



In plain English

Bilingual education flunks out of schools in California

The character of American life 50 years hence will be determined not only by decisions in the White House or speeches on the campaign trail but by what happens in elementary school classrooms where immigrants' children are learning—or not learning—English. So leave the campaign behind and visit Suni Fernandez's second graders in Laurel Elementary School in Oceanside, Calif., a modest-income town just south of Camp Pendleton and 35 miles north of San Diego. Sixteen of the 18 pupils there have parents who are immigrants from Mexico or elsewhere in Latin America; two arrived from rural Mexico during the school year; in most of their homes the only language spoken is Spanish. But these second graders are reading and writing in English.

It was not always so: Two years ago most of the instruction would have been in Spanish. As one boy reads from an unfamiliar text with the fluency and comprehension one would expect in an upscale suburb, Fernandez says he could not have done as well until sixth grade under the old system. At the end of the school year, 13 of her 18 kids are rated as fluent by the state LAS test. "Up to two years ago," she says, "only one student would have been rated as fluent." Many families hand down stories of how immigrant grandparents learned English in school and then moved on to success. The same thing is happening today in schools like Oceanside's.

But for many years, Latino kids failed to learn enough English to score well on tests and qualify for good jobs, thanks to "bilingual education," which in most cases was neither bilingual nor education. Latino politicians and foundation-funded activist groups gave loud public support to it while often admitting privately that it wasn't working. Education schools spun theories of how kids would learn English better by learning in Spanish, and teachers' unions pocketed dues from "bilingual" teachers who got \$5,000 bonuses. Democrats reflexively voted for it, and Republicans paid it no heed: It wasn't their kids.

Test scores up. Then Palo Alto entrepreneur Ron Unz sponsored Proposition 227, which limited Spanish-language instruction to one year in most cases. It passed by a wide margin in June 1998. Oceanside Unified School Superintendent Ken Noonan, who is of Mexican descent and was once a bilingual teacher, opposed 227. But when it passed, "we decided to implement the law as written," despite a protest march and candlelight vigil. Oceanside went from more than 150 to zero bilingual classes and also moved to phonics and basic math. Many teachers were very skeptical. "The

first one or two months are the hardest," Noonan says. But then "immersion seemed to work. When parents saw the progress the kids were making, they were overjoyed." Test scores show Oceanside's immersion is working: The May 1999 state-required Stanford 9 test showed scores for the early grades—those most affected by the switch from bilingual—rose from the 35th percentile to the 45th in just one year. The *San Jose Mercury News* found similar sharp rises in test scores for Latino children in immersion all over California.

Not all the news is good. At least 12 percent of California Latinos are still in bilingual instruction, and the Los Angeles Unified district, the nation's second largest, has tens of thousands in its "Model B" program, which, a grand jury ruled last year, does not comply with 227. And Alice Callahan, a longtime activist who runs Las Familias Del Pueblo community center in L.A.'s garment district, says that older students who went through bilingual programs lack the language facility needed for standardized tests. "Kids go to high school and get A's and B's and get visions of college in their heads. Then they get a 350 on the verbal SAT, and for the first time they learn they aren't on the playing field," she says.

Callahan criticizes "professionals who say these kids can't learn" and praises Gov. Gray Davis, who opposed 227 but has insisted that the law be carried out and has vetoed bills passed by the Democratic legislature to undermine it. He has called for extending 227's adult English-learning classes from \$50 million to \$400 million, with an 8-to-12-week immersion program modeled on one in Israel. The glaring contrast between California's high-tech success and its near-bottom-level student test scores jarred Davis when he learned in 1995 that most Cal State University students needed remedial reading or math. "My No. 1 concern is improving student achievement, and I will not run again if test scores don't go up," he says. He appointed to the state school board Nancy Ichinaga, a 26-year elementary school principal, who never allowed bilingual programs and whose tightly structured immersion and phonics programs have produced near-top test scores in modest-income, heavily black and Latino Inglewood. Ichinaga, Davis, Noonan, Fernandez, Callahan, Unz, for different reasons, all believe that, as Davis puts it, "every kid can learn, can do better." After a lost generation, Latino kids in California are finally learning, in plain English, like immigrant children did a century ago. Will other states follow? ●



Students help each other at Laurel Elementary School.
● "Every kid can learn, can do better."

EMILY MOTT FOR US&WR

San Jose Mercury News

SUNDAY
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FRONT PAGE

English-only test scores up

■ **Proposition 227:** Teachers and parents debate why achievement results improved in the wake of new limits on bilingual education.

BY MICHAEL BAZELEY
Mercury News Staff Writer

A year and a half after California voters approved a ban on bilingual education in public schools, test scores are up and students are speaking English as never before.

So why aren't the teachers at San Jose's Miller Elementary School happy?

"The transition has been rough," said kindergarten teacher Maria McCray. "Last year, I had a sea of blank stares in my class. These bewildered kids don't understand what I'm saying."

Proposition 227 has created a paradox in California schools: Early test scores — in-

cluding a statewide analysis by the Mercury News — suggest that students who speak little or no English are learning more in English-only classes. While some teachers are heartened by that, many others fear that so-called "English learners" are being set up for future failure as they struggle to grasp the meaning of words or complex concepts.

A Mercury News analysis of test scores for limited-English speakers showed that schools that switched to English-only instruction last year had somewhat bigger achievement gains in the early grades than schools that used waivers to keep bilingual instruction. The analysis provides the first

comprehensive statistical glimpse at student performance under the new law.

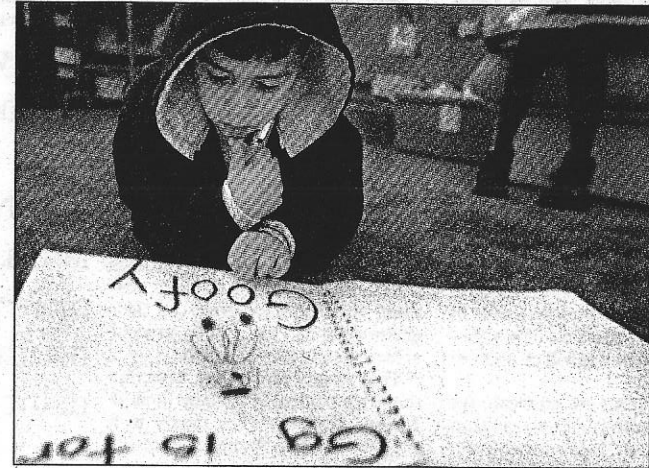
The Mercury News examined enrollment and test data for limited-English-proficient students for the 1998-99 school year — the first year under Proposition 227 — and the preceding year. Other findings include:

■ Proposition 227 did not eliminate bilingual education. Twelve percent of students classified as "English learners" were enrolled in bilingual classes, which are permitted if enough parents at a school request them.

In past years, about a third of English-learners were taught bilingually.

About half were enrolled in Proposition 227's "structured English immersion" classrooms, which are conducted mostly in English but designed to help those with language difficulties.

See **BILINGUAL**, Back Page



Larry Salazar reads in his first-grade class at Cassell School in San Jose. Math and reading scores have gone up for many pupils who switched from bilingual to English-only education.

RICKE E. MARTIN—
MERCURY NEWS

Classroom options for limited-English students

Before voters passed Proposition 227 in 1998, about a third of students with limited English skills were steered into bilingual classes. Under the new law, most students are put in "structured English immersion" classes for about a year, unless their parents request waivers. Students with strong English skills have another option, "mainstream" classes with English-speaking students.

A Mercury News analysis* indicates that English immersion schools performed slightly better on state achievement exams than bilingual schools. Schools where most students were mainstreamed performed best, probably because of the students' strong English skills.

THREE CLASSROOM OPTIONS

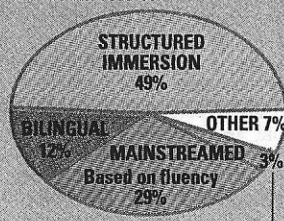
■ **Bilingual:** Students are taught in both their home language and English. Such classes are permitted under waivers from Proposition 227.

■ **Structured English immersion:** Nearly all classroom instruction is in English but designed for children learning the language.

■ **Mainstream:** A regular English language classroom. Students were put there because they have a good working knowledge of English or because their parents requested it.

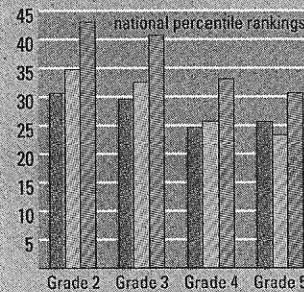
WHAT TYPE OF CLASS

Where limited-English students enrolled in 1998-99

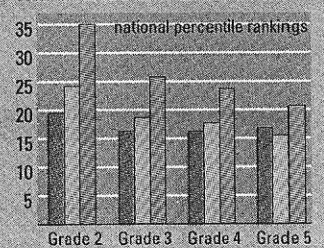


At parents' request

MATH PERFORMANCE



READING PERFORMANCE



* The Mercury News examined the achievement of schools where 75 percent or more limited English speakers were enrolled in one type of instructional setting or another.
Source: Mercury News analysis of data from the California Department of Education

MERCURY NEWS

Scores rise after bilingual limits

■ BILINGUAL

from Page 1A

And 29 percent were considered fluent enough to be in "mainstream" classrooms where they got no special assistance.

■ In the early grades — two, three and four — English immersion schools tended to post higher reading and math scores.

■ The achievement gap narrowed as students get older, and by grade five, predominantly bilingual schools did better on average.

California does not release individual student scores, so the analysis could not track students as they moved from one type of instruction to another. Moreover, the study covers just one year of instruction under Proposition 227.

And neither type of instruction — bilingual or English-only — fared particularly well overall. Students with limited-English skills still tend to score among the bottom fourth of all students — regardless of whether they are taught in English or another language.

"Even if you are an advocate (of English instruction), the news is not that good," said Stanford University education professor Kenji Hakuta.

Basic understanding

Still, the data supports what many teachers around the state have reported: that students are rapidly acquiring at least a basic understanding of English. Ron Unz, the Palo Alto businessman who drafted Proposition 227, said the study bears out his claims that immersion in English-language classrooms would help non-English speaking students.

"The opponents of Prop. 227 said all along that test scores (of limited-English-speaking students) would plummet," Unz said. "Instead, the statewide scores of immigrants rose (significantly) after seven months of 227."

Education experts, though, strongly cautioned against reading too much into the first year of test scores.

Even though Proposition 227 went into effect in the summer of 1998, many teachers spent the first year adjusting to the new law. Some continued teaching bilingually, in defiance of the law; others suffered from a shortage of English-language materials.

Moreover, test scores were up across the board in California last year — especially in the primary grades — the possible result of a statewide class-size-reduction movement and students and teachers becoming more comfortable with the state's 2-year-old achievement test.

Douglas Mitchell, a professor at the University of California-Riverside who has studied bilingual education, said English-learner scores were helped by most teachers now using the same language in their classrooms as the state's student achievement test — English.

That wasn't always the case. Before Proposition 227, many limited-English students were taught in a language such as Spanish, but tested in English.

"They are concentrating on preparing kids for an English-language exam," Mitchell said. "But it doesn't say much about academics."

Some see harm

Indeed, many local teachers who work with students who speak little or no English said they are seeing disconcerting signs that kids are being harmed by the switch to English instruction.

Those teachers concede that most students are speaking English and understanding what is being said in the English-only classrooms. Many are even learning how to decode simple words — breaking them down into their separate letter

sounds. But many of those same students are lagging academically because they cannot grasp what the words mean, or understand the concepts the teachers are trying to convey.

At San Jose's Miller Elementary, reading and math scores for English-learners generally improved last year. Second-grade reading scores, for example, jumped from the 10th percentile to the 24th.

But teacher Brian Schmaedick said the numbers are deceptive.

“They can sound out the word fan, f-a-n. But they don't understand what a fan is. . . . Their scores were higher, but they certainly didn't learn more.”

— Brian Schmaedick

"The scores go up (on the English-language test) because I'm talking in English," said Schmaedick, a teacher at San Jose's Miller Elementary. "They can sound out the word fan, f-a-n. But they don't understand what a fan is. My kids last year, their scores were higher, but they certainly didn't learn more."

Miller Elementary's acting principal, Gerry Lopez, said parents are encouraged by their children speaking so much English at school. But he said problems will crop up in the coming years, as students move into upper grades where the material is more challenging.

Indeed, English immersion test scores steadily declined as students

got older, the Mercury News found. That's evidence, Lopez said, of the pitfalls of English-only classes.

"We know we're setting kids up for failure in fourth grade," he said. "The material takes a big leap from the black-and-white and true-and-false questions of second grade to the more challenging stuff in third and fourth grade."

While English immersion schools tended to post the bigger gains in the Mercury News analysis, many bilingual schools also improved last year.

Still bilingual

Washington Elementary in San Jose Unified is one of the shrinking number of bilingual strongholds, thanks in part to a federal court order that mandates bilingual education for Latino students in the district.

Last year, the school's reading scores jumped an average of 4.5 percentile points in grades two through five, slightly higher than the three percentile point statewide gain for all limited-English-proficient students.

Washington teachers said they are determined to prove that bilingual education works. The school is encouraging students to become proficient in English at an earlier age. And it has adopted a new literacy program that calls for intensive language arts instruction every morning.

"We all believe in it," said second-grade teacher Corina Lozano. "The way I see it, the goal of bilingual ed is to teach them English. The theory is there; now we just have to prove it."

The switch to English has pushed longtime bilingual supporters into several camps, including those who resent Proposition 227, and those who are unhappy, but understand why voters rejected bilingual education.

Teacher Teresa Renteria, of San Jose's Cassell Elementary, has a foot in two camps. A longstanding supporter of bilingual education, she is trying to reconcile her beliefs with the realities of the classroom.

On one day, she spoke eloquently about the need for students to be taught in their own language, and she worried about the effect Proposition 227 is having on her students.

On another, she revealed her ambivalence about the requirement. True, some of her limited-English students are struggling under the new law.

But there are moments — like the day recently when a Mexican girl named Socorro cheerily zipped through a reading exercise in English — when Renteria warms to the idea of English-only instruction.

"I support bilingual education," said the teacher during a brief classroom break.

"But if you don't have a good bilingual program, you might as well start them with English from the beginning. And I haven't seen many good bilingual programs."

Making the transition

Second-grade Miller teacher Michelle Elliott has never wavered on the question of bilingual education. Many of her students come from homes where Spanish is the first language. Nonetheless, she cannot imagine working with students in any language other than English.

"In the classroom, I want them to read," Elliott said. "I worry about kids who don't have English at home. For those kids, I worry that bilingual education could have shut the doors."

Quiet support

Other Miller teachers said privately that they also support the switch to English classes. But after years of

holding the minority viewpoint on campus, most said they were reluctant to speak publicly.

Shayna Hicks, who this year is teaching a combination third- and fourth-grade class, would say only that she finds it much harder to work with students who have been educated in a bilingual setting.

"It's just frustrating because you're still teaching them how to read and teaching them English," she said.

At La Primaria Elementary in Los Angeles County, teachers were at first frustrated at having to make the switch from bilingual to English instruction, principal Angelica Sifuentes-Donoso said. But the change, coupled with a new, stronger literacy program, has driven up test scores.

"I think overall, it's been favorable for us," Sifuentes-Donoso said. "If you have a strong bilingual program, with strong bilingual teachers, then you're empowering the student. But we didn't have an ideal program before, so if I'm going this route, I'd rather they learn English."

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Daily News

FRONT PAGE

Online: dailynews.com

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2000

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English-only works

Record number of bilingual students achieve fluency

By David R. Baker
Staff Writer

A record number of Los Angeles Unified students learning English have achieved fluency in the first full school year since passage of Proposition 227, a ringing endorsement for proponents of the measure that ended bilingual education classes in the state.

More than 32,400 students, or 10.3 percent

of the district's English learners, made the transition to fluency between December 1998 and December 1999, according to district records, compared with 9.9 percent during the previous year and 8 percent in the last year of bilingual education.

Backers of Proposition 227, which voters overwhelmingly passed in 1998, said the numbers vindicate their view that children can learn English quickly without spending years

in Spanish-language classes.

"Either it's 227, or it's a remarkable coincidence," said Ron Unz, the Silicon Valley entrepreneur who wrote the ballot measure.

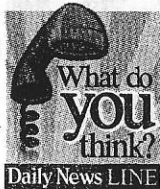
Many educators and Latino activists who opposed Proposition 227 aren't willing to concede just yet. They point out a number of other factors that could have influenced students' performance, including smaller class sizes, reading-intervention programs and a

greater number of teachers trained to work with English learners.

But some, at least, confess relief that the predicted plunge in student achievement following passage of the ballot initiative never occurred.

"Of course I think it's positive that scores didn't crash, but is it really working? It's too

See **ENGLISH** / Page 11



► Do you think Prop. 227 is the reason for the rising number of English-fluent students?

See below

English immersion making the grade

ENGLISH / From Page 1

soon to tell," said Theresa Fay-Bustillos, vice president of legal programs for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, which opposed the initiative.

Indeed, the two years following Proposition 227's passage aren't much time to assess the measure's impact. But the initial numbers are encouraging, many educators said.

Scores on the Stanford 9 standardized tests rose last year for students with limited English speaking skills, although the dramatic gains initially reported by many districts were due to an error in grading the exams. Instead, scores for English-language learners in Los Angeles rose by one or two percentage points in most grades — roughly the same level of improvement shown by fluent English speakers.

The number of students who made the transition to fluency increased from 24,851 in the last year before the proposition to 32,402 in the most recent tally, which runs from December 1998 to December 1999. To make the switch, students must prove their language skills on written and oral tests administered by the district.

Some teachers, including Canoga Park instructor Sheryl Rosario, said the immersion classes in which most English learners are now enrolled can teach students how to speak the language, and do it well.

"I think it is working," she said, as her kindergarten and first-grade pupils, who don't speak fluent English, wrote sentences on sheets of lined paper. "If you keep giving them Spanish, they're just going to give it back to you."

ENGLISH-FLUENT STUDENTS

A record number of Los Angeles Unified students learning English were deemed fluent in the language from December 1998 to December 1999. Below is a list of students, in kindergarten through grade 12, who have been redesignated as fluent by number and percentage.

Year	Number Redesignated	Percentage Redesignated
1990-91	9,054	4.2
1991-92	10,628	4.4
1992-93	8,718	3.3
1993-94	12,870	4.6
1994-95	15,999	5.5
1995-96	23,494	8.0
1996-97	24,737	8.2
1997-98	24,851	8.0
1998-99	30,850	9.9
1999-2000	32,402	10.3

SOURCE: Los Angeles Unified School District

Not everyone agrees with that assessment. But all agree Proposition 227 greatly changed the way Los Angeles Unified teaches English-language learners, who comprised nearly 45 percent of the district's student population in 1998-99, the last year for which data was available.

Last year, 84,626 elementary school pupils attended English-immersion classes within the district. An additional 109,241 students attended another type of class that allows teachers to give some help in a second language, although most of the instruction must be in English. And 21,941 students were placed in bilingual classes at their parents' request, a right they retained after the proposition was passed.

District officials, while not discounting the proposition's impact, said it can't be the sole factor behind the rising number of English-fluent students.

Some year-round schools, for example, didn't begin implementing the proposition until January 1999. The changes at those schools, therefore, could contribute to the rise in the

fluency transitions recorded by last December but not to the more substantial gains made the year before.

At the same time, they said, other forces have been at work. The district has increased its training programs for teachers who work with English-learners. It has launched extensive reading intervention programs during the past year as part of its effort to end social promotion, the practice of advancing underachieving students to the next grade.

And it has made the rate of students making the transition to fluency a key figure used in assessing each school's overall performance. Schools don't face penalties if they post lackluster rates, but teachers and district officials said the increased emphasis has an impact.

"Once you put that into your accountability system, of course schools are going to pay more attention to it," said Rita Caldera, an administrator in the district's language acquisition branch.

Teachers like Rosario make the immersion classes work through a combination of

patience and creativity.

Her students don't always breeze through lessons. When they come back from breaks spent in Spanish-speaking households, Rosario will endure a few mute stares while students try to remember the language she works so hard to teach them. Sometimes she has to mime instructions when a student can't catch the words.

"I can tell a kid, Please push your chair in, and they'll just stare at me. So I'll have to model it. I'll say, This is your chair. Push it in," she said, gently moving a child-size chair under a desk as she spoke.

Fay-Bustillos said that while she's encouraged that students seem to be adapting to English-immersion classes, she wonders whether they will pick up enough of the concepts being taught to excel at later grades.

"What you're going to witness in a classroom is verbal fluency," she said. "But that's not the same as literacy."

Still, she is grateful that the wrenching debate over Proposition 227 and its aftermath have forced Californians to pay attention to the education students with limited English skills receive.

"That's a welcome focus," she said. "It wasn't there before."

No celebration for success of Proposition 227

Test scores up, but spirits down

WHERE'S the party? When test scores go up, educators trumpet the good news — usually. But they're not celebrating the success of Proposition 227, which limited bilingual education.

Taught in English, as required by Proposition 227, students with limited English skills earned higher reading and math scores on the statewide STAR exam, a Mercury News analysis concluded.

More than a quarter of public school students aren't proficient in English. Nearly all were required to take the test, which is given in grades two through 11.

One year of rising test scores doesn't justify a victory parade. Despite prog-

ress, scores for immigrant students remain very low. But, considering the predictions of doom when voters passed 227, this is very good news.

Children can't learn what they can't understand, bilingual teachers said. Teach them in English, and they'll fail.

Children will learn English more quickly if they're taught in English, said Ron Unz, who wrote 227. They'll have a chance to succeed.

Tested in spring of 1999, limited-English students made more reading and math progress in elementary schools that switched from bilingual to English im-



JOANNE
JACOBS

mersion than in schools where most students used waivers to stay in bilingual classes.

In later grades, as the better students become fluent in English and leave the limited-English category, overall scores go down. By fifth grade, bilingual students classified as limited in English test slightly better than English-immersion students.

However, when '99 scores are compared to '98, fifth-grade scores improved more in elementary schools that switched to English immersion than in bilingual schools. Except for fourth-grade math, there was more progress in every grade in the English immersion schools.

Oceanside Unified in Southern California eliminated bilingual classes entirely. Second-grade reading scores for limited-English students jumped from the 12th to the 23rd percentile; second-grade math scores went from the 18th to the 32nd percentile.

Schools that mainstream limited-English students — placing them in regular classes with some extra help in learning English — show the highest scores. But mainstreamed students may start out with more English fluency, so it's not clear that's the best strategy.

It's a single year's data. We'll know more when students taught in English since kindergarten start taking the exam in second grade.

But, as Unz, says, "All the arrows are pointing in the right direction."

If scores were going down, would it be

too early to blame Proposition 227? I doubt it.

Some of the teachers and administrators quoted in our Dec. 26 story sounded like Y2K doomsayers cheated of their disaster. Bilingual ed believers say students may score well in the early grades but fail when they need to understand more complex language and ideas.

Maybe. But surely students are more likely to develop the English vocabulary to understand complex ideas if they've been taught in English since kindergarten.

Students taught in English made more progress in math, as well as reading, suggesting that they are understanding concepts.

Before 227, about a third of limited-English students were placed in bilingual classes. In a typical program, students re-

Some of the teachers and administrators quoted in our Dec. 26 story sounded like Y2K doomsayers cheated of their disaster.

ceived 90 percent of instruction in Spanish in kindergarten and first grade, and were taught to read in Spanish.

Because of the shortage of bilingual teachers, it was common for students to be taught to read by Spanish-speaking aides with a high school education or less.

In second, third and fourth grade, students heard more English and were supposed to transfer their Spanish reading skills to English. By middle school, most were in English-only classes.

As of last year, 12 percent of English-language learners remained in bilingual classes, 29 percent were mainstreamed and the rest were taught in English immersion classes designed for students with limited proficiency.

Some English immersion teachers taught partially in Spanish; some bilingual education programs boosted their use of English to speed students' transition.

There was considerable confusion. Often teachers lacked English books and teaching materials. For a while, Los Angeles Unified teachers were told not to teach reading skills until their students had fully mastered English.

If nothing else, Proposition 227 did one excellent thing: Children with the greatest need for good teaching are far more likely to be taught by teachers — not by aides. That's true for the smaller number of bilingual students, as well for the kids who are now taught in English.

It's also easier to offer a good instructional program in English. The choice of

Schools that mainstream limited-English students — placing them in regular classes with some extra help in English — show the highest scores.

curricula is wider.

We'd better learn to teach well in English. Among languages spoken by California students are Khmer, Toishanese, Tongan, Urdu, Pashto and Gujarati. Newly added to education department forms: Tigrinya and Albanian.

Bilingual education will survive as an option for a small number of students. But it's not the wave of the future.

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Issues & Ideas

National
Journal

■ CALIFORNIA'S LANGUAGE WARS, PART II

EDUCATION

By SIOBHAN GORMAN



RON UNZ: New, higher test scores in California, the first since bilingual education was ended, indicate that Proposition 227 is working.

Results are in from the first round of tests taken by students since California largely ended bilingual education in June 1998, and they are good—and that is a major event in education politics and policy.

Scores released last week for this year's Stanford 9 test in California were up in all grades and all subjects for English speakers and also for students new to English. Californians are now engaged in a vigorous debate about the reason for this improvement—Proposition 227's mandated end to bilingual education or a host of other school reforms implemented in the past few years. But at least the scores did not go down, as some pro-bilingualists had predicted. This probably means a big boost for efforts to roll back bilingual education in other states, as well as nationally.

The gains in California have certainly heartened Maria Mendoza, 62, a Tucson woman who has been trying for three decades to end bilingual education in neighboring Arizona. Mendoza hopes to get a measure like California's Proposition 227 on the Arizona ballot for 2000.

"I think this will be my last year, because I think we will win," said Mendoza, who heads her state's "English for the Children" campaign, modeled after Proposition 227. "We will use those results to say, 'Proposition 227 in California worked.'"

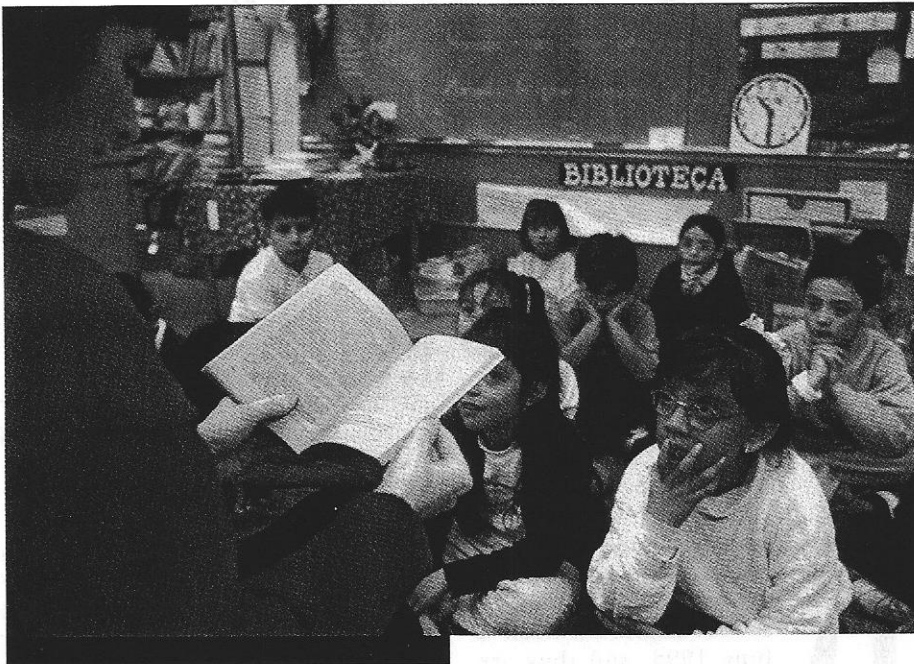
Mendoza launched her one-woman campaign in 1968, when, as a parent, she went to a fourth-grade bilingual classroom and was shocked to find students who couldn't read English. In 1974, she sued the Tucson Unified School District, asserting that students in bilingual classes were being discriminated against by not being taught English. The suit led to a statute requiring the district to give parents a choice about placing their children in bilingual classes. Not enough, says Mendoza; all Arizona school districts should ban bilingual education.

Mendoza had almost given up any hope of success. Then, last year, Proposition 227 passed in California. So she called Ron K. Unz, the wealthy California entrepreneur who spearheaded the 227 effort. She also contacted several Arizona state legislators, and held a forum to spread the English-only gospel. Mendoza hoped the California test scores would give her more ammunition in her push toward 2000. Now, she feels that her wish has been granted. "Right away you can tell these children are scoring way above [last year's scores]," she said. "If they did not understand the English instruction, their test scores would have been worse."

Even bilingual proponents fear that test gains in California, particularly among children who are not native English speakers, will fuel anti-bilingual pressures around the country, especially in Colorado, New York, and Massachusetts, and in cities such as Houston, all of which have growing Hispanic populations. "There's going to be, and there already is . . . a temptation to say, 'Look at California,'" said Jaime A. Zapata, a spokesman for the National Association for Bilingual Education, in Washington.

Recent polls point to strong public sentiment in favor of English-only education. Last year Unz commissioned the polling firm Zogby International, of Utica, N.Y., to take the country's pulse on the issue of bilingual education and found that a Proposition 227-like law would win nationally, 77 percent to 19 percent. Pollsters at Arizona Opinion in Tucson found support among 72 percent of voters in that state.

But, in truth, it is hard to draw too many absolute conclusions from California's new scores on the Stanford 9 test, which is given, in English, to students in grades 2 to 11. In this, the second year that students statewide have taken the test, average reading scores are up from a 39.6 percentile last year to a 42.2 percentile this year for students in grades 2 to 6. For children not fluent in English, the scores are up from a



BETTER RESULTS: Educators debate whether the repeal of bilingual education, or other school reforms, such as smaller classes and more phonics, are responsible for improved student performance.

15.6 percentile to an 18.4 percentile. A score of 50 is the national mean out of a maximum of 99 points.

California's top school official, Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin, said that Proposition 227 could not be called an "off-the-charts winner" because children who speak English at home, as well as those who don't, both posted similar point gains. Students with limited English proficiency improved their reading scores by 2.8 percentile points, on average, whereas scores for all students jumped 2.6 percentile points.

She also noted that in the past couple of years, California had instituted a variety of other school reforms that may have helped boost scores, including smaller class size and greater use of phonics.

Proponents of bilingual education say it is impossible to know so soon what caused the rise. Some attribute it to the likelihood that students have gotten used to the annual test. According to researchers, students given a new test often improve in the first few years as they become accustomed to it.

Unz, however, sees success in the scores. He says a three- or four-point gain in percentile terms may not seem like much to students doing well, but to non-English-speaking students in lower grades who last year may have scored in the 15th percentile, a jump to the 18th or 20th percentile means a 20 percent or 30 percent improvement. Viewed from that standpoint, students with little English proficiency improved, on average, by 18 percent across

the state, whereas all students showed only a 7 percent improvement, Unz said.

And, he added, the point is that the pro-bilingual folks predicted doom and gloom, and it did not happen. "They claimed scores would plummet [after 227]; instead immigrant test scores are up 20 percent from last year," Unz said. "If test scores had gone down 20 percent, they would have said, 'That's proof 227 was a disaster.'" Unz also noted that not all schools fully implemented the proposition last year, and many districts and parents chose to exercise waivers, which kept students in bilingual classes this year. In districts that embraced 227 wholeheartedly, however, the test-score improvements were more dramatic, he said.

In Oceanside, for example, a community north of San Diego that completely ended bilingual classes, students who don't speak English at home gained 43 percent in reading scores, climbing from an 8.8 percentile to a 12.6 percentile, compared with all students in the district, whose scores rose 16 percent in reading, from an average percentile score of 35.4 to 41. Unz contrasts these gains with those of the San Jose Unified School District, which retained bilingual classes. In San Jose, percentile scores rose from 43.0 to 44.4 for all students, and from 15.0 to 15.6 for non-English speakers, gains of only 3 percent and 4 percent, respectively.

Joseph Farley, the principal at Mission Elementary School in Oceanside last year and now a district-level administrator, did an about-face on 227 when the scores came in. Farley, who supported bilingual education for 20 years, worried that his students, half of whom had limited English and 80 percent of whom were from low-income households, would drown when immersed

in English. Instead of sinking, the students learned to swim. At Mission Elementary, children with limited English improved 111 percent in reading, from a 7.0 percentile to a 14.8 percentile, compared with a 66 percent increase among all children, from a 15.2 percentile to a 25.2 percentile.

Children at Mission who spoke no English last fall left in June speaking English to one another on the playground, Farley said. "The obvious interpretation is that the children are learning English more rapidly" in an English-only environment, he said.

Testimonials such as Farley's, perhaps more than the scores themselves, can bolster the case against bilingualism in other states. But pro-bilingual forces will not be standing still.

Taking a page from abortion-rights groups, pro-bilingual groups may begin framing the issue as one of choice. "The most important message is that this proposition is removing parental options," said Alejandra Sotomayor, a middle-school curriculum specialist for Tucson Unified and president of the Tucson Association for Bilingual Education. Sotomayor promises to launch a large education campaign in Arizona to counter whatever Maria Mendoza and her anti-bilingual camp can organize. And choice may also be the new battle cry in California to preserve the remaining bilingual programs.

"We need to give accurate information to parents so they can make decisions about the education of their children," said Silvina Rubinstein, executive director of the California Association for Bilingual Education. "If what they want is for their children to be in good bilingual programs, they can pursue that route. If they make the choice they don't want their children in bilingual education, that's fine, too."

Zapata, in Washington, said bilingualism has to be recast as "the education of the future," producing American students who can begin as speakers of Spanish, English, or other languages but emerge from high school fluent in two tongues.

Nationally, fights over bilingual education may be muted because of the upcoming presidential campaign, in which the leading contenders, Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush, will both be trying to woo Hispanic voters.

Gore has been largely supportive of bilingual education. Bush is pushing what he calls "English-plus"—allowing bilingual education, so long as test scores show that children are also progressing in English.

But the states are likely to remain the battleground for bilingualism. A new round of California test scores is due out next summer. If these scores also rise, that battleground will favor the English-only cause even more. ■

Los Angeles Times

FRONT PAGE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 1999

English-Only Teaching Is a Surprise Hit

By LOUIS SAHAGUN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

At elementary schools scattered across Los Angeles, teachers are delivering promising reports that their students are learning English more quickly than anticipated six months after the implementation of the anti-bilingual education law, Proposition 227.

"I honestly didn't expect to see them achieve as well as they are doing," said Jose Posada, bilingual education coordinator at Los Angeles Elementary School in Koreatown.

"Many of us who believed in the bilingual education program were scared about the unknowns," he said. "Now we're saying, 'Well, maybe it's not so bad. Maybe it's time we start talking about the positives.'"

In interviews at 13 Los Angeles Unified School District campuses with large immigrant populations, primary grade teachers said their students are absorbing verbal English at a surprising pace. Some children are even taking the next step and learning to read and write in English.

Still, many of these teachers and other educators question whether most of the youngsters have acquired the language skills necessary to comprehend math, reading or history lessons in English. Some suggest that students are imitating, or parroting, their English-speaking teachers rather than thinking in the language.

Many worry that the children are falling behind in their studies as they struggle with a new language and that they will not be ready to enter mainstream English classes within one year, as Proposition 227 calls for.

The depth of their English skills will become clearer after

Please see ENGLISH, A12

ENGLISH

Continued from A1

they take the Stanford 9 standardized tests in the spring.

The test results, coupled with new state guidelines for rating English language development, will help schools determine at year's end which students should be placed in mainstream classes and which should remain in English immersion another year. The second-year option is allowed by Proposition 227.

In the meantime, educators are expressing cautious optimism that if students can say it, they get it.

"We're off to a good start," said Maria Ochoa, district administrator for language acquisition. "Things are running smoothly. By the end of the year we'll have a better grasp of how well these students are doing."

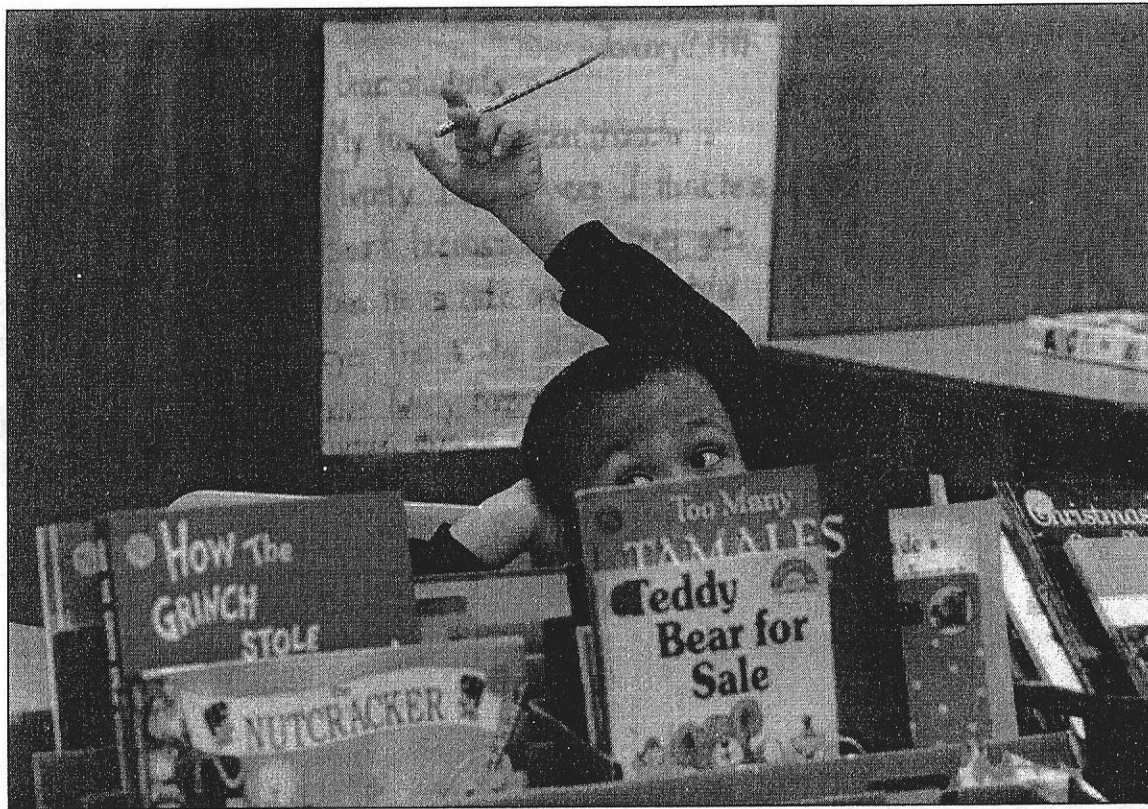
Kris Gutierrez, associate professor of education at UCLA and a specialist in culture and learning in urban schools, agreed—to a point.

"Imitation can be one of the first stages of learning, if it is part of a larger strategy," she said. "But the development of oral language skills doesn't tell us much about comprehension."

Gutierrez said she also has heard positive reports from teachers, but still harbors some concerns.

"I wish [the teachers] were saying, 'Juan is reading four books he wasn't reading before,' or that their kids were taking more books home," she said. "If they were really getting turned on by English, they'd be checking out books and at least pretending to read them."

Many teachers lament having to water down core subjects such as science and social studies for students who are just beginning to read and write in English. On the other hand, they are relieved that youngsters who spoke little or no English only months ago are generally at ease, even enthu-



GENARO MOLENA/Los Angeles Times

Second grader Jamie Rivera raises his hand during class at Dana Elementary School.

siastic about their post-Proposition 227 reading and writing assignments.

"I expected that their self-esteem would be affected, and that they would feel inhibited, give up easily," said Yomy Duran, a second-grade teacher at Dana Elementary School southeast of downtown. "Instead, they are excited, motivated."

"One-fourth of my class can write. Yes, there are grammatical errors, but, hey, you read it," she added. "My biggest fear is whether I'm doing enough for them. Can I do more? But the fear of them standing still academically is gone."

Take her students' responses to a recent question of the day: "What do birds eat?"

Twenty hands shot up. "They eat worms," one youngster said in

English. "Some birds eat other small animals," added a classmate.

Later, during a review of the lesson, which included repetitive reading from a book about birds reinforced with simple sentences written on the blackboard, Duran again asked, "What do birds eat?"

Twenty voices yelled in unison, "They eat worms!"

"Is that all they eat?" Duran asked.

"Nooooo! Some birds eat small animals," they said.

Duran was delighted that they understood her question and answered properly. But nagging at her was the fact that none of them had used phrases such as "little animals" or "tiny animals" instead of the "small animals" she had written on the blackboard. She worried that the students were just mimicking her.

"The big question is whether they can transfer the information in another situation," she said.

A few miles away, at First Street Elementary School, Irma Rodriguez cooed that her daughters, a kindergartner and a third-grader, "are learning to speak, which is what I always wanted. We're all happy."

On the first day at school after a three-week break, her daughter's kindergarten teachers, Sofia DeLatorre and Maria Barajas, also were upbeat. But then, too, they regretted having to teach their English learners at a slower pace than they would have liked.

"They are picking up more English, but it's social English—I still have to present new concepts in Spanish," Barajas said.

"No matter how hard I try, we won't have as many readers in our

class as we did last year, when we were all speaking only in their primary language," she said.

Until this year, most of First Street School's 800 students learned to read and write in Spanish in kindergarten through third grade, with English phased in later. Since Proposition 227 was implemented last summer, children with limited English skills have been placed in yearlong English immersion programs. In Los Angeles Unified, as in many other school districts, the children continue to receive varying amounts of assistance in their primary language.

At the start of the school year, First Street Principal Judy Leff, a firm supporter of bilingual education, led a series of parent meetings aimed at ensuring that residents understood their options, including their right to seek a waiver to continue traditional bilingual instruction.

By the time classes began in September, Leff said, fewer than 20 waivers had been requested. Instead, she said, the vast majority of parents chose to enroll their children in a structured English immersion program.

Officials at Charles W. Barrett Elementary School in South-Central Los Angeles also report encouraging progress.

"We still don't have the total picture. But in my opinion, our students are learning academic English faster than anticipated," said bilingual education coordinator Jesus Romero.

"How deep is the progress? It may take years to know for sure," he said.

Sylvia Harris, a first-grade teacher at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School in South-Central, asks the same question.

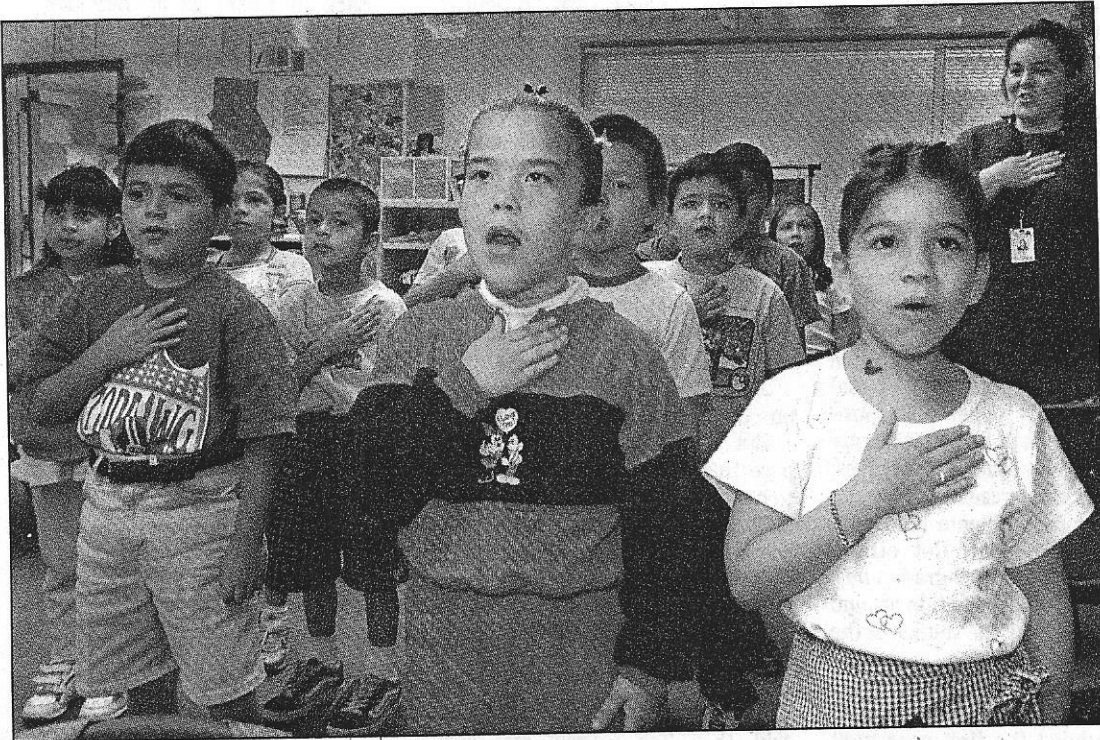
"The first day of class, their eyes were wide open with fear, and I kept thinking to myself, 'We'll get through this thing together,'" she recalled. "Now, I still have concerns. But the kids are doing very well. Parents are relaxed. We're all very happy campers."

Los Angeles Times

SECTION

B

TUESDAY, JUNE 22, 1999



Photos by GLENN KOENIG / Los Angeles Times

Zoe Garcia's class begins the day with the Pledge of Allegiance in English. Below, Garcia helps Cristina Garcia.

A Year of Promise, Progress

■ Anaheim teacher Zoe Garcia still supports bilingual education, but she's also seen impressive successes with English immersion.

By LISA RICHARDSON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

At first glance—or at first listen—it is difficult to tell that only a few months ago most of the first-graders in Zoe Garcia's class at Thomas Jefferson Elementary spoke very little English.

ROOM 28
A Class Strives to Learn English

■ Last in an occasional series

Until last year, most would automatically have been placed in a bilingual class where the bulk of subject matter was taught in Spanish. But with the

passage of Proposition 227, the anti-bilingual education initiative, the Anaheim children went straight to English-only lessons.

How did they fare? The answer is complicated. In ways, they've been spectacular, rattling away easily in a language few felt comfortable with 10 months ago. But it's difficult for Garcia to gauge how much subject matter they



have understood.

On the surface, it seems that the experiment has been fruitful. They start the school day in Room 28 with a blitz of English—reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and belting out "It's a Grand Old Flag."

Please see IMMERSION, B5

IMMERSION: Results Look Good

Continued from B1

The English goes on, almost without break. The children whisper to each other in English, obey Garcia's rapid-fire English instructions, joke in English and, now and then, blurt out some fact they urgently want their teacher to know:

"Mrs. Garcia, my brother has a turtle and it stinks sometimes!"

"Mrs. Garcia! I'm going to go see my grandmother on Saturday!"

They also have a knack for first-grade humor. How old is Mrs. Garcia?

Jose Moreno, 7, gave her a pucky grin: "She's 100."

"I was really amazed at how well it went this year," Garcia said. "I was not looking forward to it at all, but I think they've done really well. Everyone has made progress."

Garcia, who was born in Cuba and learned English in bilingual classes, strongly opposed Proposition 227. She has been pleasantly surprised by her students' progress, but she has some reservations.

Some of her students read with ease and enjoyment. But others, two weeks before first grade ends, sit in a horseshoe formation around Garcia and review the sounds of the alphabet.

Last Tuesday, one group practiced "ail" words. Pail. Rail. Flail. They sounded the first consonant in the word, then linked to the two vowels in the middle then added the final "l" sound.

"When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking," Garcia said, explaining the long "a" sound of the vowels in the middle.

At Jefferson, 94% of the 784 students are Latino, and two-thirds speak better Spanish than English. Many of Garcia's students did not attend kindergarten and arrived at Jefferson without knowing the alphabet.

So she began the year teaching the ABCs and then converting the letters to a sound. The sounds link and become words, but even when formed the words often had no meaning for the children.

"P-a-r-ents" she sounded out with a child who still looked blankly at the final product. "*Tu mama y papa* are your parents. *Tus padres*," Garcia translated.

She still believes that students learn English better by first learning to read in their primary language, because they have a vocabulary to translate and understand content better.

Still, the new English-only sys-

tem has its merits, she concedes. Students who were clearly baffled by English earlier in the year are more confident of their abilities. If they still misspell words and mispronounce letters, they are closer to being right than wrong.

"Even if they get the first part of the word right, then I'll give them credit for that," Garcia said. She holds up a paper with "beaches" spelled "beheses" and "buxes" for "boxes." Earlier in the year the child would have simply turned in a blank paper, she said.

At the beginning of the school year, a Spanish-speaking instructional aide worked part-time in the classroom, helping some students with their English skills. By the end of the year, all of her attention is focused on Cristina Garcia, 7, who arrived from Tijuana in April and speaks no English.

And that's the good news: No one else seems to need the help.

But the teacher does not compare this year's English-only class to her previous bilingual ones.

"It's all so different there's really no point," Garcia said.

Officials at several other schools in the county say they have seen good results with English immersion.

At Topaz Elementary School in Fullerton, Principal Dorie Staack said that like Garcia, she also refrains from comparing the two systems of instruction. But even when the school had traditional bilingual classes it emphasized English instruction, she said.

Topaz has four levels of English for students of varying fluency, and the majority of the 1,000 children at the school are showing significant progress, she said.

"We don't look back," Staack said. "Voters gave a choice to our parents, and I have asked our staff to remain neutral. Because of the quality of our staff, we have done a very fine program."

At O.A. Peters Elementary School in Garden Grove, one of the district's few schools that previously had a strong bilingual program, Principal Gary Lewis said English immersion is producing excellent results.

At first Lewis had planned to place the new English learners in a second year of transition classes, where they get extra help in Spanish. But the children have done so well that the teachers have talked him out of it.

"They thought the children had progressed beautifully and are

ready for full integration," Lewis said.

First-grade teacher Christina Husk said she was pessimistic about the switch from bilingual education to immersion, but she found the results good.

"When appropriately done, bilingual education did work," Husk said. "But this works too."

Back in Room 28 at Jefferson Elementary, Frank Avila, 7, has figured out that whether he is telling a story or practicing grammar, reading the week's vocabulary or playing with flashcards, there is no escape from English.

"I don't like reading," he announced. "It's all *words*!"

Zoe Garcia feigns horror. "Oh no! Don't tell me that. Reading is my favorite thing to do, and I want you to love it too."

Los Angeles Times

SECTION

B

ORANGE COUNTY

TUESDAY

FEBRUARY 16, 1999

One-Language Rule Produces Winners

■ **Schools:** Under the new classroom regimen, many Orange County children achieve at a rate that surprises even educators.

By LIZ SEYMOUR
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The boy with the huge brown eyes knew so little English when he started first grade last August that the school lumped him with the lowest achievers. He came from a poor, uneducated family that spoke only Spanish to a public school where new laws forbade bilingual teaching.

Fast forward six months: Rigo Ureño is one of the top three students in his English-speaking classroom in Anaheim. His favorite subjects are reading and writing; his favorite book is the classic fairy tale "Jack and the Beanstalk." He plows through vocabulary flashcards, recognizing words far quicker than anyone else inside Room 28 at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School.

The now bilingual 6-year-old is emphatic about which language he prefers, saying at least three times: "I like English."

Backers of bilingual education had feared children like Rigo would suffer without Spanish in school. But midway through the first school year under the state's English-immersion law, teachers say there are Rigos at elementary schools across Orange County. Children are absorbing English at such a rapid rate that in many places it is the language of choice on the playground, at the lunch table and in line for the bus.

In addition to being bright, Rigo has a powerful force on his side: a mother who, despite her lack of English skills and education, makes schoolwork a priority. She sits with him while he does his homework. She reads him a book each night in Spanish; she has him read one to

ROOM 28:

A Class Strives to Learn English

■ Second in an occasional series

her in English.

Educators warn that not all children have such support and that it is far too early for fans of Proposition 227, the anti-bilingual education initiative, to exult.

"It is very much more complex than that," said Linda Sheehan, principal at Jefferson Elementary, where close to 70% of students weren't fluent in English when they started the school year. Young children often acquire a second language with ease, she said, but fare poorly in reading comprehension and other academic subjects when they reach higher grades.

"It's too soon to know how much they're learning," Sheehan said. "Every child is unique and has a different environment at home."

Still, educators across the county say that so far, the progress is promising. In Orange County alone, an estimated 138,000 students—or 25%—lack English fluency, higher than the statewide rate of 19%.

"Most of us felt that it would take longer" for students to learn English, said Gail Reed, director of the English+ program for the La Habra City School District, where 39% of the students have limited English skills. "Even some of us that have been really strong, strong advocates of bilingual education are pleasantly surprised."

Students in the Ocean View School District, where 19% of students lack Eng-

Please see ENGLISH, B7

ENGLISH: Learning Trend

Continued from B1

lish fluency, are now speaking the language on the playground and when they line up in the halls.

"They are becoming more comfortable with English, especially the younger ones," said Karen Colby, the district's director of curriculum and instruction.

"Things are going really well here," said Dorie Staack, principal at Fullerton's Topaz Elementary School, where 78% of students are not fluent in English. "I'm not surprised. But I'm not convinced they're all doing well."

Reed agreed: "They have the basics in English, but they don't have the cognitive and academic skills."

Some parents still prefer the bilingual path. In a few districts, large numbers of parents have signed waivers so their children could be taught in traditional bilingual classrooms. An estimated 2,037 waivers were filed in Santa Ana Unified and more than 1,000 in Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified. But in the Anaheim City School District, which includes Jefferson School, only 10 have been sent in.

Rigo's teacher, Zoe Garcia, who learned to read in bilingual classrooms in Miami, also isn't convinced that English classrooms are a better setup for Spanish-speaking children.

She always speaks English in Room 28, though most of her students are not fluent. They read stories and write three sentences in English, but about six of the 20 children still don't know the alphabet. And no one, she said, matches Rigo's progress.

"The problem with learning language is that you understand it more than you can speak it," said Garcia, who was born in Cuba. "He understands me, I know, because when I give instructions, he knows what to do. But he has trouble conveying it to me."

If reading and writing were

'The problem with learning language is that you understand it more than you can speak it.'

ZOE GARCIA
Teacher, Room 28,
Jefferson Elementary School, Anaheim

taught in Spanish, "he'd be even better," she said.

Juan Ureño and his wife, Maria, credit their son's achievements to his teacher and declined to discuss whether English-only instruction had anything to do with it, saying only: "We are happy that he speaks Spanish and English."

But clearly the parents play a major role here.

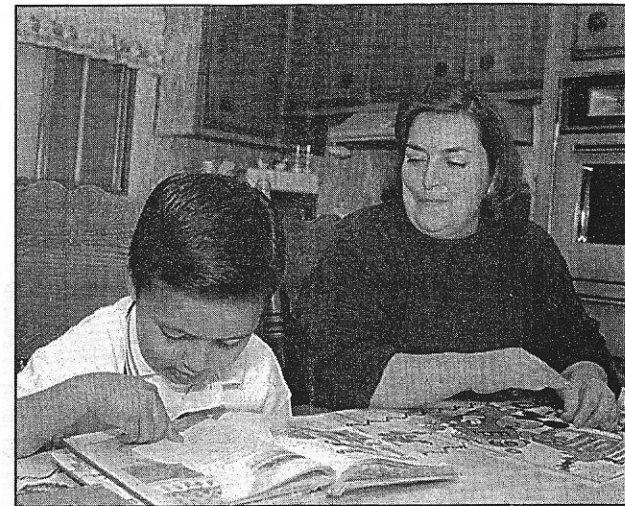
Every night after dinner and a bath, Rigo sits down to complete his homework at the kitchen table in the family's mobile home. His mother is by his side.

Although she cannot read his spelling words, Maria Ureño knows if Rigo writes them correctly by comparing his copy with the teacher's handout. The language barrier also doesn't stop her from helping with math problems in addition and subtraction.

Before his 9 p.m. bedtime, she reads him a book in Spanish; then he reads one aloud in English. She asks him to explain the plot so she is assured that he isn't just recognizing words but understands what they mean.

The Ureños are determined to instill a love of learning in their youngest child. In part, it is because they believe they failed to do so in their older children, now 19 and 20.

"When we had the other kids, we were younger," Juan Ureño, 41, said in Spanish. "We weren't able to spend as much time with them. We looked at our time differently."



ALEX GARCIA / Los Angeles Times

Though she speaks no English, Maria Ureño makes sure her son Rigo does his homework. He must read to her in English every night.

"I see that [Rigo] is very much interested in his books," said Maria Ureño, 40, also speaking in her native tongue. "Now I have more experience in raising a child and I know that learning starts from the beginning."

Rigo is the only student in his class who always wears the school's optional uniform—a white shirt and blue pants.

"We believe that inculcates in the child a respect for learning and for school," Juan Ureño said. "We

think it's a good thing because in the future he'll always present himself well."

Juan Ureño, who works for a roofing company in Anaheim, is the first to admit that his wife spends more time with Rigo than he does because she doesn't work outside the home. But even if Juan is exhausted at the end of a tough day, he won't deny his son the chance to read aloud to him.

"I like the sound of his voice," the father said.

ALEX GARCIA / Los Angeles Times

Six months into state-mandated instruction to wean him from Spanish as his only tongue, Rigo Ureño, left, declares, "I like English." Once ranked low, he now excels.

T H E O R A N G E C O U N T Y Register

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1999

FRONT PAGE

True-blue believers now in English-only schools

EDUCATION: Prop. 227 gets positive early reviews, but long-term tests lie ahead.

By **JOHN GITTELSON**
and **ELIZABETH CHEY**
The Orange County Register

First-graders in Eliana Escobar's class can add and subtract, recite the alphabet, read, write and speak — in English.

"I was afraid they wouldn't understand," said Escobar, a teacher of 20 native Spanish speakers at R.H. Dana Elementary School in Dana Point. "They may not have as much vocabulary as English-only students. But what we teach them, they learn."

Escobar used to believe that teaching her pupils in Spanish worked better than English immersion. But halfway through the first school year after Proposition 227, the voter-approved initiative requiring students to be taught in English, her beliefs

Focus on Education IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Several Orange County teachers and parents offer their perspectives on English-only training. And one student's progress is outlined. **News 10**

have changed.

Like some skeptics, she has been converted to a believer in the new law.

"They're little sponges," Escobar said of her students. "They just absorb everything."

But while some minds have changed in favor of 227, others still predict harmful long-term consequences.

"The fear is that the kids learning words like 'cat' and 'hat' won't learn the thinking skills to understand science," said Ana-Maria Greene, a bilingual resource teacher at Lincoln Elementary in Anaheim. "They

Please see **227 Page 10**

227: Classes taught only in English are doing the job

FROM 1

have to learn more than English, and we won't know that until they are challenged in third or fourth grade."

Orange County Register reporters interviewed students, parents, teachers, principals and administrators in Anaheim, Brea, Dana Point, Irvine, La Habra, Lake Forest, Orange, Placentia, San Juan Capistrano, Santa Ana, Tustin and Westminster for a sampling of midyear impressions of Prop. 227.

For now, impressions are the only gauge of the law. The first objective measure comes this spring, when schools report how many students are redesignated from limited English to fluent English.

Another yardstick will be the Stanford 9 tests, required of all students in grades 2-11, regardless of their English skills.

"The measure is standardized tests at the end of the year," said

Gloria Matta Tuchman, a Santa Ana teacher who co-wrote the initiative. "And if they're not being taught in English, how are they going to pass the test?"

Officials on both sides of the issue cited common problems:

▶ A lack of English-language teaching materials at some schools.

▶ Difficulty communicating with parents who don't speak English.

▶ The threat of mass retentions for limited-English students who are being tested in English.

▶ Concerns that many — if not most — students will need more than one year in sheltered English-immersion classes recommended under 227.

Another common theme is the lack of impact from Prop. 227 in Orange County, where only 12 percent of 130,000 limited-English students were taught in Spanish last year.

The Garden Grove, Magnolia, Orange, Savannah, Tustin and Westminster school districts received state waivers from bilingual requirements years ago, among the first in California.

Meanwhile, at schools in Santa Ana and Placentia, parents received waivers so their children could continue studying in Spanish. One example is Rio Vista Elementary in Anaheim, where

half of the 715 limited-English students are learning in Spanish. "I'd say 227 gave parents a choice," Principal Kjell Taylor said. "Parents who wanted immersion got it. Parents who wanted bilingual got it."

Tracking bilingual classes

The bilingual education battle ended at the ballot box in June, when California voters backed Proposition 227, the law requiring English learners to be taught in English.

Now come the big questions: How well are children learning English and how is the law being applied in the classroom?

The Orange County Register is chronicling the law's effects during the 1998-99 school year.

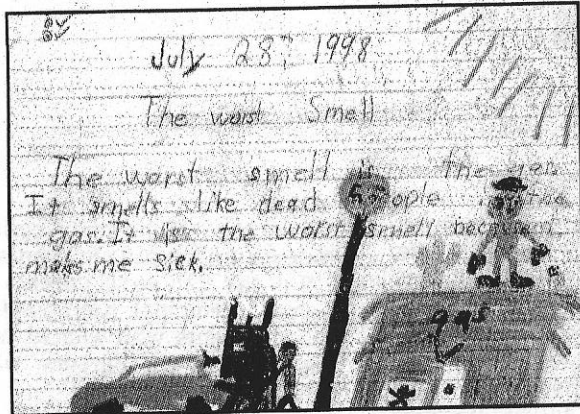
Future stories include:

- ▶ How are schools helping parents learn English?
- ▶ Are students becoming fluent in English faster?
- ▶ What is happening to test scores?
- ▶ How are schools helping limited-English students who have fallen behind?

To offer your comments or suggest topics for future coverage, call Register Infoline at (714) 550-4636, category 7251.

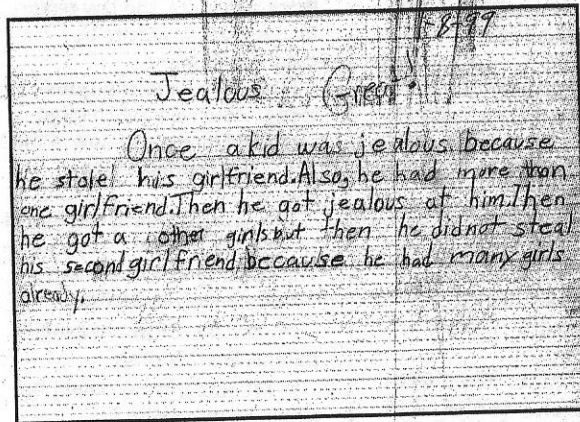
ONE STUDENT'S PROGRESS

BEFORE



IN JULY: In work Kevin Sanchez did at the beginning of his school year, he was writing simple sentences and needed help conjugating verbs.

AFTER



EARLY JANUARY: Kevin Sanchez's ideas flow freely. He's aware of verb tenses and creates complex sentences.

Third-grader Kevin Sanchez recites a passage from a third-grade English-reading textbook with ease.

Then, the former bilingual student hits an unfamiliar word: "tusks." Nothing comes to mind, not a word in Spanish, not an image.

"Do you know what a t-u-s-k is?" asks his teacher Chris Damore, sounding out the word.

Damore leads Kevin in a series of questions asking him to locate the feet, head, ears, tail, trunk, then finally the tusks on an elephant drawing in the book.

Kevin beams. Another hurdle crossed. A new word to toss around on the playground.

Kevin is in his first year of English after starting in bilingual education since kindergarten. He is still learning new words. Feeling out the nuances of English, which are sometimes at odds with Spanish, which he speaks at home.

He has learned to dot the end of his sentences with a period. Show pauses in his thoughts with



KEVIN SANCHEZ

commas. Put his thoughts in sequential order. Reflect and project between past and present with changes in grammar — all in English.

"The words had weird sounds," Kevin said, remembering his initial discomfort with English just six months ago. "At first, I sounded it out, and it sounded funny. But I practice a lot with my sister."

Damore, Kevin's teacher at Martin Elementary in Santa Ana, sees growth in his reading speed, vocabulary and grammar. Damore notes that Kevin, like his other students moving from Spanish to English, stumbles on strange, new vocabulary like "tusks" or "bather" but often finds courage to sound it out.

"This year I've learned more stuff," Kevin said. "I'm learning how to write in English."

The
Proposition 227
English for the Children
Enforcement Project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OCTOBER 22, 1998
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Bilingual Education Support Running at Under 4% Among Immigrant Parents in Los Angeles and Orange Counties

Los Angeles---Five months after the passage of Proposition 227, only about 4%---or 12,000---of the parents of limited-English children in the huge Los Angeles Unified School District have applied for waivers to return their children to bilingual classes.

LAUSD is the school district containing the nation's largest concentration of limited-English students, and has been among the earliest and strongest supporters of bilingual teaching methods. Now despite a major organized effort by bilingual teachers to encourage parents to apply for exemption waivers, some 96% have failed to do so, indicating little apparent support for traditional bilingual programs.

Long Beach Unified, the second largest school district in LA County, has received virtually no waiver requests at all. This pattern continues in Orange County, which contains California's second largest concentration of limited-English students, some 150,000. There, waiver requests are running at just 2%. However, several smaller districts in other areas of the state have generated much higher levels of parental waiver requests.

Prop. 227 Chairman Ron Unz expressed considerable satisfaction with these results. "Despite a massive, organized effort by the supporters of bilingual education to maintain their failed program in Southern California, immigrant parents have been voting with their feet for English. Contrary to the falsehoods of our opponents, Prop. 227 was never intended to end all bilingual programs, just the 98% or so which didn't work. Now within months of the election, we've seen 90% of LA's bilingual programs vanish, and that's a very encouraging start."

However, Unz cautioned that LA's bilingual education industry may try other avenues of resistance. "Since they haven't had much luck persuading parents to apply for bilingual programs, there's a lot of evidence that they're trying to force-feed them bilingual education under another name. We're hoping to put a stop to such blatant consumer fraud in education, which is completely illegal under Prop. 227."

English for the Children—Proposition 227

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Los Angeles Times

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With Gestures, but Not Chaos, Prop. 227 Begins

■ **Education:** L.A. teachers improvise on first day of English-only instruction, and students seem to catch on.

The post-bilingual age began in Los Angeles schools Monday with uncertainty, improvisation and a good many hand gestures—but seemingly none of the chaos predicted by apprehensive educators.

To be sure, there were glazed looks of incomprehension and worry in some classrooms as teachers and students at 47 year-round elementary schools started a new semester, making them among

This story was reported by Times staff writers Nick Anderson, Duke Helfand, Louis Sahagun and Doug Smith, and written by Bettina Boxall.

the first in the state to return to class under Proposition 227, the June initiative that essentially eliminated bilingual education in California's public schools.

But the morning went surprisingly smoothly at seven schools visited by Times reporters. There was no flood of requests for waivers to dodge the English-immersion instruction that is now the state mandate. There was no defiant flouting of the initiative.

Instead, teachers, parents and students all seemed in a mood to try to do what they what they are now expected to do, however difficult—or even distasteful—it might be for them. And many of the youngsters had little difficulty following their teachers' English.

At Van Nuys Elementary, one could hear only a sprinkling of Spanish among the students who returned Monday, as the language all but disappeared from many classrooms. Youngsters who once spent their days reading and writing Spanish were instead reciting the alphabet and greeting one another in English.

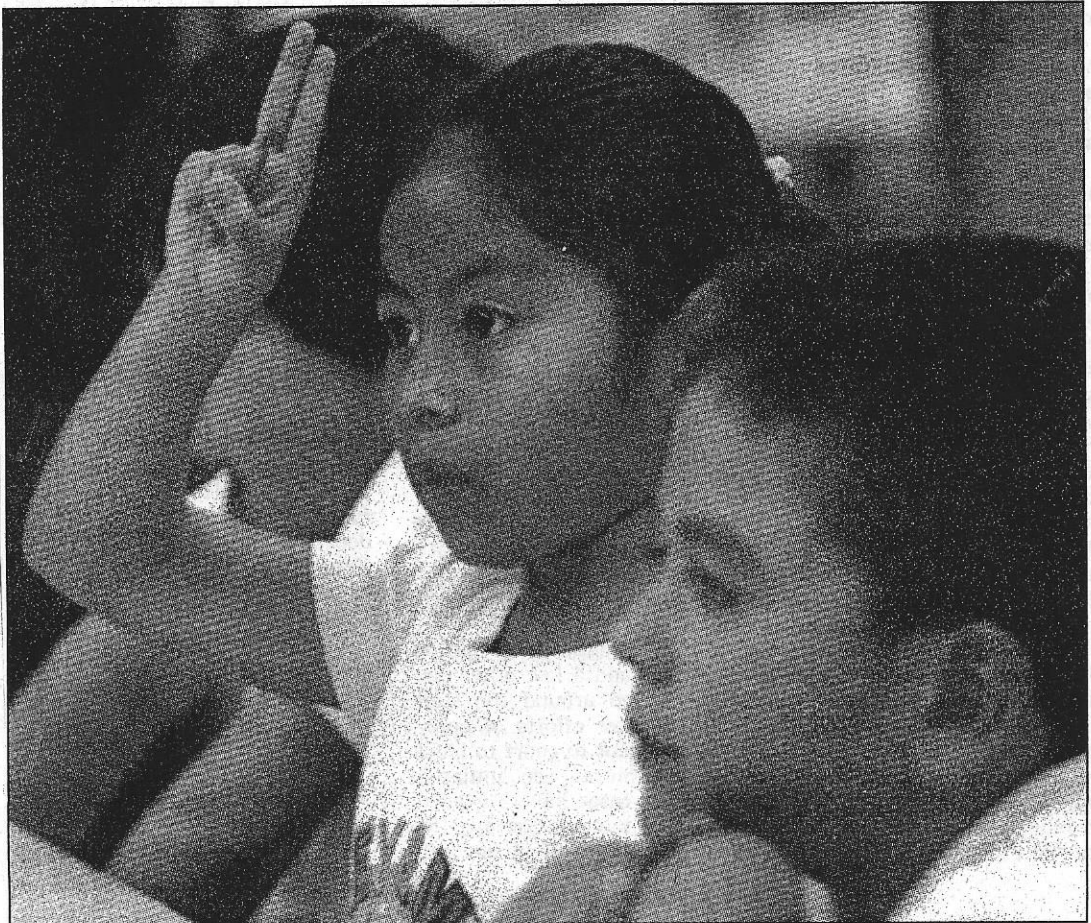
Instructors who had spent years teaching in Spanish reminded

themselves to speak English, even as some said they preferred the bilingual approach.

The majority of Van Nuys classes offered virtually no help in Spanish except for bilingual aides who gave occasional tips to students. Teachers tried hard to make their lessons clear by using gestures—one pointed to the floor when she asked the class to sit down. The teachers spoke slowly and clearly and frequently repeated words for the benefit of their students.

When second-grade teacher Beth Shwarz told her pupils to write their names at the bottom of their personal journals, she repeated the last two words of her

Please see PROP. 227, A14



BOB CHAMBERLIN / Los Angeles Times

Mariana Quintero-Uraga signals her teacher to translate a point into Spanish at San Pedro Street Elementary.

PROP. 227: Gestures but Not Chaos on 1st Day

Continued from A1

instructions in slow motion: "T-H-E-B-O-T-T-O-M."

At one point, she emphasized, "Please, if you have questions, ask me," adding in Spanish, "*Por favor, si tienen preguntas, preguntame.*"

No Textbooks or Lesson Plans

While they improvised their way through the first morning, many teachers wondered how they would fare in the coming days without a formal lesson plan for teaching English—it won't be ready for another three weeks—or the necessary English-language textbooks, which won't even be ordered for another month.

"I said to my family that I can get through the first day and probably the next few days," said first-grade teacher Rosario Martin at Christopher Dena Elementary in East Los Angeles. "My greatest concern is the curriculum. As we see it right now there's no real curriculum."

Across the hall, Eleanor Ciriza said some of her second-graders appeared worried about the class the moment they stepped through the door.

"For the kids especially, it's frightening," she said. "I had two this morning who cried. They're not really sure what this whole law means and they feel a little threatened."

At San Pedro Street Elementary in the downtown garment district, Beatrice Estrada, a brand new teacher in her first day on the job, issued a hard rule in Spanish to her combination second- and third-grade class: "If you don't understand what I'm saying, please raise two fingers over your head. Then I will explain to you in Spanish."

After telling the students in English that they would be allowed to swim in the school's pool after lunch each day if they had written parental permission, she inquired in Spanish, "How many did not understand what I just said?"

Nine of the 14 children raised their fingers high, while the others wiggled with joy at the prospect of taking a daily dip in the pool.

The 47-year-old former school secretary was not taken aback. "When I came to this country in 1960 from Jalisco, Mexico, there was no bilingual education," she recalled. "So I know what it's like

to be thrown into an L.A. public school without English skills."

With more than 312,000 students classified as having limited English skills—nearly a quarter of the 1.4 million such students statewide—the Los Angeles Unified School District will play a pivotal role in determining whether Proposition 227's mandate for English instruction succeeds or fails.

The district has developed four instruction options that parents of limited-English students can choose from: Immerse the pupils in English; instruct them almost entirely in English with classroom aides and fellow students offering native-language help (known as Model A); teach them almost entirely in English with a certified bilingual education teacher in class to help (known as Model B); apply for a waiver to place the child in a traditional bilingual program.

Parents will not have to pick a method for another month. In the meantime, many schools seemed to be following the middle two options, teaching students primarily in English but also offering native language help.

As Martin was laying out the rules of her class, for instance, she said to her students, "*Nos tomamos turnos. You will have a turn.*"

At another point, she said "Share—Do you know what that means? *En español, decimos compartir.*"

Ron Unz Unveils Complaint Hotline

Backers of Proposition 227 let its first day of enforcement pass with little fanfare, though businessman Ron K. Unz, the oft-quoted sponsor of the initiative, announced a program to help monitor its implementation. The "English for the Children Project," will take calls from whistleblowers on a toll-free number.

Unz said the calls would be logged to help determine which schools or districts should be targeted with lawsuits for noncompliance.

The post-bilingual era began in Los Angeles and a few other districts scattered around the state despite the best efforts of opponents, who went to court to block implementation of the initiative and in some cases have vowed to defy it. As late as Friday, two federal courts ruling in separate

lawsuits filed by civil rights groups gave the initiative a green light.

Officials of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, which vehemently fought Proposition 227, said last month that they would urge as many parents as possible to apply for waivers to thwart the initiative.

It is too soon to tell if such waiver requests will come pouring in, but there was no great demand Monday. Only a handful of parents asked about them at back-to-school meetings with administrators at San Pedro Street Elementary. Some parents at the sessions did express fear, though, that their children would somehow forget how to speak Spanish. A few wanted assurances that some Spanish would be used in the classroom.

At Monte Vista Elementary in Highland Park, Sabina Cortez was concerned that she would not be able to help her child on homework that was only in English. Like several other parents, she was leaning toward putting her child in the Model B program, with limited Spanish support.

But Veronica Estrada, who said she speaks Spanish perfectly, was firm about choosing the all-English model. "I don't speak Spanish at home," she stressed.

Her older daughters are now in high school and are taking Spanish as a second language. That suits her, she said.

One of the most startling contrasts with traditional bilingual classes Monday was the near total absence of Spanish words in the teaching materials and other signs posted around the classrooms. In classes of the past, every message was written in Spanish and English.

At Hobart Boulevard Elementary in Koreatown, third-grade instructor Anita Solomon, a certified bilingual teacher, had already put up a calendar and cards identifying objects from the wall to the doorknob. The labels were all in English.

"I was astounded how many of them read my classroom rules," Solomon said. "They pick up a lot from listening."

She was concerned only about one boy who had just arrived from Tijuana and seemed intimidated.

"There was no way I was going to talk to him in English," said Solomon, who said she put her arm around the boy in the morning and

assured him she spoke Spanish and would help him.

But by the afternoon, she said, the boy was following instructions in English, mimicking others in the class.

Predictions of upheaval in classrooms failed to materialize on Monday precisely because of the role that English played under the school district's old bilingual programs, teachers said.

"I think the public's perception was that no English was being taught in bilingual programs but that's not so," said Heather Hagen-Smith, as her first-graders at Canoga Park Elementary School sang songs about shoes and buses in English to build their vocabulary.

Still, Hagen-Smith and other teachers expressed concerns about whether students with limited English abilities will be able to adequately develop learning skills in English—and whether they will get the help they need at home.

"It's a big concern. I can't tell how it's going to go," said Canoga Park kindergarten teacher Christina Cuevas. "The kids have to be taught in English, regardless of what I think."

Times staff writer Tina Nguyen and Times community news reporter Jason Takenouchi also contributed to this story.

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

After Bilingual Education

THE SUCCESS OF California's Proposition 227, which is generally described as abolishing bilingual education, in fact does something more interesting: It radically alters the basic educational assumptions about how best to move non-English-speaking students toward success in school. Not the goal—bilingual education itself was intended to get students to par in English while letting them keep up in their subject classes—just the consensus on what best achieves that end. In a resounding 60 percent victory, proponents of the change signaled their agreement that the now institutionalized means of reaching that goal should be scrapped and something new tried instead.

That the "something new" has a somewhat old-fashioned sound to it—a year of intensive English immersion for all children—does not necessarily mean that the new approach must duplicate the weaknesses of the past. Those weaknesses included the notorious sink-or-swim approach by which students simply struggled, the strong catching on, the rest falling farther and farther behind.

The question to be tested by the new programs, assuming they survive court challenge and threats of teacher resistance, is more narrowly pedagogical: Is a year of intensive English instruction enough, if not for mastery then at least for a level of comfort that will leave students ready for functioning in a regular English classroom? As a starting assumption, is fast better than slow, challenge better than coddle—especially for children, whose language-learning abilities are at their peak?

Many who have struggled to learn foreign languages will see a basic common sense in this assumption, much as voters Hispanic and non-Hispanic seem to have done, while still worrying whether the scheme would afford enough safety and flexibility to children who can't rise to the challenge. California has a strong obligation, not to mention self-interest, in educating those children too. But it's by no means obvious that the California result signals a widespread desire to abandon them. Proponents insisted that, on the contrary, they wish only to save such children from educational limbo. And that is a worthy goal.

The
Proposition 227
English for the Children
Campaign

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 5, 1998
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Despite Massive Opposition Campaign, Proposition 227 Sweeps to Landslide Victory

Overcoming huge opposition, Proposition 227, the "English for the Children" initiative, won a landslide 61% victory at the polls. The measure dismantling California's 30-year-old system of bilingual education for limited English children had consistently demonstrated widespread public appeal during its yearlong campaign, and was able to sustain that support against powerful political opposition by election day.

"We overcame enormous odds to win this victory," declared Ron Unz, the Silicon Valley entrepreneur who chaired the 227 campaign. "Our initiative was opposed by the President of the United States. It was opposed by the Chairman of the state Republican Party *and* the Chairman of the state Democratic Party. It was opposed by all four candidates for Governor, Democrat and Republican alike. It was opposed by nearly all the state's major newspapers and virtually every educational organization, large union, and establishment group. Our only strong support came from the people of California, but that was enough for victory."

In the final weeks of the campaign, Republican billionaire A. Jerrold Perenchio, owner of the Univision Spanish-language television network, provided millions of dollars in cash and free air-time to the No on 227 campaign, which overall outspent the Yes campaign by a ratio of 20 to 1 in advertising. Despite this financial mismatch Proposition 227 passed by one of the widest margins in recent history, winning a larger percentage of the vote than any contested initiative since Proposition 13 in 1978.

Election results show that the measure carried 56 of California's 58 counties. Campaign finance reports indicate that the Yes campaign spent about \$550,000 (excluding signature-gathering costs), of which some \$200,000 was spent on advertising, while the No campaign raised and spent \$4.5 million, including nearly \$4 million on advertising and voter contact. In addition, Mr. Perenchio's television network provided an estimated \$1 to 2 million in free air time for anti-227 editorials.

English for the Children—Proposition 227

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