

# THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

MONDAY

NOVEMBER 20, 2000

FRONT PAGE

## Arizona win encourages bilingual-ed opponents

By Daniel González  
The Arizona Republic

Proposition 203's recent landslide victory in Arizona is energizing opponents of bilingual education across the country who predict more states are soon to follow.

"It inspires others to see it can be done and we are not alone," said Rita Montero, a former member of the Denver Board of Education and a fierce opponent of bilingual education.

Coupled with rising test scores in California that bilingual education opponents attribute to a similar anti-bilingual education measure that California voters passed in 1998, Arizona will give efforts to dismantle bilingual education in Colorado a boost, Montero predicted.

In July, the Colorado Supreme Court tossed an anti-bilingual education initiative off the November ballot be-

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## PROP. 203 | Win rallies U.S. backers

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cause it contained unclear and misleading wording. The initiative was similar to the one embraced by 63 percent of Arizona voters on Nov. 7.

Proposition 203 requires public schools in Arizona to end traditional bilingual education in favor of placing immigrant children with limited English skills in an intensive one-year English-immersion program.

A new version of the Colorado ballot initiative is expected to be reintroduced in 2002, Montero said. By then Montero expects to see a rise in test scores in Arizona, further adding momentum to the campaign to ban bilingual education in her state.

But James Crawford, an author who specializes in the politics of language, predicts Proposition 203's victory in Arizona will have minimal impact on bilingual education programs in other parts of the country.

"What happened in Arizona is less likely to make a national impact than what happened in California two years ago because California is

seen as a trendsetter," he said. "The only reason there (was) an initiative in Arizona is because Ron Unz put it there. It's still being promoted by a small number of right-wing ideologues. This is not a large popular movement that most people care about."

Unz is the Silicon Valley entrepreneur who bankrolled anti-bilingual education initiatives in both California and Arizona.

Even so, Proposition 203 seems to be resonating with bilingual education opponents in Texas.

"It's going to have a tremendous impact. What it's doing is energizing the people of Texas that this can be done, that we can get rid of bilingual education," said April Horner, who hosts a Spanish-language talk radio program in Dallas.

The day after Proposition 203 won in Arizona, Horner interviewed Maria Mendoza on her show. Mendoza was a leader of English for the Children, the group that led the Arizona campaign.

Horner said the program was flooded by callers who

agreed that bilingual education was a failure.

"What I heard from listeners is people want their children to learn English as quickly as possible," she said.

Horner, a native of Mexico and a certified bilingual teacher, opposes bilingual education not because she doesn't think children should learn two languages, but because she believes bilingual education fails to adequately teach English to immigrant children.

Unlike Arizona, California and Colorado, Texas does not have a referendum process allowing citizens to place initiatives like Proposition 203 on the ballot.

Until now, Texas has been considered a bilingual education stronghold, but that could change, Horner said. To end or restrict bilingual education in Texas would require a vote by the state Legislature, something lawmakers there have avoided, Horner said.

"This has been a taboo subject for a very long time in Texas," Horner said. "But after what has happened first in California and then in Arizona, people have been feeling more comfortable talking about it."

Rosalie Porter, an ardent critic of bilingual education in Massachusetts, also kept close tabs on Arizona's initiative. Porter earned a doctorate in bilingual education and taught it for years before souring on the method. Still, she said she considers measures like Proposition 203 too extreme.

"I would rather see a modification of the existing state law than a complete overthrow," she said.

Unz, meanwhile, has been crisscrossing the country marshaling forces to mount attacks on bilingual education in other parts of the country, especially in New York City, where bilingual education has increasingly come under fire. At a hearing in New York, however, Unz was reportedly heckled with shouts of "Let him go back to California"

and "Go home."

Unz said he hopes the back-to-back votes in California and now Arizona will create a domino effect toppling bilingual education in other bilingual education strongholds such as Illinois and Massachusetts. But ultimately, Unz said he would like to see support for bilingual education cut off at the federal level.

After Proposition 203's victory in Arizona, Unz sent out an e-mail lamenting the lack of politicians willing to back anti-bilingual education measures, and expressing hope that will change.

"Perhaps at some point, some politicians will begin to see the light," Unz wrote.

# The Arizona Daily Star

WEDNESDAY  
June 28, 2000

FRONT PAGE

## Voters to decide on bilingual ed in Arizona

By Howard Fischer  
CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

PHOENIX — The future of bilingual education is now in the hands of Arizona voters.

Foes of bilingual education filed petitions yesterday with about 165,000 signatures in support of a plan to scrap the program and force all educators to teach only in English.

The signature total is far more than the 106,762 necessary to qualify for the Nov. 7 ballot.

The campaign, financed so far by Californian Ron Unz, who pushed through a similar program there, proposes that students who enter schools without



**"There are thousands of parents out there who are already dissatisfied with bilingual education. But they had no voice."**

**Hector Ayala, high school teacher**

being fluent in English be placed in one-year "structured English immersion" courses while continuing their regular course work.

Despite that wording, Margaret Garcia Dugan, a leader of the

English for the Children Campaign and principal of Glendale High School, said youngsters who need more than a year's worth of help would get it.

Hector Ayala, a Tucson high

school teacher, said the movement comes from a growing belief that the only people benefitting from existing bilingual programs are the teachers and administrators whose programs receive special funding. He said students languish in bilingual programs for years, never fully learning English.

Statistics from the state Department of Education seem to bear that out.

A 1999 study showed that only 4 percent of the more than 112,000 students in bilingual education programs learned enough to join mainstream classes. And the

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### BILINGUAL Voters to decide on programs' future in Arizona

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average high school senior from a home where English is not spoken has been in bilingual education or in programs teaching English as a second language more than eight years.

Despite that, John Petrovic, a researcher with the Center for Bilingual Education, said that in the years before bilingual education 60 percent of Spanish-speaking youngsters never graduated from Tucson schools. Now, he said, that figure is only 10 percent.

State Sen. Joe Eddie Lopez, D-Phoenix, had his own explanation for the failure of many bilingual programs: lack of proper funding and allowing courses to be taught by teachers who are not certified bilingual instructors.

Backers of the initiative said they believe students would be better served by teaching them in English from the first day they are in Arizona schools.

"There are thousands of parents out there who are already dissatisfied with bilingual education," said Ayala. "But they had no voice."

He said laws that allow parents to "opt out" of bilingual programs for their children are insufficient.

"The option exists in the statutes only; it doesn't exist in practice at all," Ayala said. He said none of the thousands of parents his organization spoke with said they had a realistic option to remove their children from bilingual programs.

Beyond that, he said, there is proof that students in elementary grades "can learn a second language as easily and as quickly as they can learn a first language."

Bilingual education actually takes several forms in Arizona.

Some districts provide full-time academic instruction in students' native language to ensure they are learning math, science and other skills even though they are not yet fluent in English. Others teach English as a second language.

The Tucson and Sunnyside school districts use mainly bilingual and bicultural programs. The state Department of Education found those students consistently perform better on standardized tests than counterparts from districts where English is taught as a second language.

There is a price to be paid for that, though: In Tucson, fewer than 30 percent of the students whose skills were reassessed after four years were judged to be English-proficient. That compares with statewide figures that show 75 percent of students in all types of programs were proficient after four years.

Ayala brushed aside questions of whether scrapping these programs has the additional effect of separating new students from foreign countries from their culture.

"Loss of language and loss of culture becomes a political issue," he said.

"It's not an academic issue. It's at home where we learn culture, it's in our neighborhood where we learn culture, not in the American school classroom."

State School Superintendent Lisa Graham Keegan supports the goal of getting kids to learn English as quickly as possible. But John Schilling, her chief of policy and planning, said Keegan opposes the initiative itself, saying the solution to the lower scores of students from non-English-speaking homes is more complex than the plan on the ballot.

Schilling said the higher test results from the 1998 California program are "promising" but cautioned it may be difficult to draw conclusions after only two years.

### English for the Children - Arizona

#### What the proposition says

- ▶ English is required for all public instruction.
- ▶ Students who speak little or no English will be placed in sheltered English-immersion classes, normally for one year.
- ▶ Those students are transferred to mainstream classrooms once they acquire "a good working knowledge of English" and can do regular school-work in English.
- ▶ Standardized tests will be given annually to all students, except for those exempt for special-education reasons.
- ▶ Foreign language classes are unaffected.
- ▶ Lawsuits are permitted to ensure enforcement.

#### Parents can request waivers to put children in bilingual education if:

- ▶ The child already knows English, or
- ▶ The child is 10 years old or older.
- ▶ The child has spent at least 30 days in an English classroom.
- ▶ The parents apply at the school.
- ▶ The child has special physical or psychological needs, beyond lack of English proficiency.
- ▶ The principal and superintendent sign off on a 250-word description of the child's needs.
- ▶ Teachers and districts accept the waiver, under guidelines reviewed by local and state school boards. They may reject waivers "without explanation or legal consequence."

The school must offer bilingual education only if it has at least 20 students per grade level with approved waivers. Otherwise a child can transfer to another school that has a program.

Web site:  
[www.onenation.org/aztext.html](http://www.onenation.org/aztext.html)

# THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

WEDNESDAY

JUNE 28, 2000

FRONT PAGE

## Bilingual schooling targeted

### Drive to put issue on ballot

By Daniel González  
The Arizona Republic

A battle is brewing over the future of bilingual education in Arizona.

On one side are opponents of bilingual education, many of them Hispanics who believe Arizona's 30-year-old system is a sham that inhibits immigrant children from learning English and places them on the road to educational and economic failure.

"English is the language of opportunity," said Hector Ayala, a Tucson English teacher born in Mexico who is co-chairman of a campaign to abolish bilingual education in the state.

On the other side are supporters who concede that bilingual education may have some faults but maintain that educating immigrant children in two languages is the best way to teach them to speak English without sacrificing their native language. Bilingual education also best prepares them for the global marketplace, supporters say.

On Tuesday, opponents submitted petitions bearing

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## **DRIVE** | Fights bilingual ed

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165,000 signatures to the secretary of state supporting a Nov. 7 ballot initiative to scrap bilingual education in Arizona and replace it with a one-year English immersion program for non-English speaking students. Proponents need 101,000 valid signatures of registered voters.

About 50 educators, parents and children, most of them Hispanic, went to the state Capitol to show their support for the anti-bilingual education ballot initiative. They carried bilingual signs that said, "English for the children," in Spanish and English.

The campaign is being financed by millionaire Ron Unz of California, who after orchestrating the dismantling of bilingual education in his home state in 1998, has shifted his focus to Arizona and elsewhere. Unz has said he would like to organize an anti-bilingual education effort in New York City.

On Tuesday, Unz said he has contributed \$100,000 to

the anti-bilingual education campaign in Arizona. In California, he said, test scores improved "dramatically" after bilingual education was scrapped.

But John Petrovic, a researcher at Arizona State University's Center for Bilingual Education and Research, said the assertion that English immersion works better than bilingual education is "a lie."

Research indicates that students with limited English skills attending bilingual-education programs consistently outperform their peers in English immersion programs, Petrovic said.

What's more, Petrovic said, the majority of immigrant children in Arizona already are placed in English immersion programs, not bilingual education.

State Sen. Joe Eddie Lopez, D-Phoenix, a bilingual-education supporter, said opponents have wrongly blamed bilingual education for the high drop-out rate among Hispanics.

"If you are going to lay blame, you should lay blame on English immersion because only between 5 and 7 percent (of limited English-speaking children) are actually in bilingual education," Lopez said.

Lopez further characterized the anti-bilingual education campaign as a xenophobic movement that seeks to capitalize on the fears and anxieties about Hispanics trying to succeed

in the United States.

"I think it is an extension of an English-only movement by Anglos somehow afraid that Americans are going to lose part of their culture," Lopez said.

But Ayala, an English teacher at Cholla High School in Tucson, said Hispanic parents are fed up with bilingual education.

"The most common complaint that we heard from the parents was that bilingual teachers promised them that their kids would learn to speak Spanish and English perfectly," Ayala said. "The reality was that their kids were dropping out in the ninth and tenth grade of high school because they weren't learning English."

Ayala said he is proof that English immersion is better for immigrant children. When he was 9, his family moved to Arizona from Nogales, Sonora. He never lost his ability to speak Spanish, despite attending English-only classes.

Retaining his native language, Ayala said, "was my folks' responsibility, not American schools."

Ayala acknowledged that bilingual education sometimes works.

"But that's not what we want," he said. "We want unqualified success, and bilingual education has never been able to do that."

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# THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Sunday, November 22, 1998 B3

## Bilingual programs failing

**D**ominique Chavez can't tell her daughter's story without crying. It happens when the 30-year-old single mother wonders whether an educational program that was supposed to brighten the child's future might actually dim it.

Her daughter, Sarena, 10, can't read or write as well as other fifth-graders. She scores below grade level and attends a special reading group. She finds social studies difficult because of "all the big words." Shy and unassertive, she lacks confidence.

Chavez is terrified. She began to worry when Sarena was a second-grader at Clarendon Elementary.

"We were driving. I was pointing to billboards and asking her what they said," recalled Chavez.

"She didn't know. Then, I realized: 'Oh God, something's wrong. She doesn't know how to read.'"

When Chavez confronted officials at Clarendon, they told her to "be patient" but didn't offer any reason for Sarena's troubles. Chavez suspects that she knows the reason. But she hesitates to say it out loud. Her father raised her never to see herself as a victim.

Still, Chavez has slowly become convinced that Sarena has indeed been victimized. And the culprit is bilingual education.

Sarena, who speaks only English, was roped into the program in kindergarten. That happened, her mother later learned from a teacher, because of the girl's Spanish surname, Marquez. Sarena remained in bilingual classes, much of which were taught in Spanish, through the second grade. She then returned to the mainstream, where she has struggled. She now attends Mensendick Elementary School.

"She was robbed of the most important years of her life," Chavez said.

Bilingual educators talk about how "the research" proves that teaching non-English-speaking stu-



**RUBEN NAVARRETTE JR.**

The Arizona Republic

dents in native languages works. They do not talk about casualties such as Sarena Marquez.

Nor do they like to talk about an April report by the state Department of Education which found that only 2.8 percent of Limited English Proficient students had, in 1996-97, learned enough English to re-enter the mainstream.

Meanwhile, Hispanic parents in Tucson want an end to bilingual education in Arizona. They favor an initiative such as California's Proposition 227. The initiative, passed by voters in June, requires that students be placed in all-English classrooms. A subversive reform, it also reverses the existing power structure in education by giving parents such as Dominique Chavez veto power over their children's placement in bilingual instruction.

Members of the Tucson group have persuaded the sponsors of the "English for the Children" initiative to help them launch something similar in Arizona. That launch may be imminent.

Ron Unz, who spearheaded Prop. 227, said last week that he is prepared to file an Arizona initiative with the Secretary of State's Office as soon as early December. If enough signatures are collected, the issue probably will be decided in 2000.

New polls suggest that many Arizonans already have decided. A poll

last month by the Behavioral Research Center found that a 227-type initiative was supported by 69.7 percent of respondents.

The Legislature, which hates to be outperformed by initiatives, will get into the act when it reconvenes in January. A House bill sponsored by Rep. Laura Knaperek, R-Tempe, would cut off funding for bilingual programs after three years. A Senate bill sponsored by Sen. Joe Eddie Lopez, D-west Phoenix, would increase bilingual funding and require districts to hire only credentialed teachers.

The status-quo Lopez bill shows how tone-deaf Hispanic leaders are to the screams of their constituents.

Screams like those of Dominique Chavez, whose daughter now suffers from a stunted sense of possibility.

When Chavez asked Sarena whether she might like to join an acting class, she said that she couldn't because she "can't read." When asked what she wants to be when she grows up, Sarena says she wants to open a nail-polishing salon.

Those self-imposed limits trouble Chavez. An executive with Sprint/Paranet, she's willing to pay for a private tutor to help her daughter make up lost ground.

The 10-year-old doesn't know much about politics and ballot initiatives and worthless politicians. What she does know is that teachers do important work.

That might explain her choice for a backup career. If the nail thing doesn't work out, Sarena wants to be a kindergarten teacher.

"I'd like to teach kids how to read," she said. "Because if they don't know how, when they get older, they'll struggle."

Now if we can just get bilingual enthusiasts to stop acting like children and start thinking like them.

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# Tucson Citizen

## Some claim bilingual class tough to get out of

By **MARISA SAMUELSON**  
Citizen Staff Writer

Some parents and their advocates say they must scramble to get children out of bilingual programs in Tucson Unified School District, despite claims by the district that it's easy to opt out.

"They should explain to parents what is happening," said Maria Mendoza, a private advocate for parents who has challenged district bilingual placements. "(The students) are like little prisoners."

### INSIDE

• **TUSD denies that admissions to bilingual programs are based on students' Spanish surnames.**

• **Procedure for removing your child from bilingual programs at TUSD.**

### Stories, 6A

their child in bilingual education, it's as easy as writing a letter," said Leonard Basurto, director of bilingual education and Hispanic studies.

District officials say that's simply not the case.

"If a parent doesn't want

But parent Amparo Martinez said she had a hard time pulling her 7-year-old son from a bilingual program at Lynn/Urquides Elementary School, 1573 W. Ajo Way.

Her son, first-grader Daniel Martinez, was placed in a bilingual class when he entered the TUSD school in kindergarten.

Amparo Martinez, who speaks little English, said she tried to get her son out of the program last year, but didn't know how.

She said she doesn't think bilingual classes are necessary because her older sons, ages 19 and 15, who also attended TUSD schools, never were placed in them.

"They speak English perfectly and went on to graduate and do well for themselves," Martinez said.

She said she wanted more proof, so she signed up as a parent aide to observe her son's kindergarten.

"I was told by the principal that they were teaching him 45 minutes a day in English, but that's not what was happening," Martinez said. "The only time they used English was for the flag salute."

At registration this year, Marti-

**OPTING**, continued/6A

## Wednesday afternoon

September 2, 1998

### SELECTION PROCESS

Here's how students are selected for bilingual education programs in Tucson Unified School District. The following questions are posed to parents on student registration forms:

- What is the first language the student learned to speak?
- What is the language spoken most often by the student?
- What is the language most often spoken in the student's home, regardless of what the student speaks?

If a parent answers "Spanish" to any question, the district tests the child for English proficiency. Results determine whether the child is placed in a bilingual education program.

## Officials deny surnames are basis of placement

By **MARISA SAMUELSON**  
Citizen Staff Writer

TUSD administrators deny that their schools base admissions to bilingual programs on students' Spanish surnames.

Some district parents said they've heard rumors that students are put into bilingual classes solely based on that criterion.

"The decision to put a student in (a) bilingual program is based on test scores," said Leonard Basurto, the district's director of bilingual education and Hispanic studies. "The determination is based strictly on their English proficiency.

"We, as educators, determine

the needs of the students. It is not done (based) on Spanish surnames. We have a very, very specific policy in TUSD."

All principals, counselors and teachers are trained on how to decide who goes into bilingual programs, he said.

District officials are prompted to test a child according to a parent's answer in Spanish to one of three questions on school registration forms.

"The questions do not determine placement. They only determine if students are taking the test," Basurto said.

"Once we test them, if the students score below the standard, then they are enrolled" in bilin-

gual programs.

Parents are also asked to answer "yes" or "no" to: "If bilingual and/or English as a second language instruction is recommended, I want my son/daughter to participate."

However, even if a parent answers "no" to that question, and the child is determined suitable for bilingual education, a school still places him in bilingual classes.

If the parent is still dissatisfied, he must write a letter requesting the child be removed from the classes and set up a conference with district officials.

It's a three-part process that Basurto defends.

"I think it's really an attempt to protect students' rights to an equal learning opportunity," he explained.

"My experience is that parents thank me. They seem to be appreciative that we take these precautions."

Lorraine Aguilar, a member of the Independent Citizens' Committee, which deals with district issues, said she sympathized with parents questioning placement.

"The district's doors are open, but it's really hard to change all the cultural problems," she said.

Aguilar said she would like the citizen committee to take a role "where parents came to us" with complaints or problems.

# Opting out of TUSD bilingual classes is difficult, some say

Continued from 1A

nez was determined to get her son into "regular classes." It was then, she says, school officials told her of the district's policy: A letter requesting the change must be written, followed by a conference between the parent and school officials.

Intimidated by "the system," Martinez said a friend recommended a woman who could help her.

Martinez contacted Mendoza, who interpreted for Martinez and attended the parent-principal meeting with her.

Mendoza was one of three plaintiffs who in 1978, successfully sued TUSD in federal court to establish desegregation programs in the district.

She also is co-founder of English for the Children - Arizona, which wants to dismantle bilingual education in the state.

## Program not always explained

Mendoza, who has observed the district's adherence to desegregation stipulations for 20 years, said school officials don't always explain to parents how their children are selected for bilingual programs or how they can be taken out of them.

According to district policy, TUSD "shall not admit a student to a bilingual instructional program without specific parental permission. No student shall be admitted to such a program without an explanation of the nature of the program and the available options."

Lorraine Aguilar, one of 17 members of the Independent Citizens' Committee, said parents could use help dealing with the system. The purpose of the ICC is to monitor the district's compliance with the stipulations of the suit's settlement.

The committee is charged with reviewing TUSD's 33 desegregation schools and submitting an annual report to the court and the district governing board. Bilingual education has been a side issue to desegregation for decades.

Aguilar said she doesn't want to dismantle bilingual education, but

believes Mendoza is a good resource for parents who feel caught in a bureaucracy.

It was positive "that people like Maria Mendoza are helping to open those doors," Aguilar said. "(Some parents) have a hard time.

"They are not knocking" either because of their culture or because they are "not well-to-do," she said.

## Dissatisfied with 'system'

Teresa Garcia, 36, who has a daughter at Keen Elementary, 3538 E. Ellington Place, said she was afraid to deal with the system.

Garcia cannot speak English, but said she wants her daughter to.

Beatriz Garcia, a first-grader, was assigned to the bilingual program at Keen when she registered last year for kindergarten.

"I want my daughter to be able to go to college," Garcia said, and for her to do that, knowing English is essential.

Garcia said she visited her daughter's classroom last year and observed that children were not being taught English. This prompted her to "fight" to get Beatriz out of the program before school began last week.

Garcia said she approached school officials a few times, but didn't receive a response.

Frustrated, she enlisted Mendoza's help. By week's end and before school started Aug. 17, Beatriz was assigned to a non-bilingual classroom.

"Without (Mendoza), I wouldn't have been able to get her out (of bilingual classes)," Garcia said. "She understands the politics and how the district works."

Garcia said her daughter is doing fine in an English-only classroom.

"She can already read it a bit," Garcia said. "Right now her brain is like a sponge."

## Proponents defend policy

TUSD's Basurto said he was unaware some parents in the district found it difficult to remove their children from bilingual programs.

"I can't remember ever getting

that complaint in my office," he said.

He said the number of rejection letters from parents who don't want their children in bilingual programs is minimal - about 12 a year.

He defended the district's policy.

"I think it's not too cumbersome or too many steps," Basurto said. "If parents are going to turn down a program, they need to know what they are getting in exchange."

He said that is why school officials request parents to attend a conference.

Alejandra Sotomayor, president of the Tucson Association for Bilingual Education, said parents also have the option to write letters of rejection in Spanish if they are not comfortable with English.

"They can say, 'Yo no quiero que mi hijo este en educación bilingüe' or 'I don't want my child in bilingual education,'" Sotomayor said.

Keen parent Carmen Acevedo concurred that it wasn't "that difficult" to remove her daughter, Natalia, from a bilingual program before school started.

"They only asked me for a letter," Acevedo said.

Her daughter is in a mainstream English classroom at the elementary school.

Acevedo, who does not speak English, said her daughter brought only homework in Spanish home last year.

"I want her to learn English. For Spanish, I can teach her at home," she said.

## More explaining needed

Mendoza said school officials often don't make the effort to explain things to parents.

"They don't tell (parents) how it's done. They only tell them how long it will take and how teachers are qualified," she said.

Developed in 1993, TUSD's Comprehensive Plan for Bilingual Education has a section outlining the district's role in explaining the bilingual program to parents.

"The school shall produce a brochure describing the bilingual education instructional program," the manual says.

It also states that "the schools shall make a reasonable effort to provide written communications in the primary language of the parents when 15 percent or more of the students speak the same language other than English."

"We are doing everything we can so that principals are following the comprehensive plan," TUSD's Basurto said.

But, he said only some district schools actually provide a brochure for parents.

The plan also calls on the Bilingual Education and Hispanic Studies Department to develop a "video in English and Spanish describing bilingual education instructional programs in TUSD."

But, "the video has yet to be developed," Basurto said. "It's something still in progress.

"Eventually there are things you can't get to immediately."

Basurto affirmed his department's commitment to "continue to improve" communication with parents.

## Suspicious of process

But parents Acevedo and Garcia said they were suspicious of the district's methods for selecting children for bilingual classes because officials never fully explained the admission policy. These parents' doubts are fueled by rumors that at some schools students are selected based solely on Spanish surnames, the two said.

The district says its policy is not to put students into bilingual classes based on Spanish surnames, although Basurto admitted this happened at one Southwest Side middle school.

"We found one case where we made some mistakes, where the principal had told a counselor incorrectly" to do that, he said.

He refused to name the school. Basurto said school officials found out about the error on the first day of registration and had it corrected.

## How to remove your child from TUSD bilingual programs

If parents don't want their child in Tucson Unified School District bilingual education programs, they must:

- Check "no" to this question on the district's registration form: "If bilingual and/or English as a second language instruction is recommended, I want my son/daughter to participate."
- Write a letter to the school principal, asking that the child be placed in non-bilingual programs.
- The principal, along with district officials, will schedule a conference with the parents to discuss the merits of bilingual education.
- If parents still choose against bilingual education, the child will be placed in mainstream classes.

Source: Tucson Unified School District

# Statewide push to kill bilingual education gains

## Bilingual

Continued from Page 1B

By Sarah Tully Tapia  
The Arizona Daily Star

There's talk of a voter initiative to stop bilingual education, and much of it is in Spanish.

Ten Tucson people - most Spanish-speakers, about half of them educators - started a movement to fight bilingual education about six weeks ago.

Since then, English for the Children Arizona has gained members in Glendale and Nogales - as well as the interest of a millionaire who backed a successful California proposition on the same issue.

Walking door-to-door in the neighborhood behind southside Wakefield Middle School last week, members of the group found support among Spanish-speaking parents who think schools need to try harder to teach their children English.

Maria Orendain, who has three girls in Wakefield and Hollinger Elementary School, said she would prefer her children learn more English so they can teach her. Her oldest daughter can hardly speak English.

"I told (the school officials) that I want my children to learn more English," Orendain told Maria Mendoza, a founding member of the local group.

A few doors down, resident Maria Irene Yanas said she supports bilingual education for her three children, but admits she favors more English in the schools.

After moving here from Mexico three years ago, she has noticed that her 9-year-old boy is learning English faster than her

oldest daughter, Berenice, who just graduated from Pueblo High Magnet School. However, Berenice made all A grades in one year of bilingual classes and two years of all-English courses. She has a scholarship to Pima Community College, where she plans to take reading and language classes.

Down the road, neighbor Manuela Borchardt said she believes in English-only education. "Spanish, you learn at home," Borchardt said.

English for the Children Arizona hopes to eliminate bilingual education - the main method used for limited-English students in Sunnyside and Tucson unified school districts - and replace it with one year of English immersion.

### Meeting with legislators

Members have met with legislators and Lisa Graham Keegan, state Superintendent of Public Instruction.

They were visited last month by Ron Unz, the Orange County software millionaire who is the father of California's Proposition 227. Mendoza called him soon after the California effort passed June 2.

Arizona's effort is the first he has considered helping, although he has spoken with others in Colorado, Texas, Washington and New York.

Unz said in a recent phone interview he made no formal commitment but is interested because of the group's organization, as well as Arizona's number of limited-

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ed-English students and the state's proximity to California.

"There's a very good chance that we will help these people financially," Unz said.

Unz's support could give the group the funding needed for a statewide effort, said member Hector Ayala.

The campaign for California's so-called "Unz Initiative" cost about \$1.2 million, Unz said. The law goes into effect today, since a federal judge refused to block it last month.

The 9th U.S. Circuit of Appeals upheld that ban on Friday.

English for the Children Arizona has yet to organize formally or take out petitions. It can start collecting the needed 113,000 signatures in November for a ballot measure in 2000.

But members are already busy.

They held four meetings and five times went into southside neighborhoods to knock on doors.

They maintain bilingual education is holding children back by teaching them in Spanish. TUSD, known nationwide as the "cradle of bilingual education," has failed in the past 30 years, they say.

Bilingual educators say limited-English students learn best when they are taught basic content in their primary language and use more English as time goes on.

English is used from day one, said Leonard Basurto, TUSD bilingual education director. It takes five to seven years to master a language, bilingual education experts say.

Foes of bilingual education contend they are not against immigrants or bilingualism, but want parents to have a say in their children's education, Ayala said.

Members hear horror stories about parents who are intimidated into keeping their children in bilingual classes, children who can't read and students who are labeled as limited-English so the district can collect an extra \$156 a year per child in subsidies.

The key members are Mendoza and Ayala.

Mendoza was the main Hispanic plaintiff in the class-action TUSD desegregation lawsuit, resulting in a 1978 court order to improve minorities' education. She would prefer an intensive English phonics program, rather than the bilingual education she protested in the 1970s.

Ayala, who has taken master bilingual education classes, is an English teacher at Cholla High Magnet School, which receives students from bilingual schools. He said his ninth-graders come with low skills in both languages, forcing him to order elementary-level books such as "Charlotte's Web."

Spanish is the first language for Mendoza and Ayala, who was born in Mexico. They both learned English through immersion in U.S. schools.

In arguing against bilingual education, members use an often quoted figure from a recent Department of Education report that says 2.7 percent of limited-English students passed the tests required to go into mainstream English classes in 1996-97.

The group's brochure states those students are in bilingual education. The report says something different.

The report lumps all limited-English students together, no matter what program they are taking. That means some are in the English courses that the group favors; others are in bilingual education or nothing.

The report also states that students in bilingual programs outperformed on standardized tests other students who took English as a Second Language.

The members also use those standardized test scores to back their opinion, showing that 19 of 20 lowest-scoring TUSD schools use bilingual education.

Basurto said those schools' test scores are lower primarily because they are in poorer neighborhoods.

"Even among dominant English speakers, you will find that those schools in low socioeconomic neighborhoods also have the lowest scores on achievement tests," Basurto said.



Sarah Prall, The Arizona Daily Star

Maria Orendain wants to learn English from her children