

Research About How to Facilitate Second Language Learning

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The following is a very brief summary of the major finding from research regarding second language learning. This summary and the list on the previous page provide a framework for designing successful learning opportunities for English Learners.

1. There is a difference between social and academic language skills (Cummins, 1987; Brice-Heath, 1987).
2. Second language skills for academic learning require, on average, five or more years to develop (Ramirez, et. al., 1992; Collier, 1989; Genessee, 1989; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981).
3. Language development requires an articulated Pre-K/Grade 12 instructional framework: Speaking, Reading, Writing and Listening Skills (Krashen and Terrell, 1983; Ferguson, 1977).
4. Increased proficiency in the primary language facilitates development of second language skills (Ramirez, et. al., 1991; Swain and Lapkin, 1992).
5. Because language acquisition is facilitated when it is used purposefully and meaningfully, content instruction in a second language should reflect a continuum of instructional approaches that considers both the students' level of second language and content skills development through an integration of second language teaching and content methodology (Mohan, 1991; Bilingual Education Office, 1990; Vygotsky, 1962; Penfield and Roberts, 1958).
6. Access to the core curriculum in the English Learners' primary language allows them to catch up to their native English speaking peers in the content areas (Ramirez, 1992; Collier, 1993, 1995).
7. The instructional program must have a strong multicultural component that is infused throughout the curriculum, because learning is most effective when it builds upon the prior knowledge of a student and is perceived as relevant by the learner (Brice-Heath, 1992; Cortes, 1992; Kagan, 1992; Grant, et. al., 1995; Walsh, 1993; Darder, 1995).
8. Providing second language instruction, including primary language instruction (for English Learners), does not cost any more than the cost of

providing traditional instructional services (BW Associates, 1992; Carpenter-Huffman, P. and Samulon, M., 1981).

9. There must be effective outreach to involve ALL parents in the schooling of their children, because school success for a student is the result of both parental involvement and the quality of instructional services (Keith, 1991; Ramirez and Douglas, 1989; Fehrman, et. al., 1987).

10. As accountability is a central component of an effective program, there must be a well delineated evaluation process to assess the delivery of services and their impact on student achievement (Ramirez, 1992).

11. The most successful program for meeting the English language and content skills needs of English Learners is also the most effective program documented in helping native English speakers acquire foreign language skills (Grey, T. & Hornberger, 1982). This program is referred to as Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Education (Lindholm, 1996).

12. Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Education programs are the most promising educational programs which integrate issues of school reform with language, race and culture for all students (Ramirez, in press).

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