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From impact to enrichment: lessons learned in Florida on teaching English as a second language in the Public High School setting

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History

The state of Florida, USA: a veritable example of cultural diversity and language amalgam that has been the subject of numerous studies. Some of these studies focus on how the educational system has dealt and is dealing with a sudden and massive influx of immigrants who bring with them the diversity that is reflected in its school systems. Some would think that the history of this cultural and language diversity dates to the 1960's with the influx of Cuban, Haitian, Central, and South American immigrants. The state, and specifically South Florida, they would say, was severely "impacted" by this influx. However, the manner in which the state and its educational institutions reacted to this impact has brought enrichment, often mixed with hardship.

Indeed, those who would believe the beginning of these cultural and language exchanges in Florida began in the middle of the twenty-first century are not considering the long history of Florida as a culturally and linguistically diverse region. Historically, for example, the use of Spanish preceded the use of English in the peninsula eventually known as La Florida. Spain claimed the state as part of its empire in 1512. In 1565, the Spanish laid the foundations for St. Augustine, half a century before the Pilgrims had landed in Plymouth Rock. Despite King Phillips' attempt to discourage foreign immigration to this province, the immigrants came to Florida. The French and English were persistent threats during the two and a half centuries of Spanish rule. The Viceroy of Mexico was forced to fortify and hold Pensacola after the remains of La Salle's French colony were found there. By 1694, the occupation of Pensacola Bay had begun, and by 1783 this small port had been populated by Canary Islanders and French Creoles, creating further language diversity. Twenty years earlier, Minorcan and Greek immigrants had arrived in New Smyrna. Many Minorcans moved north to St. Augustine, and the Greeks eventually moved to the west coast. In fact, Spanish and the minorcan language were spoken by more than half of the inhabitants of St. Augustine when it was finally ceded to the United States in 1821.

Additionally, southern Florida was visited by pirates during the 1700's. In 1767, the first band of Upper Creek Indian immigrants settled northeast of Tampa Bay. The Creeks, later called Seminoles, came from Georgia and the Carolinas and settled in Central Florida. The Miccosukees settled in villages such as Tallahassee and Miccosukee in North Florida.

Immigration continued during the nineteenth century as the Spaniards brought Black slaves to Fernandina on Amelia Island. In 1886, the cigar industry was brought to Tampa and Ybor City was established as a colony of Spanish workers. The U.S. sponge industry was developed around this time in Tarpon Springs by a large settlement of Greeks from the island of Kalymnos.

And finally, the modern "impact" years arrived. Just after World War II, many Filipinos passing through the Navy base settled permanently in Jacksonville. However, these immigrants did not tax the educational system, or more accurately, the system provided little, if any, special help for immigrants and the children of immigrants. Later in the last century, however, refugees fleeing Cuba after Fidel Castro's takeover in 1959 impacted the educational system in large numbers, creating a need for special language and cultural programs. Between the middle and the end of the century, immigrants from Cuba, Haiti, and numerous Latin American countries have created and continue to create a need for programs to teach students and consequently train teachers in English as a Second Language (ESL) techniques, bilingual education, and Bilingual Curriculum Content classes. To meet the challenge created by the impact of immigration with a resulting increase in the number of students whose proficiency in English was limited, Florida established bilingual education programs long before their need was recognized by the federal government and by the Supreme Court of the United States.

Florida's history and current status has always included a significant number of minority language groups. Historically, however, schooling was not always viewed as a prerequisite for participation into the mainstream political and economic institutions of the day. A limited English speaker (LEP) was not always expected to complete secondary education. Unskilled working class jobs were plentiful through the 1960s and many dropouts found employment. By the 1970s it was becoming apparent that an important link between schooling and employment existed. The completion of schooling became indispensable to economic success in the United States. On the assumption that economic success was directly tied to constitutional rights of equal opportunity and the attainment of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," a series of Federal and State mandates attempted to address the apparent inequality of opportunity within school that also led to inequality of opportunity in life.

Legal Foundations

Beginning with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and then building upon Supreme court decisions of Lau vs. Nichols, 1974; and Plyer vs. Doe, 1982, Florida designed its Education Equity Act of 1984. This act specified the broad framework for equal access to education within the state. At this point there was no funding of specific program design for non-English speakers in the school system, just an ideal of equal opportunity. Individual schools and districts were left to resolve their perceived dilemmas regarding student difficulties.

Numerous school districts had various types of programs to address the non-English speaker. Some schools had "intensive English" programs designed to help the student learn academic English at an accelerated pace. Others schools had "bilingual" programs which varied in format from little more than intensive English to dual language programs attempting to graduate fluent bilingual students. Statewide, most schools were ill equipped to provide either an intensive English program or a true bilingual program. There was no consistent way to identify language minority students, and no comprehensive state mandate for education of LEP students. Special teacher training was sporadic and often confined to only foreign language teachers and some intensive English instructors. Even data collected by the schools about students' birthplace and home language was limited. Under such conditions, and with increasing immigration, particularly from Cuba, the stage was set for a court test. In 1990, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and others brought a court case against the Florida Board of Education, claiming that students whose first language was not

English were not being provided a fair and equal education because English was the only mode of communication in most classes and that fact seriously jeopardized any chance for a non English speaker to receive an education. Recognizing the strength of the case, the Board of Education sought a Consent Decree with the parties.

The decree became the LULAC Meta Consent Decree and is now the current framework for compliance with state and federal education laws in Florida. The Consent Decree is divided into sections for identification and assessment, equal access to appropriate programming, equal access to all programs, personnel, monitoring, and student outcomes. Section 1 describes how all students must be properly identified and assessed to ensure that they receive proper services. As a result of this section, the LEP population jumped from approximately 50,000 in 1989 to over 110,000 in 1990. In 1999 it stood at 176,490 identified students receiving LEP services. All students are questioned as to their home language. This section of the decree also specifies the procedures for placing students into the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, their exit from the program, and the continued monitoring of students who have exited the program after a period of years.

Section 2 states that LEP students not only have a right to ESOL classes, but that they also have a right to all other educational services including special education, and subject area courses. Students must be educated in the amount, scope , and sequence that any other student might be provided. An LEP student is simply not allowed to be placed into an ESOL class for their entire educational experience.

Section 3 entitles LEP students to have access to special programs to suit their academic needs. LEP students may have an extra year to finish their secondary education program. There are early childhood experiences and dropout prevention support services provided to the LEP student.

Section 4 focuses on the training of teachers. All school districts must provide the appropriate training for its teachers. A teacher may complete a series of courses at a university, consisting of 15 credit hours in specified ESOL methodology, assessment, and multicultural studies, or they might complete an inservice program of equal depth and focus provided by their school district. Currently the State of Florida is requiring that all new teachers graduating from Florida colleges and Universities obtain this endorsement as a requirement for graduation from a teacher training program.

Section 5, monitoring issues, delineates the responsibility of the State of Florida Department of Education to collect data and ensure compliance with the Florida statutes. The office of Multicultural Student Language Education (OMSLE) currently is responsible for this monitoring. It provides statistics to interested policy makers, academics, schools, and other parties. The current web site is highly recommended for those interested in more detailed information: http://www.firn.edu/doe/ .

Section 6, outcome measures, assigns responsibilities to the Florida Department of Education for monitoring and evaluating the program's effectiveness. Comparisons between LEP and non LEP students are made, analyzing several variables such as graduation rates, achievement levels, grade point averages, and state assessment test scores. It is assumed that continued adjustment to the school programs will be based upon an analysis of these reported data. The Consent Decree provides a clear framework designed to help the LEP student succeed in school. It also assigns responsibility to the State for monitoring and enforcement of the program and requires teachers to have special training. Since the 1990 Consent Decree, many accomplishments and challenges have faced the schools and this particular population of LEP students.

Statistical results and analysis

Florida's student population has become more diverse. LEP students come from 252 countries and speak 202 languages within its schools. LEP students are facing new challenges in terms of state exams, public schools are being asked to be more accountable, and universities are taking on more responsibility for training teachers. In addition, the schools have become more crowded, and student teacher ratios are higher. There is some evidence that early entry into the school system with good ESOL trained teachers is producing a group of successful bilingual students, while at the same time the problems of LEP students' late entry into the school system have not been adequately addressed.

What is the country of origin of LEP students? Surprisingly, the largest group, almost half, is born in the United States; they are U.S. citizens.

Country of origin 1998/99	Number	Percent
United States	124,264	52.41
Cuba	18,489	7.80
Haiti	14,975	6.32
Puerto Rico	13,255	5.59
Mexico	12,907	5.44
Colombia	7,242	3.05
Venezuela	4,971	2.10
Brazil	4,546	1.92
Dominican Republic	3,582	1.51
Nicaragua	2,923	1.23
Vietnam	2,857	1.20
Peru	2,761	1.16
Honduras	2,741	1.16

Source: Florida Department of Education (2000)

The table demonstrates the complexity of the LEP population. Almost 10% of the state's population is classified as LEP, or 237,120 out of 2,326,656 students. The numbers do not include students who have exited the program for more that 5 years. Although there are more than 200 languages spoken by students in Florida schools, Spanish speakers comprise about 69% of the non-English speakers. Haitian-Creole is the next largest group with about 11%, followed by Portuguese (2 %), Vietnamese (1 %), and French (1 %) speakers. These five languages account for approximately 85% of the state's non-English speaking student population (Florida Department of education, 2000).

The State of Florida has adopted a coding system for identifying the various categories of LEP students. These are necessary to understand the statistics and to more clearly address student achievement and need. The following coding will be used in this review:

LY = LEP students currently enrolled in classes designed for LEP students

LF = Former LEP students who exited program within the last 2 years

LZ = Former LEP students who exited program within the last 5 years

ZZ = Non LEP student

This section will focus on the differences in achievement between students who are not LEP students and the above LEP categories. The categories are important. Students are usually exited from ESOL programs after about 4 years. An LZ person in 10th grade, for example, has had at least 6 years of schooling in the United States. An LY student in 10th grade has had fewer than 4 years of schooling in the United States, and perhaps only 1 year. Students who enter the school system in the lower primary grades will be classified as LZ by the time they are in high school. LEP students who enter the system as high school students will either have LY or LF classification. The ZZ category are native English speakers, regardless of the time spent in a school system. There is a significant disparity between these groups in high school achievement.

Performance indicators

Graduation and dropout rates for 1998/99

LEP Status	Number of graduates	Dropout rate
LF	1,288	6.9 %
LY	2,077	8.4 %
LZ	5,816	7.4 %
ZZ (non-LEP)	86, 789	4.4 %

Florida Department of Education (2000)

One alarming statistic concerns the number of dropouts recorded by the LEP populations. According to state record management, LEP populations who are enrolled in an LEP program (LY) have almost twice the dropout rate of an English speaker (ZZ). Usually dropout occurs while the student is in high school, after their 15th birthday. What this indicates is that an older student in high school, who is involved with learning English, but has not yet attained the requisite fluency needed for academic success, is twice as likely to decide to leave school prior to graduation. The reasons for this vary, but as will be discussed through the case studies to follow, anomie, or the sense of isolation, is at least one significant variable.

Florida Writes, the required state writing standardized test, may also reveal why LY students may feel discouraged to continue school. The test is currently given in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. The following statistics concern state totals for the 10th grade test. An average passing score is considered to be a "3."

10th grade Florida Writes

LEP status	% score < 3	Average score
LF	27 %	3.1
LY < 2 years exited	67 %	2.2
LY > 2 years exited	51 %	2.6
LZ	11 %	3.5
ZZ (non-LEP)	11 %	3.6

Clearly the students who are in ESOL classes learning English, and those who have been recently exited with only social language skills are struggling with this writing assessment. It is interesting to note that scores for those who have completed an ESOL program and have had at least five additional years of school are scoring at levels equal to native English speakers. In this analysis, it is important to realize that 10th graders who are in an ESOL program and those who have recently exited do not have the time available to reach the level of their LZ peers. If only two years remain, at best, an LY student at this stage will have only about a 50% chance of passing this test. As the state adopts this exam as a graduation requirement, it is probable that an academic barrier is being imposed. Also interesting is the observation that LEP students (LF) supported by specific ESOL courses have a higher passing rate than those recently exited. One might question the validity of the exit readiness of some LY students to achieve academically. In the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, FCAT, the reading and math scores show similar results. In each case, an achievement score of "3" is considered passing at grade level.

10th grade FCAT Reading and Math

LEP Status	Reading Average	% score < 3	Math Average	% score < 3
LF	280	91 %	293	77 %
LY < 2 years	247	96 %	272	78%
LY > 2 years	250	99 %	265	88 %
LZ	295	79%	300	65 %
ZZ	310	65 %	315	56 %

Florida Department of Education (2000)

Again the trends of success and failure emerge along ESOL entry and exit lines. LEP students who entered their ESOL program as young students and have exited the program for at least 5 years are having results closest to the native English speakers. The other LEP categories lag way behind the ZZ and LZ norms. In part this should put to rest the myth that one can "do math" even if one doesn't know English. A review of the reading and math problems on these tests reveals the need to make many fine discriminations between word meanings, a cognitive ability difficult to achieve in one's native language, and much more difficult in a second language. In comparing the numerous averages one sees again that average scores of supported LF students and LZ students are close to the ZZ average, but LY exited students have the most difficulty.

The implications of these figures for the recent immigrant high school student is not encouraging. In fact, these standardized tests may be viewed by some students as impossible hurdles. It then becomes only a matter of choice for these students to decide to dropout. If they sense that the system will not provide a means for them to be successful in school, it is logical for them to decide to begin a work career and pursue an alternative degree such as a high school equivalency degree (GED). The realization that success at school is limited may also serve to increase the sense of isolation or anomie.

While Florida instituted the LULAC Meta Consent Decree in 1990 to aid non-English speaking students in their transition to academic fluency and school success it seems that it is far more successful for students who enter in the elementary grades. For those entering as middle school or high school students, another set of considerations must be brought into play. While the decree does allow students to attend an additional year of high school if they are still classified as active ESOL students, few take this option. The decree did not consider the effects of state

wide standardized exams nor does it address the social decision making that young adults must confront.

Thus, the operationalization of the decree has been uneven in its benefits. The decree's mandates, coupled with the time provided to an entering elementary school student, generally provide sufficient remediation and positive results. It falls short, however, when dealing with entering secondary students. The age of the secondary student means that they have a different educational background. Their educational background ranges from the normal number of years in a formal educational setting in their home county to no formal education. Teenage years bring about a host of biological changes and sociocultural expectations that often work against motivating a student to complete a formal education. The need to "belong" and be accepted by a peer group is most important in adolescence. Often job and family concerns pressure the adolescent to drop out. There is also the lack of remediation time available for a student who enters at the high school level to master the skills of academic English.

Academic English demands not simply a basic communication but includes a sophisticated vocabulary, the ability to write in a formal manner, specific subject area knowledge, and content mastery oriented towards the United States perspective. For most students this is a daunting task. To make matters worse, there is a dearth of bilingual teachers and role models in secondary schools as compared to the elementary levels. It is not enough for teachers to simply know how to speak another language; they must also be biliterate in their specialized content area if they are really going to help the non-English speaking student. Disenfranchised from the complete learning experience, the student experiences a high degree of anomie. Given these various factors, it is not surprising that poor test scores are found in this age bracket.

Case studies

This next section illustrates through case studies what high school students and teachers say about their daily struggles in learning and teaching. The first three studies look at the dilemmas from the teachers' perspectives.

<u>Teacher case study number one: the need for support systems</u>

"Unless a LEP student has some kind of support system to help them with their school work, it can be difficult process for them"

When Ms. T. is asked how many LEP students are in her class, she is unaware as to the exact number, but she can identify the students who still need the extra help by their lack of English proficiency in her 9th grade English classes. In her opinion, she notices that the most successful LEP students are the assertive ones, but even they labor over the most basic assignments and activities in the classroom. She feels that many LEP students have exited too early from the ESOL program. Moreover, she goes on to say that in high school a student can exit the program at the mid year point and then be mainstreamed into her class. She says, "they have missed half the year, half the material covered…they have missed the the time it takes to get used to a teacher, to their classmates, to the whole classroom environment." She goes on to say that she tries very hard to include them, feels for them, and tries to breakdown the material for them.

She cares for them and attends to them and has bonded with them, and outside the classroom tries to speak to several students in the small amount of Spanish she knows. But overall she observes that their writing, reading, and oral skills are not ready for the mainstream. She wishes she had more time to address their needs. She feels she has a difficult time balancing their needs with the needs of the whole class. At times the momentum of the class is on target and she feels her teaching is reaching the core of the group, then she has to reflect, "Are my LEP students getting it, do I stop the momentum, go on, check with them later?" It is a very difficult balancing act.

She found that the most successful students were the children who bonded to her, and that the successful student usually had a support system. This support system could help them with their English, school assignments, and with their reading, writing and deadlines. She gave the example of a female student whose boyfriend was a native English speaker. He and his family tutored her and consistently helped her with her schoolwork and she was able to be successful outside of the ESOL program because she had a strong support system.

Teacher case study number two: the need for personalized instruction

"There is a need for personalized instruction…a supportive family/home environment that fosters a successful ESOL student. The state demands so much of them, such as the English curriculum and passing the FCAT to earn a standard diploma. These are overwhelming hurdles for them; let's stop being in denial about this."

Ms. T2 says that what they need is personalized instruction, sometimes on a one-on-one basis. "At the high school level, I am teaching all levels of ESOL in one class, that is the class is broken down by class level, not by English proficiency level. My job is to teach 10th grade curriculum to an ESOL student who is in their 2nd year of high school. It does not matter that they may have only been in this country for two years or less. But the reality is that most of these students are not ready for this curriculum, even with the appropriate adaptations. Some of these students are illiterate in their home languages and some lack sufficient training in their home language for the transference of skills and knowledge to the second language English. They are not ready for the high school language arts curriculum which I am to follow and then adapt with ESOL methodologies. There needs to be a way to meet their needs in learning the second language before we bombard them with the English curriculum and with preparing them for a standardized test like the FCAT. Most of our LEP students did not have these types of stardardized tests in their native countries, where so much of our teaching emphasis is placed. We should stop being in denial about what their true needs are. There needs to be a special program where these children can build these basic English skills before being forced into the standard curriculum. This is not about equal access or the denial of equal access; it is about addressing some very basic student needs as it concerns their second language development."

The differences between ESOL in the elementary and secondary setting are many. "My experience with children at the elementary school level is that they catch up on social language quickly and do not lag behind too much when acquiring academic language. They adapt faster to the school environment and they seem to bond to the teacher, especially if the teacher is from the same ethnic group as the student. At the elementary level you teach the student the whole day and all subject matters, so you can arrange the class according to their needs; you see the big picture. Co-teaching with other teachers can take place with much more ease than at the high school level. The mainstreaming of the elementary ESOL student is done in incremental stages. There is a much closer monitoring of the student's progress. The teacher at the elementary level is aware of the student's progress and the English proficiency level in all subject matters. In high school the situation is not the same, and at times, it can be the opposite. You, as the ESOL teacher, may understand the needs of these student (English proficiency needs), but the science teacher may ignore them or not recognize them as needs they need to address, or they may not be aware that the student is an ESOL student recently exited from the program and still in need of guidance and monitoring."

Some students are more successful than others. She believes this has a lot to do with the family support they receive, the environment they have at home, how well their parents are educated, and their particular academic preparation in their home language. All these components translate into how successful and motivated an ESOL student will be at the high school level.

Teacher case study number three: home language preparation

"The ones who are prepared in their home language will eventually make it. It is the ones who have no or very little preparation in their home language that I worry about."

The third teacher interviewed is a full time high school ESOL teacher. She finds that many times when she is ready to exit a student from ESOL, the mainstream teachers do not understand the differences between social and academic language. She thinks that many teachers believe that when these children have social language in place, the children should be exited from the program, or once exited, they no longer need that extra support and guidance. She thinks that this misconception exists because many staff members don't usually understand second language acquisition. They feel a newly exited ESOL student is just as ready as a monolingual English speaker and does not need further support concerning basic assignments and lessons. She goes on to say that some students see their own needs in a similar way. That is, that once social language is in place, they no longer see themselves as in need of the ESOL program to help them with their academic language development. She observes that many of these same students see a stigma with being an ESOL student and in ESOL classes and want out of the program as soon as possible. So you have teachers, as well as students, rejecting ESOL principles and support once social language has been acquired, and rejecting the obvious need for academic language development, even when the reality hits that these students are not passing the courses into which they have been mainstreamed.

She too feels the ones who are prepared in their home language will eventually be successful. It is the ones who have no or very little preparation in their home language that she worries about. "There are many children who come to my classroom who are illiterate or pre-literate, who have so much catching up to do. They try so hard but they are faced with an overwhelming task."

"Along the way I was helping a child who is essentially just learning to read and write, and I worry -- how will she pass the English portion of this test? But then on a day when I started to review math word problems, I realized that this child had never learned a number system nor did she know how to do basic math computations. So all along I thought, just teach her how to read and write. It just didn't hit me that if you had no previous schooling in your home language, not only can't you read and write but you don't know your numbers and that you also have been missing out on math preparation for all your life."

"What we are doing for them does work. But we need to support that process a lot more, not criticize it, build on what works and revise what doesn't and revisit the tenets of bilingual education in general."

Just as the teachers express a sense of frustration, so too the students find it difficult to succeed with the combined agenda of academic and social adjustments.

Student case study one: the sense of anomie

Student one, a female, is 16 and has been in the United States for 3 years.

"Originally I wanted to go back, I couldn't get used to it here. I only live with my Mom and my stepfather. My sister and father are still in Cuba. I miss them very much. I am used to it a little. I would love to be able to go back to visit, but not to live."

"The language here is hard to learn. The people are so different, I feel so strange as if I don't belong here. I miss my family; I want to return to visit. At first in school, it was strange. Sincerely I don't like school because of the language problem. I wasn't passing my classes. I like Spanish more. I feel embarrassed when I speak English. If someone knows Spanish, I go into Spanish. In English, I am embarrassed. I feel like if I make a mistake I'll be made fun of. But also I love my language and I love to speak it. As time went by I tried to speak more English and my English got better, and I was able to get better grades. I got used to the system. I have adapted. I am not saying I like it. You have to put yourself out there and push, if you don't, just forget it.

I had no alternative, you become accustomed or you go crazy."

Student case study two: home support

Student two has been here 3 years: she is 16 years old.

"In the beginning, I thought it was a big vacation, but after a while you realize it is something else. Then comes the depression, you miss your home, family and friends. And you realize that people and life have changed. Then you go to school. The first week of school I didn't know any English (I took English in Colombia, but it was only grammar), but when you're here you actually don't understand anything, even though I took English in my country. What really helped me is that my stepfather is American. He taught me English and helps me with my homework. If I had not had him it would have been hard because there was no other English speaker in my home, and when you come to school you hang out with Spanish-speaking friends."

Student case study three: peer pressure

Student Three has been here 2 years, is 16 years old and in 10th grade.

"When I got here, I was put back a year because of my English. I could understand a little but I couldn't say anything. You see in Cuba I took a little English, but what really helped is that I had an intensive class from a foreigner on vacation."

"When I originally arrived, my family that was already here helped me and new friends helped with English. The most important things that helped me were friends and some teachers. My Spanish teacher and ESOL teacher helped the most. They are both Hispanic and knew what was happening to me and could help me. Some of the hardest things were understanding the different accents in English and here the students are always trying to be so cool."

" Here students were different, they were trying to get out of work and really not being serious about school, like in Cuba. Peer pressure was hard. Other students know you don't speak English, so other students make you feel bad. They would belittle you even in the hallway going to class or the cafeteria. One time it was bad, I was walking down the hallway, going to the cafeteria and a bunch of girls started calling me, "stupid" and ugly things like "bitch." I just kept on walking. I didn't know why they were calling me names so aggressively and trying to trip me. I guess it was because I was different."

"I would dress differently, because you know, when you first get here you don't know how to dress. You don't know how to dress like everyone else and how important that is. My Aunt and my Mom couldn't help me with that because they didn't know either. People (students) would tell me that my clothes were not right and weird, and look at me weird. So I would feel totally out of place, like I didn't belong at all. I would feel like I wouldn't want to come to school at all."

" I couldn't understand some of the teachers because of the language. The students would make me feel out of place and were mean to me. The classes were not challenging. The math I knew everything, so I wanted to go to sleep in that class, but, in ESOL (English) I needed more time in it, to learn the English."

"What got me through all of this, is that I got new friends, Hispanics who spoke English. They would talk to me and help me. I got an American boyfriend, so I had to speak English. I liked English. I also went to my Spanish teachers (Spanish for Native Speakers class) at lunch time, and I would tell her everything that happened to me that day and she would listen and give me advice. Also, I told my Mom. My Mom and my Uncle would help me. In my home my family would support me. Most importantly at school and during my first year at school I had a strong desire to learn English, so bad that I began to do better."

"You know when I was in Cuba, I knew everything about Cuba, I had knowledge from Cuba and I was an advanced student. So here, I knew a lot of the material but I didn't know the language fluently and I still don't."

Discussion

The lessons learned have not come easily. Clearly addressing the needs of the non-English

speaker is a "work in progress." While the Meta Consent Decree was a significant step in the legislative foundation supporting ESOL programs, much work remains. Test scores reveal success and concern. While younger students with more time in the school system are making appropriate advances, the student who enters the system at the high school level appears to need more support. As revealed in the case studies, the high school experience of large classes, academic discourse, intense peer pressure, and a dearth of bilingual subject area teachers leave the high school ESOL student in the position of relying on his own network of friends and peers to help master English. Not all students even have the time to make the best use of a peer network, especially if the academic preparation in their home country was minimal.

While entering LEP high school students do receive special support, there is a distinct gap between the ESOL teachers' abilities and concerns and those of the subject area teacher. A lack of ESOL training required by subject area teachers is evident by their minimal understanding of the language learning process. The incorrect perception that social language skills equate to academic language skills appears still to be the operational assumption used in many subject area classes. As stated by one of the teachers, "we need to stop being in denial about what their true needs are." To remain in denial is to continue to deny a portion of the students fundamental access to an equal education. This central issue is what has time and again brought this issue to the courts.

Florida, from its earliest days, has been enriched by the constant tide of new immigrants. The unique cultural features of the state would not exist without the dynamic exchange of abilities and ideas brought to us from many peoples and lands. The efforts by the schools to ensure that all children and citizens receive a fair and enriching education will continue. Florida will always be challenged to foster democratic ideals, and those ideals should first manifest themselves in the school. One thing is certain. Florida will continue to have an increasing number of students whose first language is not English. The needs of this dynamic multicultural environment will continue to affect educational policy for the foreseeable future.

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