

A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students’ Long-Term Academic Achievement

Purpose

Our research from 1985 to 2001 has been focused on analyzing the great variety of education services provided for language minority students in U.S. public schools and the resulting academic achievement of these students. We are the first researchers to analyze many long-term databases collected by school districts in all regions of the U.S., and we have collected the largest set of quantitative databases gathered for research in the field of language minority education. This current five-year research study (1996-2001) is our most recent overview of language minority students’ long-term achievement, depending upon the type of program in which these students are placed.

It is urgent that federal and state governments know what school practices are most effective for language minority students, because this demographic group is fast becoming the largest “minority” group in U.S. schools. Students whose home language is other than English are projected by the U.S. Census Bureau to be 40 percent of the school-age population by the 2030s, and possibly sooner if present demographic trends continue. Our data analyses from 1985 to 2001 show that most U.S. schools are dramatically under-educating this student population. As a country, we cannot afford continuation of current practices, at the risk of under-preparing a large segment of our workforce for the 21st century. For this study, we are reporting on long-term data collected from five school districts, analyzing some of the most promising models for schooling

language minority students, and the resulting student outcomes.

Overall, our findings of this study confirm our findings from the five large urban and suburban school districts in our analyses conducted from 1991 to 1996. In addition, we have enhanced generalizability of our findings by including in this study two rural school districts. All regions of the U.S. are represented in our series of studies from 1991 to 2001, thus providing a fairly comprehensive picture of the variety of services provided by U.S. public schools for language minority students throughout the country.

This is an ongoing study. Although we are reporting the results of the most complete longitudinal and cross-sectional databases that we have collected over the past five years, the school districts plan to continue working with us as collaborative research partners, so that the results of the research analyses will inform their practices. This study thus serves two major functions—providing the federal government with an overview of effective practices for language minority students, and answering questions for more effective, data-driven decision making among the participating school districts. Most of all, this study is designed to answer major policy questions of interest to the federal and state governments of the United States.