Students * One-year awards up to $15,000

Funding priority is given to proposals focusing on biliteracy, educational achievement, and California. For more information visit: http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/research/lmri-grants/call.php

Open Call for Papers: UC LMRI and ASU College of Education Conference  
Conference Dates: May 3-5, 2007 • Submission Deadline: December 1, 2006

The University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute (UC LMRI) and the Arizona State University Linguistic Minority Research Initiative (ASU LMRI) of the Mary Lou Fulton College of Education announce a Call for Papers on the topic of “Immigrants, Education, and Language.”

More than 10 million school children in the United States are first or second generation immigrants. One of the traditional functions of U.S. public schools has been to help prepare immigrants for successful integration into American society. This not only includes teaching them English, but also providing academic and social supports to meet the increasingly high standards for subject matter competency, high school graduation, and college access. Yet the achievement of immigrant students, even those who have mastered English, lags behind those of other students

UC LMRI and ASU LMRI are accepting papers addressing important issues of policy and practice concerning the education of immigrant students, with a focus on language to be presented in Phoenix, Arizona at the 20th Annual Conference. Papers may address such questions as:  
- What are the educational challenges in meeting the needs of immigrant students?  
- To what extent are those needs related to language versus other factors?  
- What educational practices are most effective in meeting those needs?  
- What skills and competencies do teachers need to successfully educate these students?  
- What educational policies are needed to promote effective practices?

For more information visit: http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/events/07_conf

Ensuring Academic Success for English Learners  
By Laurie Olsen

Almost half of California students come from non-English speaking backgrounds. Those who are not yet proficient in English are called English Learners (ELs). Numbering close to 1.8 million, ELs comprise almost a fourth of California’s K-12 enrollment. English learners face the challenge of mastering a new language, facing barriers to accessing the curriculum, and persistently end up in the lowest levels of academic achievement.

Since passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, English learners have become an increasing focus of concern as educators struggle to implement instructional approaches and programs to ensure achievement for these students. In most cases, educators are doing so without sufficient knowledge of language development, without access to research on effective practices, and in a climate without consensus about the role of schools in EL education. The purpose of this essay is to provide an overview of research and knowledge that educators can use to create schools in which English learners thrive and achieve at high levels.

Despite major policy efforts to impact EL achievement, the gap between English learners and English-fluent students has maintained virtually constant in the past decade.

High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to earn a high school diploma, even if all other requirements for the diploma have been fulfilled. At the end of the eleventh grade, only 51% of English learners in the senior class of 2006 met CAHSEE requirements, compared to 78% of all students.

What Do English Learners Need to Succeed in School?  
Over the past three decades, a solid body of research has been amassed on second language acquisition, bilingual brain development, effective programs, and “best practices” in instructional strategies. This research provides guidance to schools seeking to create powerful programs for English learners.

The first step in creating an effective program is knowing who the students are and looking beyond the single label “English learner” to understand the very different needs of the students who arrive at the schoolhouse door. Beyond the shared challenge of an English language barrier, English learners differ in the languages they speak and the degree of fluency in English, in cultures they come from and in the social status they hold, in the type of prior schooling they have had as well as in the experiences of coming to the United States. Particularly relevant “types” include: under-schooled students, newly-arrived highly educated adolescents, and long-term English learners who have been in U.S. schools for six years or more.

As a result of this diversity, no single EL program model fits all populations and contexts. Instead, schools need to craft the particular set of program components and support services that are needed for the specific population of English learners enrolled, based on available resources, capacity, and educational goals.

Effective programs begin with understanding their English learner students. A school with large numbers, for example, of newly-arrived students will need to provide orientation and transition services; whereas a school that is primarily serving students who have been in the United States for a long time would not need a newcomer program, but would likely need to emphasize engaging curriculum and individualized interventions.

While there is no single program model that fits all EL...