



**Californians Together:** A Roundtable for Quality Education

---

**Schools with Large Enrollments  
of English Learners  
and Substantial Bilingual Instruction  
are Effective in Teaching English**

**Sponsored by the Diane Middleton Foundation**

August 21, 2000

A review of SAT-9 data for ten elementary schools with large enrollments of English learners (ELs) and substantial bilingual instruction indicates that these programs are effective in teaching English and academics. The spring 2000 SAT-9 scores (reading and math) for these schools were compared with scores attained in three schools which have been highlighted by proponents of 1998's Proposition 227 and structured English immersion.

In all cases, the average performance of all students at the schools implementing bilingual instruction met or exceeded the performance of all students at the schools used for comparison at most grades and in both reading and mathematics. A direct comparison of the scores of English learners showed seven of the bilingual schools outperforming the comparison schools by wide margins. The purpose of this preliminary review was to document examples of bilingual schools that reach high levels of academic performance in English.

### **Methods and Sample**

A non-random sample of ten schools from seven school districts was selected based on recommendations of educators who work directly with these schools, and who were able to confirm that these schools offer substantial bilingual instruction with adequate materials and with qualified teachers for Spanish speaking English learners. The performance of these schools in reading and math on the SAT-9 from Spring 2000 was then compared with three schools that have been highlighted by proponents of Proposition 227 as good examples where school district and community preferences have limited instruction exclusively to structured English immersion. The National Percentile Rank (NPR) derived from the Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) average was used as the basis of comparison. In addition to the ten schools reviewed, two districts provided data for all students and for English learners.

There were 24 possible comparisons: three schools X two subjects X four grades [2-5] = 24. The comparisons were based on the data for all students, since most of the school enrollments consist overwhelmingly of English learners and former English learners (fluent-English proficient students). In nine of the bilingual schools complete SAT-9 data for English learners is available, and was used to provide direct comparisons with English learners in the structured English immersion schools.

### **School Results**

All of the schools providing bilingual instruction reported school-wide performance as strong or stronger than that of the schools providing only structured English immersion in at least 75 percent of the comparisons. Nine of the bilingual schools had scores that equaled or bettered the scores of the comparison schools in 21 or more of the 24 comparisons.

In seven of the nine cases where complete separate data for English learners was available, the bilingual schools met or exceeded the performance of English learners in the comparison schools in most of the comparisons. Complete English learner data is not yet available for one school. Two schools had mixed results on SAT-9, but had recently redesignated very large numbers of English learners as fluent-English proficient students (Dolland and Edmondson).

The comparison schools (San Juan, Ditmar, Ninth Street) generally tested fewer of their students (92%, 95%, 78%) than did the bilingual schools. With three exceptions, the latter tested 94 – 100%. Testing fewer students typically results in higher scores, since the lowest performing students are usually excluded. Had all schools tested over 95%, it is likely that the comparisons would have been even more favorable to the bilingual schools.

### **District Results**

In addition to the school-level data presented here, two school districts provided summary data indicating effectiveness of bilingual instruction district-wide. The Little Lake Elementary School District enrolls 1,459 English learners (28% of a total 5,132 students), and provides substantial bilingual instruction. This district met or exceeded the performance of the comparison schools in 22 of 24 comparisons. The English learners had higher scores in 11 of 24 direct comparisons with English learners.

A separate analysis of SAT-9 2000 data by the Fresno Unified School District reveals that English learners in bilingual instruction [Grades 2-6] exceeded the performance of English learners in that district enrolled in structured English immersion in all subject areas: reading, language and mathematics. In addition, from 1998 to 2000, scores for ELs in bilingual instruction grew by 19% in reading and 24% in mathematics. Scores for ELs in structured English immersion grew by only 11% in reading and 19% in mathematics.

### **Conclusions**

This review of selected schools providing bilingual instruction to a substantial portion of their English learners indicates that such schools can equal or exceed the performance in English of schools providing instruction only in English. Many other factors beyond the choice of language are crucial to school success, and extensive formal research is needed to document the best ways schools can make use of a wide variety of strategies to ensure success for all English learners.

## **APPENDIX**

The performance in the year 2000 SAT-9 in reading and mathematics of all students enrolled in grades two through five in ten schools providing bilingual instruction was compared with performance of all students enrolled in three schools providing only structured English immersion. Separate scores for English learners were available for nine schools, and were used for a direct comparison with scores of English learners in the structured English immersion schools.

Table 1

**Schools using only  
structured English immersion**

School year 1999 – 2000

<b>District</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>English learner enrollment</b>	<b>EL Percent</b>	<b>Percent of Enrollment Tested</b>
1. Capistrano USD	<b>San Juan</b>	1,107	934	84%	92%
2. Oceanside USD	<b>Ditmar</b>	635	464	73%	95%
3. LA USD	<b>Ninth Street</b>	482	377	78%	78%

Table 2  
**Schools providing substantial  
bilingual instruction**

School year 1999 – 2000

District	School	Enroll- -ment	English learner (EL) enroll- -ment	EL Percent	Percent of enroll- -ment tested	SAT-9 Reading and Math
						Number of comparisons favoring the bilingual school out of 24 total comparisons
						<b>ELs</b>
						<b>All</b>
1. ABC Unif.	<b>Niemes</b>	634	290	46%	97%	<b>* 24</b>
						24
2. Glendale	<b>Cerritos</b>	553	393	71%	96%	<b>*18</b>
						21
3. Glendale	<b>Edison</b>	1,041	712	68%	92%	<b>*19</b>
						23
4. Glendale	<b>Franklin</b>	431	234	54%	92%	<b>*20</b>
						23
5. Norwalk-La Mirada	<b>Dolland</b>	901	289	32%	97%	<b>*10</b>
						23
6. Norwalk-La Mirada	<b>Edmondson</b>	511	199	39%	90%	<b>*12</b>
						18
7. Saddleback	<b>Gates</b>	769	301	39%	99%	<b>*16</b>
						24
8. San Mateo- Foster City	<b>Fiesta Gardens</b>	428	161	38%	94%	<b>*13 / 18</b>
						24
9. Santa Barbara	<b>Peabody Charter</b>	710	298	42%	96%	<b>*16</b>
						24
10. Vista USD	<b>Vista Academy</b>	1,257	404	32%	98%	<b>**</b>
						24

\* These are direct comparisons between English learner scores at these ten schools with English learner scores at the three comparison schools. Where there were only 18 possible comparisons, the school tested fewer than 10 ELs at a grade.

\*\* At Vista Academy a substantial proportion of the English learner data was missing from CDE reports on 8-15-00, and a direct comparison of English learner scores is not yet possible.

## NOTES TO TABLE 2:

1. There are several bilingual schools with proportions of English learners smaller than those at the structured English immersion schools. In most cases the direct comparison of English learner data confirms the advantages of the bilingual schools over the comparison schools.
2. The two schools in Norwalk-La Mirada have total enrollments that are overwhelmingly Hispanic and speakers of Spanish. Dollard enrolls a total of 54% speakers of other languages and Edmondson a total of 70%. In 1999-2000 these two schools have been successful in redesignating large proportions of the former English learners as fluent-English proficient (FEP) - - 19% and 20%, respectively.
3. Scores at Vista Academy greatly favor the bilingual school, but follow-up is needed on EL scores, once the separate language proficiency data become available.
4. The vast majority of the English learners at the structured English immersion schools and at most of the ten bilingual schools are Spanish speakers. In the Glendale schools most of the Spanish speakers receive bilingual instruction within structured English immersion programs. Some receive additional primary language instruction beyond the regular school day. Speakers of Armenian receive primary language support. Spanish speakers in Cerritos, Edison, and Franklin constitute 79% , 62%, and 87% of the ELs, respectively. At Niemes, 77% of English learners speak Spanish.

## TECHNICAL NOTES:

1. This current review of data is a preliminary analysis, which must be confirmed by careful study of the separate data disaggregated by language proficiency that was released August 15<sup>th</sup> by the California Department of Education. A variety of procedures should be used, including appropriate tests of statistical significance.
2. The SAT-9 has been challenged as a test with limited reliability and validity for assessing the academic knowledge of English learners. Indeed, the national student population used to establish the norms for the SAT-9 included less than 2 percent English learners. Approximately 30 percent of California's elementary school enrollment consists of these students.
3. In 1999 Professor Kenji Hakuta and his colleagues at Stanford University reviewed many of the previous claims made by Ron Unz regarding the effectiveness of Proposition 227. Hakuta concluded that claims of the success of Proposition 227 were unwarranted. (See Prof. Hakuta's web-site for further information: [www.stanford.edu/~hakuta/SAT9](http://www.stanford.edu/~hakuta/SAT9) ).

4. This current review of data consists simply of a preliminary analysis of selected schools. It provides some encouraging results, but also serves to illustrate the difficulty in drawing any firm conclusions about the effectiveness of any single approach to educating English learners. It does, however, illustrate the potential of bilingual instruction to meet rigorous language and academic goals for substantial numbers of English learners.
  
5. Carefully-conducted research on the effectiveness of specific instructional programs is needed. A statewide evaluation of Proposition 227 programs was authorized in a 1999 bill carried by Assembly Member Mazzoni (AB 56, Education Code 33328). This study will be conducted over the next five years, and should provide useful information on representative samples of schools. It is expected that the study will control for important alternative explanations for gains in student performance, such as: class-size reduction, investments in teacher training and coaching, major changes in instructional methodology for all students, socio-economic status, and other variables.