Effective Community Programs for English Language Learners

Kip Téllez
University of California at Santa Cruz

Hersh Waxman
University of Houston

This research was supported in part by a Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement grant from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Laboratory for Student Success. The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the granting agency. Correspondence concerning this article can be sent to ktellez@ucsc.edu
Overview

In 1996, Hilary Rodham-Clinton touched off a surprisingly heated debate when she published her book, “It Takes a Village to Raise a Child” (Rodham-Clinton, 1986). While many progressive educators praised the book for drawing attention to the importance of communities in preparing children for school—and helping them to excel once there—more conservative voices attacked her work as “anti-family.” For example, Fox-Genovese (1996) agreed with the book’s premise but argued that “It takes a family—ideally a mother and a father—to raise a child, and the village’s first responsibility is not to hamper them in doing so” (p. 63). Commentators such as Fox-Genovese suggested that the publication of Rodham-Clinton’s book was both a political strategy designed to re-elect her husband and an attempt to increase the role—and budget—of the federal government, both goals that set her at odds with a more conservative agenda.

The political battle over the roles of the community and parents faded as the nation’s policymakers turned their attention to international concerns, but educational researchers have continued to ask questions about the relative importance of community and family effects on school achievement (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Fan, 2001; Jeynes, 2003).

Whereas the political debate on this issue may have muted, educators agree that the community must play a primary role in order to maximize a child’s achievement in school. For instance, we have strong evidence that the children and youth of parents who hold high expectations for academic achievement will experience greater success in school than those students whose parents who have poorly defined expectations (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001). This finding, not surprisingly, mirrors the conclusions drawn by research in teacher expectations (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Good & Nichols, 2001). Similarly, parents who provide their children with the materials needed for school and an environment conducive to study will also realize higher achieving students (Downey, 1995). Healthy communities provide the parks, youth
organizations, and law enforcement needed so that children and youth have places to play and learn, and feel safe while doing so (Coley & Hoffman, 1996).

Our research synthesis seeks to apply the body of research on effective communities for those children and youth who are English Language Learners (ELL), as well as searching for those studies that focus on ELL specifically. Working to find ways to help ELL be more successful in school is now paramount. The academic achievement scores of the 4.5 million “Limited English Proficient” students in US K-12 schools—a figure that grows at an annual rate of about three percent (Kindler, 2002)—show that ELL students are struggling. Although the data supporting this differential achievement is less than complete (state and federal agencies tend to report on racial/ethnic differences rather than language status), studies show that ELLs are well below their native English speaking counterparts on tests of literacy (Kindler, 2002). Mexican-American ELLs, who comprise the largest group of ELLs, fare worst of all (Schmid, 2001), with dropout rates as high 40% in some regions (Hispanic Dropout Project, 1998(Velez & Saenz, 2001)

Teacher professional development, both inservice and preservice, is falling short in providing teachers with the preparation needed to address the needs of ELLs. A recent national survey showed that in many states, even those with large and growing ELL populations, less than 10 % of the teachers had received more than eight hours of English development inservice in the previous three years (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

We will focus our review on research addressing the effects of community on ELL. ELL who are, in most cases, the children of immigrants or immigrants themselves. As immigrants, ELL must, of course, learn English, whether in school or in the community. They must also learn a new culture and customs. Given that they have so much to learn, we might imagine that ELL would gain the most from a free public education, and it is true that the success of many immigrant children is largely owing to their participation in the public school. Yet in 1922, the progressive educator George Counts found that immigrant children, those who stand to gain the most from what schooling has to
offer, were failing in great numbers. Counts found the schools unbending places, unwilling to compromise for the benefit of immigrant children, and he reported that a great many immigrant students simply dropped out of the school. Sadly, Counts’ 1922 finding remains true (Gitlin, Buendia, Crosland, & Doumbia, 2003). Could the community be doing better than schools in assisting immigrant students and their families succeed in school?

Given the alarming data on school achievement and dropouts, it is no surprise that educators and policymakers are in search of the most effective and efficient practices for ELLs.

With a renewed emphasis on the value of research for informing the practice of schooling, the No Child Left Behind legislation has all but mandated that educational programs be based on principles and methods proven effective by experimental research, with particular attention given to program effectiveness demonstrated in randomized, controlled trials. With this mandate in mind, our work has produced four earlier research syntheses on effective (a) programs (Waxman & Téllez, 2002), (b) practices (Téllez & Waxman, 2003), (c) teachers, (Téllez & Waxman, 2004) and (d) schools for ELL (Waxman, Price & Tellez, 2005). This final topic completes the series. Other researchers have been similarly motivated to uncover those programs, practices and policies that assist ELL academic achievement. (Gersten & Baker, 2000; Roessingh, 2004)

Before beginning the synthesis portion of the paper, it is important to provide some provisional definitions. First, we must consider the scope, limits, and misinterpretations of the term “community.” One immediate objection to the term comes from educators who argue that to consider schools and the community as separate features in the educational process foments a false distinction (Morris, 2002). Schools, they argue, are a part of the community. Further, (Strike, 2004) argues that it the job of a school to become a community within a community. Whereas we recognize the objection to the term, and agree that it is entirely justifiable, we wish to suggest that educators can define community not as something distinct from schools but rather those features of a child’s life not directly associated with the school; that is, those organizations and
institutions whose choice of policies and activities do not reside under the administrative umbrella of the school or school district. For instance, an after-school program may be linked in many ways to a school or school district but is likely to be operated by an organization governed by a board not associated with the school district (e.g. a YWCA program). The community organization and the school may share board members or a long history of collaboration, but they are separate in mission, often relying on different sources of funding.

Parents, in our definition, are part of the community. Again, effective schools encourage parents to consider themselves part of the school “community,” but parents make decisions regarding their child’s education and welfare independent of the school’s oversight (with the possible exception of school attendance, which is mandated by law). Similarly, law enforcement efforts, clearly related to the health of the school and community, are typically governed by a city charter and municipal elected officials.

The mention of law enforcement as an entity separate from school oversight immediately threatens our definition, because many large school districts operate their own police departments (Eriksen, 2005). In such a case, we would draw a distinction between municipal and school district police, and include only the former in our research synthesis.

Placing parents in the community category is also dubious. If a school offers effective parent training, how can it be said that parents are part of the community rather than part of the “school community”? Again, we might suggest that although the school’s efforts here (noble, to be sure) may have a clear impact on parents, the school is not in direct control of how and when parents use the information they have received (or even if they attend the program at all).

Our definition of community is admittedly faulty, but our desire for conceptual clarity, as well as the need to synthesize research in areas not already covered by our earlier efforts (Waxman & Téllez, 2002; Téllez & Waxman, 2003; Téllez & Waxman, 2004; Waxman, Price & Tellez, 2005) suggests that effective communities for ELL is a legitimate topic of a research
synthesis, capable of distilling a vast number of studies for educators and others who wish to improve the academic performance of our nation’s ELL.

With our definition of community in mind and informed by earlier studies of community effects in schooling (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003), we created the following categories of studies before conducting our literature search, keeping in mind that these initial categories could be split, combined, or, in some cases, eliminated.

The first category we review includes those studies related to effective parenting programs for ELL. This section of the literature is the most comprehensive in our review. The second category, community programs, includes after-school programs as well as other programs designed for the well-being of children and youth, ranging from homework clubs to organized sports. Our final two categories, peer and online communities, examine the ways that peers (outside of school, both real and virtual communication) might affect the academic achievement of ELL.

Search Strategies

We relied on five primary search source indexes or databases in preparing this meta-synthesis: (a) Education Abstracts (used to find articles published in refereed journals), (b) Educational Resources Information Center (used for locating papers presented at conferences), (c) California Digital Library (used for locating books and articles not published in refereed journals), (d) Social Science Citation Index-Web of Science (for locating works a specific author and cited by common authors) and (e) Dissertation Abstracts (used for locating dissertations). Table 1 describes our search indexes in detail. Search terms used in the research synthesis were all combinations of the following terms: English, English Language Learner(s), ELL, ESL, ELD, second language learners, community, parents, after school, programs, and several others designed to locate specific studies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index/Database</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ovid Technology’s Education Abstracts</td>
<td>Education Abstracts is a bibliographic database that indexes and abstracts articles of at least one column in length from English-language periodicals and yearbooks published in the United States and elsewhere from 1983-present. Abstracting coverage begins with January 1994. Abstracts range from 50 to 300 words and describe the content and scope of the source documents.</td>
<td>Education Abstracts was used to locate published, often refereed research papers, typically published in academic journals (e.g., Bilingual Research Journal).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)</td>
<td>ERIC is a national information system designed to provide ready access to an extensive body of education-related literature. Established in 1966, ERIC is supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement and is administered by the National Library of Education (NLE). At the heart of ERIC is the largest education database in the world-containing more than 1 million records of journal articles, research reports, curriculum and teaching guides, conference papers, and books</td>
<td>ERIC served to locate unpublished reports and references to papers presented at conferences. In addition, ERIC will often index evaluation reports not published in journals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Digital Library (CDL)</td>
<td>CDL is a collaborative effort of the UC campuses, organizationally housed</td>
<td>CDL served to locate books and book chapters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
at the University of California Office of the President. It is responsible for the design, creation, and implementation of systems that support the shared collections of the University of California. CDL includes Melvyl Union Catalog (CAT) and the California Periodicals database (PE). Library materials owned by UC and others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Web of Science’s Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)</td>
<td>The Social Science Citation Index is a multidisciplinary index to the journal literature of the social sciences. It indexes more than 1,725 journals across 50 social sciences disciplines.</td>
<td>SSCI was used to locate additional works or citations by specific authors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation Abstracts</td>
<td>Dissertation Abstracts indexes US dissertations and thesis completed in past 30 years</td>
<td>This index was particularly useful because many qualitative research projects in education generally and second language education specifically are lengthy and therefore unlikely to be compressed to journal form from its original length.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We limited our search to research articles published between 1990 and 2005, but cited older papers to inform our theoretical framework.

Parents
The study of the role of parents and the community in the academic success of school-aged children and youth has its roots in the work of Johann Hienrich Pestalozzi, the Swiss educator and essayist whose educational reforms can still be seen in contemporary schools. His insistence on the cultivation of critical thinking skills, as well as an enduring attention to the emotional well-being of the child, foreshadowed the goals of American public schooling. Whereas his work is most typically associated with the conduct of the schools, much of his writing is focused on the importance of the family in the development of a child’s intellect and morality (Berger, 1995). In his most widely read book, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*, Pestalozzi underscores the importance of parents in the preparation of children for school. Among the then-innovative methods he encouraged: the use of manipulatives to teach mathematical concepts and the development of interactive lessons, each sounding a familiar modern tone.

Whereas many educators took seriously the role of parents in the early education of children, it may come as a surprise that parent groups and parental assistance were not always welcome in the schools themselves. In 1919, with the professional knowledge of educators growing as a result of a progressive ideology, administrator, teachers, and school board members alike concluded that running schools was far beyond the knowledge and capacities of the common parent. School needed the moral and monetary support of parents and parent groups, but educators were uniquely qualified to conduct the work of the schools (Cutler, 2000).

This view has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. Educators uniformly agree, at least publicly, that parents should play a major role in contemporary schools. The specifics of that role, however, lead to an open and often contested question (Lightfoot, 1978). For some educators, the proper role for parents is to support the activities and programs of the school and classroom. This role does not necessarily require parents to go beyond making sure that their child is ready to learn and has a place to do their homework. Also included in this view is that parents attend parent/teacher conferences and assist in the
classroom on occasion, among other “traditional” tasks. This model of parental involvement has been described as insufficient. With the rise of site-based management in schools, a model often legislated at the state-level (e.g., (Stevenson & Schiller, 1999), parents have become a structural part of the school administration. Indeed, in some school reform models, such as Comer’s School Development Program, a model for use in urban schools requires parents to join in the everyday operations of the school (Comer, 1995, c1993). Somewhere between this traditional model and Comer’s design is where most schools seek to locate their parents’ involvement.

Our interest in this review is discovering how schools can create a climate in which parents of ELL help their children to succeed in school. In pursuing this task, we first review the general studies addressing parents and their effects on their children’s academic achievement.

General Studies Addressing the Effect of Parents and Parent Programs on Academic Achievement

Without question, parents play a crucial role in the academic success of their children. Beyond the studies showing that family income remains one of the most powerful predictors of student achievement in both the US (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1999) and international (Hung & Marjoribanks, 2005) contexts, we find that parents, regardless of income, who have the time and energy to assist their children with school assignments and encourage their general effort in school make a fundamental difference in their academic achievement (Englund et al., 2004). When parents take an active role in their child’s education, homework completion rates improve (Balli, Wedman, & Demo, 1997), school behavior problems decrease (Hill et al., 2004; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002), and students are more motivated to do well in school (Ratelle, Guay, Larose, & Senecal, 2004) and miss less school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). The effects of parent expectations and assistance are found even as students complete high school (Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987).
(Hill et al., 2004) found that among the higher parental education group, parent academic involvement was related to fewer behavioral problems, which were related to achievement and then aspirations. For the lower parental education group, parent academic involvement was related to aspirations but not to behavior or achievement. Parent academic involvement was positively related to achievement for African Americans but not for European Americans. Parent academic involvement may be interpreted differently and serve different purposes across sociodemographic backgrounds.

Based on the research of the past 15 years, it seems there is almost no desirable school outcome that cannot be enhanced by parent involvement. But the majority of the general studies of parent involvement are largely correlational; that is, they examine those attributes held by parents across a wide range of demographic, attitudinal, and social variables and relate those to the academic achievement (or some other dimension) of their children. While this type of research is critical for understanding relations among important variables, we cannot be sure of causation or the size of the effect. For instance, it is commonly assumed that parents begin the chain of events that lead to improved school performance, but it is also possible that the quality of school and teacher interactions could initiate parent behaviors. Teachers who routinely communicate with parents regarding student progress are likely to engender more parent involvement.

Given the nature of the large-scale research to date, it is interesting to note that research on the effects of low-income, minority parents tends to test interventions designed to augment parent involvement. Whereas this research is not always experimental in the strict definition of the term, it often compares treatment and comparison groups. Most importantly, it begins with the assumption that low-income, minority parents are not fully participating in their child’s education. Whereas we do find some differences between European-American and Latino families (Gauvain & Perez, 2005), it is not all clear whether these differences are responsible for variations in academic achievement.
As we learned in the previous section, one of the chief differences between middle-class, white students and lower and working class minority students is the variation in parent participation. This finding has led to the development of a great many programs all designed to increase and augment the quality of parent participation among low achieving school populations.

We begin this section with a review of several programs designed to increase parent participation and skills in African-American students and their families. Several studies have shown that parent programs are effective, but must be carefully developed and often require specific resources that challenge a typical school. For instance, a study by (Norwood, Atkinson, & Tellez, 1997) documented a parent training program which sought to both raise the self-esteem of low-income African-American parents as well as improve their capacity to help their children with school work. The standardized achievement test scores of the children whose parents attended the program were significantly higher than those whose parents did not. However, the intensive program required a fully trained educator who had experiences similar to those of the parents. The parents who participated in the program were motivated by both the skills they learned as well as the example set by the class leader. Whereas the results of this project are heartening, it is difficult to imagine how such a program could meet with similar success without the specific teacher in place.

(Yan, 1999) found that African American parents of successful students supported their children with cultural capital at rates higher than successful white students. A surprising conclusion at first glance, but obvious perhaps when we consider that many African-American students must overcome racism, less experienced teachers, including those who are teaching without the proper certification (e.g., (Darling-Hammond, 2000), and overcrowded schools. Finally, (Diamond & Gomez, 2004) found that middle-class African-American parents are
more likely to participate in parent training programs and utilize what they have learned more than their low-income counterparts.

While many studies have addressed parent participation among low-income African-American parents, the lack of parental involvement by Latino parents has been cited as one of the primary reasons ELL struggle in school (Haro, 2004). Selected schools and school systems have worked to increase the involvement of Latino parents hoping that it will improve the academic achievement of ELL. Many such efforts have met with limited success and left their designers frustrated.

However, before beginning to share the research on Latino parent participation, we should first begin with an exploration of the reasons why Latino parents are less engaged (or at least believed to be so) in their children’s education. If Latino parents are less involved in their children’s education (a widely held assumption though not one necessarily supported by research), what accounts for their lack of participation? One explanation is based on differential student expectations in Latin American and US schools. In most public schools in Latin America, more emphasis is placed on “passing the grade” than on normative achievements within the class. This difference is partly owing to the time teachers can devote to each student. With so many students in a single class, a detailed ordinal scale of student achievement (e.g., grades) is impossible, so teachers in Latin America tend to report student progress as either “pass” or “fail.” In the US, schools are very cautious about retaining students even if they are not meeting grade level standards. Combine this fact with US schools’ desire to maintain student self-esteem, and parents from Latin America may falsely conclude that because their child is not in danger of retention, all is well (Goldenberg, 1987).

A second explanation is that immigrant Latino parents assume that teachers are the educational experts and that they are content to leave their children’s education to them. Indeed, a study by Ensle (1996) found that Mexican-American parents viewed their first grade children’s teacher as a respected expert. Contradicting the “parents as partners” focus found in many
schools, these parents reported great doubts about working with teachers on curriculum or instruction, let alone offering their opinions on what their children should be learning. However, when a respected teacher gave them specific instructions on what to do with their children, they responded. This study suggests that Latino parents are willing to offer help but are most comfortable when the teacher provides very specific instructions. This finding is corroborated by other studies (Carrasquillo, 1993.; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). Programs that invite parents to act as partners in planning and design seem to run counter to these findings.

A third explanation suggests that the school does not have the bilingual staff needed to properly communicate with parents. While the vast majority of teachers in the US are monolingual English speakers, many parents of ELD are not yet capable of communicating in English to the degree needed to speak with a teacher. This communication gap can cause parents to miss the contents of the communication from school to home. Further, we find that teachers themselves, especially beginning teachers, are not always confident in their own capacities to involve parents who do not speak English (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002).

Finally, the source of the belief that Latino parents do not participate in education can also be traced to stereotyping and even outright racism. One of the most damaging portrayals of Latino parents comes from the educational psychologist Lloyd Dunn, who suggested that while schools themselves have failed Latino families, valuing education “is a tradition that Hispanics in general do not appear to have” (cited in Valenia & Black, 2002, p. 89). To the contrary, research has shown that Latino parents value education as highly as their white counterparts (Hernandez, 2003; Valdes, 1986). However, unfamiliarity with the school’s goals and procedures often encourages educators and others to misinterpret a lack of understanding as a lack of concern. Irrespective of their participation, Latinos are uncommonly optimistic about the state of US schools (Bowman, Lundgren, Brilliant, Langdon, & Cooper, 2004).

Whatever the reason for Latino parent under-participation in their
children’s education, many research studies have engaged parents in programs to enhance their participation while others have sought to understand the actions of Latino parents whose children seem to excel in school despite a host of factors commonly considered to be obstacles to academic achievement.

The results of the general studies of parent involvement seem to mirror those we find the wider community, but only to a point. In a study examining factors associated with motivation among Latino students, school belonging and parent involvement are, not surprisingly, positively related to achievement motivation (Ibanez, Kuperminc, Jurkovic, & Perilla, 2004). These authors conclude that motivating Latino youth, regardless of acculturation or generational status, is based on positive relationships within the school and family. In addition, parent involvement was positively related to expectations and importance of schooling but not to aspirations. This finding makes sense within an immigrant community that values education but is not quite sure how far students should go in pursuing advanced study.

A recent study interviewed academically successful Latinos (all undergraduate students at Yale University) to discover strategies common to each of the students’ parents (Ceballo, 2004). The research revealed three key themes. First, the students reported that their parents put great emphasis on education, often pointing out that their education was best (sometimes only) way to a better life, a life that had eluded them. Second, the parents supported their children’s educational autonomy, allowing them to make their own decisions regarding classes and programs. Finally, the parents each offered nonverbal support for educational endeavors. One student’s comments were emblematic of this strategy, recalling that her mother would often wake her up very early in the morning to complete an assignment or bring her hot chocolate if she were working late at night.

In a similar study of academically successful Latinos, Gandara (1995) interviewed 20 Latino graduate students in various fields. While many of the students pointed to excellent teachers who had encouraged them during their elementary and secondary school days, they reported that their primary
motivation was their parents’ insistence on educational excellence, as well as their parents’ dedication to academic success. They consistently pointed out that their children had been given a chance to learn that was not available to them, and that they should take full advantage of this fact.

(Punkett & Bamaca-Gomez, 2003) found that Latino teenage girls reported higher academic motivation and educational aspirations than boys, and that this feature was often the result of mothers' and fathers' behaviors (ability to help, monitoring, support) and adolescents' academic motivation. Substantial support was found for the relationship between mothers' and fathers' educational level, language spoken at home, and educational aspirations, all predictable correlates.

Yet another study explored successful parenting strategies among Méxican families (Ramos, 2003). Data from this research suggest a cultural model in which the parents of successful students engaged in four strategies. First, they addressed the materials conditions for attending school; that is, they made certain that their children had the resources they needed to be successful. Second, they routinely shared moralizing narratives about the importance of school. Such advice was often set within the context of their own lack of educational opportunities or even failures. For instance, one father said, "I tell them to study, so tomorrow they're not ignorant like their parents, so they have what I didn't, if they feel like something they can say, my job gives it to me, that's what I buy it with" (Ramos, 2003, 314). Third, these parents were willing to allow their teenagers “waiting times,” periods within their schooling career when a transition had to be made. For those students who dropped out or moved schools, the parents were willing to allow their children time to find a new school, or perhaps one with a better fit. Of course, this waiting period had its limits, but Méxican parents, including Latino immigrant parents in the US, do not threaten their children with expulsion from the home. In most Latino families, even adult age children are allowed to stay as long as they like. The idea of “kicking” a child out of the house is simply not an option for many Latino families. Fourth, parents encouraged individual effort, and that success in school would be something their
children should be proud of. One parent reported, “I am glad that you are moving ahead, and that you finish school is going to be my pride, but better yet, this is going to be good for you” (315). This finding stands in contrast to Asian families, for whom Confucian ideology and its emphasis on filial piety plays a prominent role. When an Asian student succeeds or fails in school, it is a reflection of the entire extended family. (Deutsch, 2004).

Research corroborating these findings suggests that immigrant Latino parents who hold high academic achievement expectations for their children, and are more likely to see the instrumental value of schooling (i.e., doing well in school will pay off with a good job) (Goldenberg et al., 2001).

We find that several studies addressing parent involvement suggest specific strategies for improving Latino involvement. For instance, Bermudez (1988) found that university collaboration with local schools enhanced parent involvement. Latino parents of learning disabled children struggle to help them improve their school performance and require additional and highly specific assistance from the school (Hughes, Schumm, & Vaughn, 1999). However, this recommendation is no different than those for non-Latino parents.

In review, a finding common in the studies on successful parenting for Latino youth is the notion of support without direct help with the schoolwork. In many instances, the parents of successful students could not provide direct assistance to their children (often because they did not have the skills in English or because they have limited schooling themselves), but they nevertheless found ways to promote an ethos of schooling. When schools design programs to aid Latino families specifically, they should consider cultural and ethnic traditions and realize that parents not be offended by direct requests or even demands for assistance.

Based on these findings, we might expect parent education programs to address these parenting skills and pass them on to parents who do not posses them. But could such a program work? How does the school help parents to provide non-verbal ways of encouraging school work? How does a program
encourage parents to be supportive without sacrificing their own cultural beliefs and heritage, as our review would suggest.

Studies Specifically Addressing the Effect of Parents and Parent Programs on the Academic Achievement of English Language Learners

Many of the studies cited in the previous section could fit easily into this one. For instance, when a school organizes an intervention designed to increase Latino parent involvement, they will almost certainly include parents whose children are ELL. However, for conceptual clarity, we include in this section only those studies aimed directly for parents of ELL. In addition, it is important to note that while a great majority of ELL are native Spanish speakers, many thousands of ELL speak a language other than Spanish, thus a study that addresses parent involvement of Latino parents may not include parents of ELL from other language groups.

The good news with respect to studies of parent participation for ELL is that the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Affairs (now replaced by the Office of English Language Acquisition) for at least two decades made available grants to implement schoolwide bilingual education programs or special alternative instruction programs for reforming, restructuring, and upgrading language teaching programs within an individual school. A primary component of many school-wide projects was a parent education component; consequently, there are thousands of evaluation reports assessing the effects of these parent programs. The bad news is that few of these reports used any kind of comparison group. Because they were projects unique to a single school, they were at best single group, single assessment studies. At worst, they included only anecdotal findings. Nevertheless, the distinguishing feature of the majority of these reports is the attention to the parents’ need to learn English.

McCollum, Heather; Russo, Alexander (1993), made an effort to synthesis the results of high quality OBEMLA reports in their review of effective parent
education programs in bilingual schools. They argue that four key components must be in place to create a high quality parent involvement program. First, the program must address the parents’ need and desire to gain proficiency in English. And in contrast to typical adult English language course models, they found that quality parents literacy programs create opportunities to develop reading and writing skills in a natural context; that is, they provide genuine instructional tasks for both parent and child. Second, they attempt to address the long-term needs of the child by serving the short-term needs of the whole family. For instance, if parents were struggling with a rental contract or taxes, they provided English exercises that addressed these pressing concerns. Third, they help parents understand the demands of U.S. schools and equip them with the skills to be their child’s teacher and advocate. Fourth, they provide English-language instruction and other services to the parents to enable them to participate more actively in their communities. Several studies completed since this review have echoed these conclusions, as well as providing new directions.

This research raises an important issues regarding English language instruction for ELL parents. Many educators believe that the most efficient way for ELL parents to help their children at school is to learn English. This belief, while logical, presents several challenges and contradictions. First, learning a second language when one is already working many hours per week in a semi-skilled job with no opportunities to practice is very difficult (Gonzalez, 2000). Acquiring competency in a second language takes years of directed study, time and energy most immigrant parents do not have. In addition, we have strong evidence (see previous section) that Latino parents who speak little English are capable of rearing children who excel academically.

Maruca’s (2002) research aimed directly at improving ELL academic achievement vis-à-vis parent involvement. This study invited parents to volunteer for a parent-training program based on the principles suggested by the Parent Institute for Quality Education (see Ochoa, 1990 for a review). The results indicated no statistically significant gains in academic achievement or parenting skills (as measured by pre- post-test surveys). However, Maruca did
find gains in student attendance for those children whose parents attended the training. Furthermore, parents spoke highly of the program, especially the opportunity to share ideas and concerns with other parents, and many noted that discipline problems at home were reduced as a result of the program.

In addition to these studies, programs designed to assist migrant families uniformly attend to issues of language and parent involvement. Lopez (2004) found that effective initiatives in migrant parent involvement are not defined as a set of practices or activities for parents to do, but rather as a form of outreach. Schools successful in promoting migrant parent education offered a parent education program that served its own purposes and improved migrant families' lives. Attention to developing English skills emerged as an important component.

In a paper based largely on anecdotal findings, Osterling, Violand-Sánchez, and von Vacano (1999) share the results of a parent program designed primarily to teach English to parents of ELL. The goals for the program improvements in the reading, writing, and mathematics skills of students; provide a caring community that acknowledges and respects their cultural values and fosters initiative and leadership; and establish a collaborative partnership among parents, community organizations, and the school system. Their data suggest that the program is working to improve ELL student learning.

Summary of Parent Effects. The impact of parents on any child’s education cannot be underestimated, and the general research in this area suggests that more parent involvement and additional programs for parents is manifestly better. Indeed, we could find no research studies suggesting that parent involvement is onerous or counter-productive. For Latinos, the research suggests that even when parents have little education background themselves or cannot speak English, those who raise academically successful students make personal sacrifices for their children, encourage individual effort, and extol the material advantages of schooling (e.g., obtaining a high-paying job). Latino parents of academically successful children do not appear to invoke familial pride as motivation for doing well in school, a tool used extensively by Asian immigrant
families. Finally, programs designed to improve parent participation for the parents of ELL often begin by teaching English, a very challenging task made more accessible when the program focuses on the direct language needs of the families. The research also suggests that outreach to ELL families is important, but that the research has not yet determined the most effective form.

Community resources

All children and youth live within a social network designed to protect and educate them. In fact, no culture on earth is remiss in providing either formal organizations (e.g., schools) or social norms (e.g., parenting to a minimum age) that work to shelter children from the adult world. And every culture understands the need for children and youth to be organized by age into cohorts as they grow and learn their responsibilities as adults.

In spite of cultural norms that demand the care and development of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), specific societies can sometimes fail in providing basic needs for its children and youth. War, disease, or other disasters can temporarily allow norms and other traditions to fail. In addition, families displaced from their traditional culture can face incongruities between their home culture and a new one. More specifically, immigrant parents may not have the means or the proper understanding to provide their children with opportunities to become socialized in the customs of their new home. They may not understand the child-rearing strategies of their new culture and perhaps not offer their children an opportunity to take part in the community practices designed for socializing its youth.

This section of our synthesis shares research studies that address the features of effective communities and community programs for ELL. Our review hopes to answer several questions regarding effective community programs for ELL, among these: What community programs exist for low-income Latino
children and youth? What programs specifically target ELL and why so they maintain such a focus? And which programs are effective and why?

As we begin this section, we draw attention to those traditions in US history that have provided community programs for assisting immigrant families. From land grants in the western US to free ESL programs in large cities, from roughly 1850-1929, the nation not only accepted many immigrants but also provided opportunities for more complete membership in the country’s social and economic life. This is not to say that immigrants did not face overwhelming economic hardships and brutal ethnic discrimination, but that with the vast numbers of immigrants arriving in the nation, policies and programs designed to integrate immigrant families into life in the US were, in some ways, more common than they are today. In any case, immigration to the US, both sanctioned and unsanctioned, will remain a bitterly contested political issue (Suarez-Orozco, 2001), filled with myth and misinformation.

Perhaps no effort designed to assist immigrant families is better known than Jane Addam’s work at the Hull House in the early 1990’s (Lissak, 1989). A contemporary, and like-minded progressive of John Dewey, Addams’ brand of social work was directed at the immigrant family, providing strong support, in particular, for young immigrant women, “factory girls” as they were called. Addams and her colleagues were particularly interested in assisting these girls to learn English, as well as providing a protected space in the midst of a large and dangerous city. Whereas some have criticized Addams for her desire to disengage her immigrant students from their “old world” habits and customs, Addams’ “settlement” house and her other efforts to help immigrant families stands as model of a community program designed specifically for ELL.

General Studies Addressing the Effects of Communities and Community Programs on Academic Achievement

General observation and simple logic tell us that healthy communities will positively affect the academic achievement of children and youth. If a
community’s youth are left to their own after school or feel unsafe in their neighborhood, then their academic achievement is bound to suffer.

The extant research confirms this everyday view. Positive neighborhood environments have a dramatic impact on educational achievement (Ainsworth, 2002; Crowder & South, 2003; Fischer & Kmec, 2004). The research also suggests that collective socialization, in which many members of a community feel a responsibility towards the children and youth, encourages academic achievement. Simply put, healthy communities support learners (Lee & Smith, 1999)

Of the many studies demonstrating the positive effects of community programs on academic achievement, several stand out. First, a study of 139 youths of varying ethnicity and family income levels found that participation in Boys and Girls Club activities was positively associated with student grades, effort in school, and enjoyment in school (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003). This study also found that four club activities (unstructured game room activities; sports and recreation activities, creating friendship networks, and parent commitment to the program) were most closely associated with academic success and positive school attitudes. Based on these findings, the authors suggest that if unstructured activities (game rooms) can have a positive impact on student achievement, they believe that activities more related to school achievement could have an even greater impact. Whereas these recommendations make sense, this study did not have a control group by which the authors could have measured the effects of pre-existing conditions (i.e., the participating youth may have been predisposed to better grades).

We also find that variations in after-school care programs are associated with academic achievement. For instance, (Posner & Vandell, 1994) found that children in formal after-school care programs spent less time watching TV and in unsupervised play with other children and more time interacting on cognitive tasks with adults. The latter activities are related to academic achievement and school conduct.
In a compelling paper, (Larson, 2000) suggests that community programs that foster “initiative” in children and youth result in improved school performance. He further argues that the context best suited to the development of initiative is structured voluntary activities (e.g., sports, arts, and participation in organizations) in which the combination of intrinsic motivation and deep attention foment one’s ability to initiate activities for growth. Larson suggests that schools do not generally provide for such experiences. Research has also shown that safe communities are associated with lower child misconduct rates (Shumow, Vandell, & Posner, 1998).

In a comprehensive review, McLaughlin (2001) found that schools and community-based organizations that collaborate to help students enhance their academic skills find exceptional results. Participation in such programs often leads to higher grades, higher expectations of their school, better self-worth and self-control, and, perhaps most importantly, an improved sense of civic duty. Schools can help community-based organizations by sharing space and facilities, setting up institutional collaborations, connecting mutual goals, codeveloping curricula, supporting teachers' involvement in these organizations, and developing meaningful measures of youth development. Programs that link universities to tutoring programs have shown particular promise (Polansky, 2004).

Whereas the positive effects of well-designed community programs are unequivocal, we are not certain how such programs generalize across communities. For instance, we might expect that community programs would be more effectual for low-income students. We take up this question and subsequent research in the following section.

Studies Addressing the Effect of Community and Community Programs on the Academic Achievement of Minority Students from Low-Income Households.

Studies the effects of after school or community programs on minority youth from low-income communities are common (e.g., (Morris, 2002); those focusing directly on Latino students less so. One notable exception is a recent
study by (Riggs & Greenberg, 2004) who suggest that Latino students, especially those from “poorly functioning families,” accrue significant academic gains from participating in an after school program. Consequently, our review here will focus exclusively on those studies focused on Latinos only. A full review of all ethnic and socioeconomic groups in this category is beyond our scope.

As an ethnic group often characterized as allocentric (i.e., promoting a sense of identity and commitment to collectives and groups, rather than the individual), Latinos might be expected to benefit differentially when children participate in community settings (Gutierrez, Yeakley, & Ortega, 2000).

This conclusion is corroborated in the view of (Nevarez-La Torre & Hidalgo, 1997) who suggest that Latino community resources have a special place in assisting children in school. This work points out specifically that the traditional community resources in Latino communities must play a role in raising Latino academic achievement. Of the traditional community resources they note, the church stands out as a compelling example. Indeed, research has shown that religious participation among Latinos has a positive effect on the academic achievement of children and youth (Bankston, 2004; Jeynes, 2002). Unfortunately, these studies are associational only and, therefore, cannot answer questions about why such participation may enhance academic achievement, but several possibilities come to mind.

As a highly religious people, Latinos in the US participate in church activities at rates higher than the general public. Indeed, Latinos make up about 40% of the Catholic church’s membership in the US, and their involvement in the Catholic church is well established, although such involvement has, at times, been confusing and contradictory (Pulido, 1993).

Interestingly, Stevens-Arroyo and Diaz-Stevens, 1993) suggest that the Catholic Church has rarely embraced its Latino following and viewed their participation as a largely mandatory process of holding membership while vesting little power in Latino churches. They also point out the potential of the Catholic Church to empower their Latino communities through education programs has
gone largely untapped in spite of many progressive priests who used their parish to advance the causes of urban Latinos.

The distinctive character of Latino Catholicism in the US resists easy categorization. It is true that Latino Catholics share some of the same mixture of conservative social views as their European-American counterparts: a firm anti-abortion stance, a general intolerance of gay and lesbian lifestyles, and a reverence for authority. On the other hand, Latino Catholics tend to be pro-labor, voting a more progressive ticket than many other Catholics. These features, however, do not seem likely to have a role in the academic success of Latino children and youth.

A less well-known feature of Latino religious participation, especially Latino Catholics, is the belief in *aguantar*, which can roughly be translated as forbearance. Of course, all Christians are encouraged to display humility and taught to understand that suffering can be evidence of one’s faith, but the Catholic church reinforced the concept of forbearance to a people already accustomed to suffering. Gonzales (1999) points out that this traditional Mexican characteristic was buttressed further by the Catholic churches in largely Latino parishes. Consequently, many Latinos view their poverty and a lack of opportunity within the larger US culture as a condition of their faith.

With respect to children in school, forbearing students are less likely to misbehave, accept their teacher’s assignments without questions, and demonstrate more self-control. These features may indeed promote academic achievement among Latino students who share a religious orientation towards Catholicism. These same phenomena may be at work in Mormon families, whose children outperform their non-religious counterparts after controlling for family income, family size, and parent education (Downey, 1995). However, the common belief that poor, minority children accrue greater benefits from religious participation than their middle and upper middle class, white counterparts has not been supported. (Regnerus, 2000). In sum, community involvement in the form of religious participation seems to promote academic achievement among
Latinos, but the precise mechanism of this relationship remains an open question.

Another form of community programming often thought to increase academic achievement is participation in sports programs. Sports programs represent one of the most ubiquitous community offerings, especially in low-income communities. Great faith is placed in the value of sports programs to raise student self-esteem and thereby academic achievement, and many studies have shown the generally positive effects of sports participation (Yin & Moore, 2004). Generally, the research on after-school sports programs suggests that participation in an organized sports group tends to increase academic achievement and helps to keep students in school (Guest & Schneider, 2003; McNeal, 1995).

With respect to minority students, several studies report that participation in sports is most strongly associated with achievement in schools with low educational expectations and schools in poor communities. Specifically, these associations suggest a causal chain in which participating youth develop an “athletic identity” which in turn encourages them to work harder in other spheres of life (Goldsmith, 2003; Guest & Schneider, 2003). No studies to date have examined the role of sports in promoting academic achievement among ELL specifically, but we might suspect that many of the benefits sports provides to low-income, minority students would generalize to ELL. In particular, the many immigrant ELL would respond to the identity development that sports provides.

Studies Specifically Addressing the Effects of Communities and Community Programs on the Academic Achievement of English Language Learners

As with other community features, we found only a handful of studies focused directly on ELL. A study of particular interest assessed the effects of community programs, especially after-school programs (Riggs & Greenberg, 2004), on Latino ELL. The results suggest that academic improvements resulting from the after school program were most pronounced for those students who
already spoke English well and whose families were poorly functioning. These results make sense if the after school program did not engage in ELD instruction or did not conduct activities in Spanish.

However, other studies have found positive effects for after school programs to be particularly effective for ELL, especially those which had specific ELD component (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, & Macias, 2001). This study suggests that after-school homework-assistance programs serve a “protective” function for children at-risk for school failure (i.e., students who might normally do poorly in school are aided most by the program). These researchers found that ELL who lack structured after-school activities or whose parents do not speak English at home reported the highest gain scores.

Taken together, these studies suggest that after-school clubs that focus on the teaching of English can benefit ELL most. Whereas this finding may seem quite obvious, it is complicated by several factors. First, programs designed for Latino students may choose to offer their programs in Spanish. Such a strategy may encourage native Spanish speaking students to attend the program. Second, there are may be important cultural reasons for using Spanish. Third, in some parts of the country, it may be difficult to find after-school counselors who speak English well.

But the research on second language learning is clear: the more time one spends hearing and speaking a second language, the better one learns it (Collier, 1989; Holm & Dodd, 1996). It is therefore not surprising that ELL who are learning English at both school and in community programs will learn it better. Of course, the benefits of English in after-school programs will be most beneficial to those enrolled in ELD programs in school, in contrast to bilingual programs, at least in the early grades.

Summary of Community Effects. The previous section makes clear the positive effects that community resources have on the academic achievement of children and youth in general. The research suggests that community programs from Boys and Girls’ clubs to sports teams enhances academic performance, although
it is not always clear how such participation directly affects school achievement. For students who lack resources at home, community programs can deliver great benefits. For minority students from low-income households, community programs may make the difference between staying in school and dropping out. The few studies examining directly the effects of community programs on ELL find that those engaging in teaching English or at least those that conduct their programs in English stand to help ELL the most.

**Peers**

Children and youth rarely learn in isolation from a clearly defined peer group. Whether a group is defined by age (e.g., grouping students by grade level), academic preparation (e.g., grouping strategies in a secondary mathematics class), or English language achievement (e.g., a beginning English Language Development class), a student’s peers constitute an important part of any learning experience.

Our review of the research in this category first synthesizes the general studies of peers and peer programs as they effect academic achievement, followed by studies more specifically addressing ELL.

*General Studies Addressing the Effects of Peers and Peer Programs on Academic Achievement*

The role of peers in creating learning opportunities has been a topic of thousands of research studies in the past 20 years (e.g., (Gillies & Ashman, 2003). The systematic study of cooperative learning, in particular, has been particularly popular, and its effects have been realized across a varied contexts and learners (Slavin, 1996). Indeed, the vast number of studies in the area of cooperative learning makes a comprehensive review in this paper out of reach. Therefore, instead of attempting to review these studies, we will focus this
section on those studies that specifically prepare students to assist their peers. We later take a wider lens when examining ELL specifically.

Studies in this vein often focus on what are known as Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) programs (e.g., Mathes, Torgesen, & Allor, 2001). This research, in general, finds that peers can be a valuable source of academic enrichment in a wide variety of learning contexts.

Studies Addressing the Effects of Peers and Peer Programs on the Academic Achievement of Minority Students from Low-Income Households

Can peer influences augment the academic achievement of poor, minority students, even when those peers are not necessarily up to grade level themselves? The research conducted in pursuit of this question, in general, suggests that peers can have a positive effect on academic growth. However, it turns out that convincing educators and researchers of this fact has not been easy, in spite of the many studies that validate such practice (e.g., (Gabriele & Montecinos, 2001; Webb, Nemer, Chizhik, & Sugrue, 1998).

In a broad meta-analysis of PAL programs, it was found that PAL interventions were most effective with younger, urban, low income, and minority students (Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, & Miller, 2003). Effect sizes were greatest in those PAL programs that provided specific rewards for assistance in addition to direct instruction on how to provide assistance. In spite of the generally positive findings, peer tutoring programs may fail because students, for whatever reason, are not able to provide reliable assistance (Dufrene, Noell, Gilbertson, & Duhon, 2005)

Studies Specifically Addressing the Effects of Peers and Peer Programs on the Academic Achievement of English Language Learners

The benefits of peer interaction has been promoted as an especially effective tool for assisting ELL (Kagan, 1995). In a particularly applicable study,
Klingner & Vaughn (2000) found that fourth grade bilingual (Spanish/English) students provided crucial assistance to their ELL counterparts in learning to understand word meanings, getting the main idea, asking and answering questions, and relating what they were learning to previous knowledge. They found that the ELL students’ scores on English vocabulary tests improved significantly from pre- to posttesting. However, their results revealed that students’ academic assistance was most effective when they were given specific instructions on how and when to help their peers. This tightly controlled research study suggests that more advanced peers can assist ELL on a wide variety of learning tasks, but that adequate preparation is necessary.

The Klingner and Vaughn (2000) study underscores the role that peers can play in assisting ELL, as well as offering the caveat that such assistance does not happen without preparation. This important point is worth exploring. For many years, the general findings on cooperative learning suggested that the academic performance of less able students in heterogeneous groups would rise on the natural effects of the cooperative setting (Leighton, [1989]). This study suggests that in order to realize gains in language learning, higher achieving peers must be prepared in the most effective ways to provided assistance. The results found in this study were corroborated in an earlier study by the same authors (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999).

Other studies have revealed that interaction with peers increased ELLs capacity for oral language skills (Kobayashi, 2003). Even ELL with learning disabilities benefit from peer assistance (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005).

The review of research on peer assistance to ELL has so far been limited to the community of learners inside the classroom. But what of the language learning effect of peers outside the school setting? What role do peers play in assisting ELL to acquire English in non-school contexts?

First, research in second language acquisition theory suggests that the “natural” native speaking environment is not a particularly good teacher (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982). Native speakers speak at rates typically too fast for learners to process, they use idioms and other metaphorical inventions that
confuse a learner, and, when they try to teach, turn language into segments of speech with little meaning, as well as foreground pronunciation to the exclusion of meaning.

Further evidence for the important role that peers play in helping ELL acquire English comes from the studies of two-way bilingual immersion programs (TWBI). Students in TWBI programs are placed in classes in which half their peers speak their native language and other half speaks the target language (Christian, 1994). These effects derive from a school, rather than community, program, but some evidence suggests that students enrolled in such programs learn languages from each other as a result of additional contact outside of school (Tellez, 2001).

**Online communities**

In spite of a strong interest among ELD teachers, the role of virtual communities for ELL has not been widely studied (Lam, 2000). Youth worldwide are now communicating across time and space with a most remarkable ease. For instance, an ELL in the US can post a message on a “blog” and begin a conversation with counterpart in Taiwan or Bolivia.

The effects of the virtual community on general student population is just now underway, but the early results suggest that adolescents are using communication technologies such as instant messaging in a variety of ways, some of which support academic achievement in schools. A recent study found that teenage users of instant messaging (IM) was devoted to fairly ordinary yet intimate topics, such as friends or gossip (Gross, 2004). Yet we cannot ignore that fact that IM users are writing, using language in ways that traditional mediums cannot accommodate.

Communication technologies have the capacity to alter the ways we communicate (Kavanaugh, Carroll, Rosson, Reese, & Zin, 2005), yet it remains to be seen how such technologies will effect communities among ELL. Instructional technologies have been embraced by some in the second language
community (Murphy, 2002), but it remains to be seen whether ELD educators will embrace communities that exist online. On the other hand, perhaps such communities will be built without the aid of schools, without the intervention of educators, but which nevertheless have an impact on language learning.

**General Conclusion**

It may not “take” a village to raise a child, but the village can certainly play an important role, especially when the child is poor and of color. Similarly, parents can significantly enhance their child’s academic achievement, but are they the most important “community” factor in school success? A student’s peers play an increasingly important role in academic and social development, but how adults organize peer interactions holds great importance. As we have demonstrated, social science research has confirmed the importance of community, parents, and peers in the social, emotional, and, especially, academic success of children and youth.

The question, then, is not whether communities make a difference, but rather who might benefit most from strategic and systematic interventions, how we can best design, implement, and assess such interventions, and, perhaps most important of all, who will pay for them?

We began our review by noting the academic underperformance of ELL students and suggested that community resources, if properly leveraged, could improve their academic success. In spite of several studies that provide a clear direction for community programs who wish to serve Latinos, we were struck by how few studies addressed ELL directly, making it difficult to draw a line between programs for Latino students and programs for ELL. We were disappointed to find no studies of the community designed to improve the academic performance of students who were not native Spanish speakers. More common were those studies interested in the ways that the community can improve school success among Latino children and youth. Where applicable, we reviewed such studies with an eye on their direction application to ELL and found that
communities in many Latino neighborhoods are working hard to improve the academic achievement of their children and youth.

With policymakers now firmly positioned in the debate over the role of the community in raising academic achievement (e.g., Eccles, 1999), good research will become even more important in deciding what programs are needed, how comprehensive such programs should be, and how we might fund them.

As George Counts suggested, immigrant students should have the most to gain from public schooling. As Jane Addams proved, strong community programs can help to ease the transition to US life for immigrant, ELL children and youth. These and other progressive thinkers were working at a time when the percentage of immigrant students in the US was much greater than it is today and yet the generations of Italian and Polish immigrants they served are now full participants in the economic, social and political life. Will the current wave of immigrant students, now largely from Mexico and Central America, fare as well? As our review suggests, the quality of community programs may make the difference.

References


Eriksen, H. (February 17, 2005). School discipline in the spotlight: Groups find common ground on state issue, *The Houston Chronicle*


Lam, Y. (2000). Technophilia vs. technophobia: A preliminary look at why second-language teachers do or do not use technology in their


Valencia, R.R., & Black, M.S. Mexican Americans don’t value education! On the basis of the myth, mythmaking, and debunking. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 1*(2), 81-103


---

i The 2000 Census reveals that over 60% of all US residents age 5 and over who speak a language other than English at home (a total of 17.9%) speak Spanish. The number of ELL in the nation’s public schools is a much greater percentage of the total ELL, equaling around 80-85%.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4, Matrices PCT35, PCT36, PCT38, PCT43, PCT45, PCT47, PCT49, PCT61, PCT64, PCT67, and PCT70.

ii Even for those children who are home schooled, new evidence suggests that parents who choose to home school are keen on seeking out peer experiences for their children (Eley, 2002).