

# UC Berkeley

## Newsletters

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## GRANT REPORT

## Improving College Eligibility for English Learners

One of the challenges facing English learners is becoming eligible to attend college. Not only must English learners master English, they must complete all the core academic subjects that are required for college eligibility. Both the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU), for example, require students to complete 15 academic courses with a grade of C or better to become eligible.

This study examined the opportunities and constraints faced by three cohorts of high school students in taking college prep algebra, and the implications for college eligibility. Algebra was selected for several reasons, including the fact that past major efforts have been made to enroll many more students in algebra, and it is not clear if this is raising the gate for access to the college prep curriculum.

The study was conducted in four high schools in northern California. The schools differ in the ethnicity, language background, and English proficiency of their students. Although at least 33 percent of the students in each of the schools were bilingual, the percent of English learners varied from 5 to 40 percent and the percent of redesignated English proficient varied from zero to 43 percent. Spanish-speaking students represented from 34 to 89 percent of the English learners, while Hmong students represented from 17 to 41 percent of the English learners.

#### Opportunities for Completing Algebra One

The four schools took different approaches to providing algebra for English learners. Two of the high schools offered multiple algebra course options, including the traditional 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade algebra courses, as well as a new two-year Algebra 1 course for students who were not prepared for the regular algebra course. The University of California backed this two-year option across the state by adding the course for review, and accepting it for admission, if the student completed each of the four semesters of the course with a grade of C or higher.

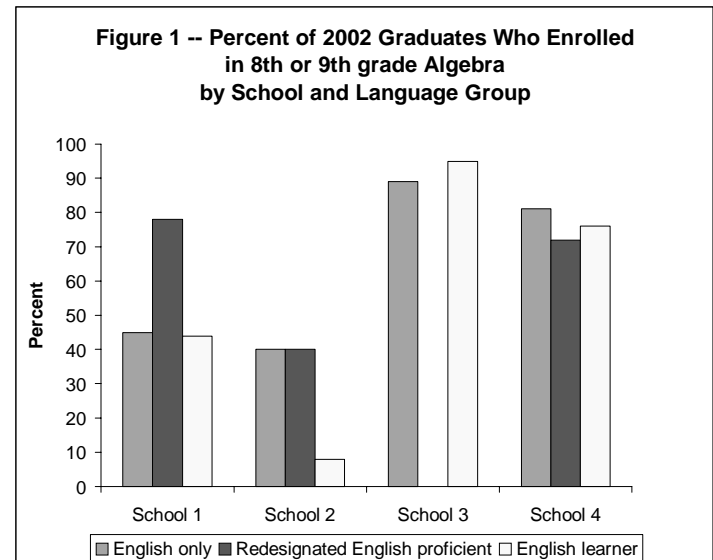
The other two high schools took a different approach. They reasoned that if the intent of the California state standards was to make algebra available to all students, then they should provide the same mathematics opportunity to all students. Therefore, they offered only the traditional one-year algebra course.

English learners' access to algebra resulted from district and school policy on when to allow English learners to enroll in mainstream courses, and from professional assessments of individual students by teachers and counselors. The four schools took three different approaches to assigning English learners to mainstream (9<sup>th</sup> grade) algebra classes: (1) no access until re-designation as a fluent English proficient student, (2) access at early-advanced or advanced levels

of English proficiency, and (3) access possible for students at intermediate as well as early-advanced and advanced levels of English proficiency.

Across the schools, assignment of students to their original algebra group was based on the professional assessments of teachers and counselors using information on performance in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics courses, current test scores in mathematics, and perceptions of the motivation and learning needs of each student.

Differences in these policies and practices resulted in very different access to the traditional 9<sup>th</sup> grade algebra curriculum (see Figure 1). Schools 1 and 2 both offered the two-year algebra option, but School 1 allowed English learners with early-advanced or advanced levels of English proficiency to enroll in traditional

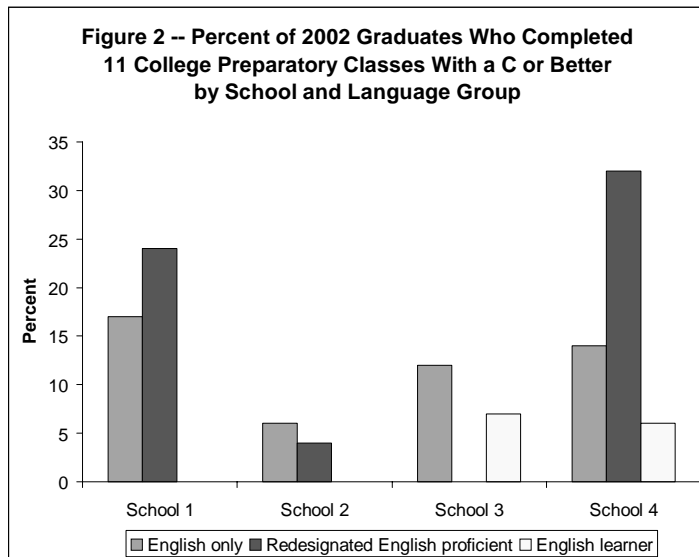


algebra, while School 2 restricted access to redesignated students only. Consequently, 44 percent of English learners in School 1 enrolled in Algebra 1 by the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade, compared to only 8 percent of the English learners in School 2. In the two other schools, where only the traditional algebra course was offered, more than three-quarters of the English learners enrolled in Algebra 1 by the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

#### The Impact of Algebra

Did the way algebra was offered by the schools make a difference? It appears that it did. In Schools 1 and 2, which offered alternative

algebra options, no English learners became eligible for UC or CSU (by completing 11 of the required courses), whereas in Schools 3 and 4, which provided only the traditional algebra courses, six and seven percent of English learners became eligible (see Figure 2). The schools that provided only the traditional algebra courses



were also endeavoring to make the college prep curriculum the regular curriculum for all students, which we believe contributed to the overall outcomes.

Because we were not able to control for potential confounding variables, such as school demographics and grading policies, these conclusions should be considered tentative; nonetheless, it does appear that schools' curricular decisions can impact English learners' college eligibility.

—Faith G. Paul

*The cover story is an edited abstract from the final report for UC LMRI Research Grant #03-03CY-071G-D. The unedited abstract and complete report are available on the UC LMRI web site.*

## Research Grants Awarded

The UC LMRI Faculty Steering Committee met in Oakland in October and reviewed the submissions received in the October 2004 Call for Proposals. Subsequently, a total of three grants—one Dissertation and two Individual—were awarded, while several others were given the conditional option to resubmit and may be eligible for future funding.

A total of \$65,000 was awarded in the October 2004 Grant Call, bringing the total dollar amount awarded for research grants in 2004 (February and October Grant Calls) to \$185,000.

Following are the (edited) abstracts submitted by the three most recently funded grantees.

## DISSERTATION GRANT AWARD

### Narratives: The Intersection of Language and Culture: Latino Children's Narratives from Three to Seven Years Old

ALISON G. WISHARD, *UCLA*

GRANT #05-04CY-01DG-LA

This study takes a developmental approach to the study of the narratives of Latino dual language learning children by looking at co-constructed narratives at three time points: In naturalistic mother-child conversations when children were 36 months; semi-elicited narrative interactions between mother and child just before the child entered primary school at 54 months; and elicited narratives between child and researcher during first grade, or when children were approximately six years old. Patterns of immigration experiences and language practices will be analyzed in relation to narrative experiences at each time point.

In sum, the overall goal of this study is to provide rich descriptive information on children's narrative productions and language practices over time, to describe how they are related to each other within and across time, and to ultimately determine what predicts complexity in narrative productions at 6-7 years along with the level of growth from 36-months to 6-7 years.

The results of this study will help to inform developmental psychologists, educators, and parents about dual language learning Latino children's experiences with language and literacy development through a deeper understanding of narrative development.

## INDIVIDUAL GRANT AWARDS

### Peer Talk and Emergent Literacy: Mexican-Heritage Children's Narrative Development in Peer Pretend Play and Peer-Based Story-Acting-Out Practices in Preschool

AMY KYRATZIS, *UC SANTA BARBARA*

GRANT #05-04CY-04IG-SB

Fictional stories are an important form of decontextualized language, involving creating scenes entirely through words (Wells, 1986; Nicolopoulou, 2002). The present study will examine how children's classroom interactions with peers support the use of narrative and decontextualized language skills.

One kind of narrative practice engaged in by peers is creating dramatic pretend play. Descriptive prose, a type of decontextualized language, may be occasioned when children seek to involve peers in a game. Using ethnography and discourse analysis, the present study examines the extent to which narrative talk is occasioned in different contexts of children's peer play activity.

Children's story-telling can draw on preschool peer culture in a second way. In a classroom narrative intervention designed by Paley (1988), children construct and dictate stories for the purpose of later acting them out with peers in Circle Time. These stories have been found to be rich (Nicolopoulou, 2002; Paley 1988), due to the influence of children's peer culture goals.

By documenting how peer dramatic play utterances of different types are occasioned in peer play, and how stories dictated for peer interactions develop over time, this study is intended to identify some of the ways in which children's peer interactions combine with narrative enrichment practices in preschool to develop decontextualized narrative skills.

### La Patera: Continued Longitudinal Studies of Reading Risk

MICHAEL M. GERBER, *UC SANTA BARBARA*

GRANT #05-04CY-02IG-SB

Project *La Patera* will continue and join three related research studies, all of which contribute to the emergent longitudinal research on reading development of English Learners (EL) in the U.S. These studies primarily focus on Latino children from low-income backgrounds.

**Objective:** To continue longitudinal studies of factors associated with reading risk for primary and intermediate grade ELs and effectiveness of targeted, intensive instruction to ameliorate that risk.

**Results:** Using this year's—as well as previous year's—data, we will calculate rates and changes in rates of development on outcome measures, how performance on these measures predict global reading achievement, and test the effects of targeted intensive instruction for students at highest risk each year.

**Conclusions:** We anticipate integrating these data with previous data to have five year longitudinal data on at least 80 students (K-4). We also anticipate being able to provide colleagues and teachers with assessment procedures that will identify highest risk students for reading comprehension difficulties in fourth grade, as well as with intervention methods and materials that can ameliorate risk and boost achievement for these students.

### 2005 UC LMRI Research Grants Call for Proposals Deadline: February 1, 2005

UC LMRI encourages University of California researchers to undertake comprehensive and collaborative research that improves the schooling conditions and academic achievement of language minority youth by increasing our understanding of the challenges they face as well as the resources they represent for the state.

Funding is provided annually in four grant categories:

- \* **Individual Research Grants** for UC researchers (one year awards of up to \$25,000)
- \* **Dissertation Research Grants** for UC graduate students (one year awards of up to \$15,000)
- \* **Collaborative Research Grants** for teams of UC and CSU researchers (multi-year awards of up to \$50,000)
- \* **Teacher Research Grants** for teams of UC researchers and California school teachers (one year awards of up to \$25,000)

Funding priority is given to proposals that focus on: Bilinguality, Educational Achievement, and California. For detailed information and grant applications, visit the UC LMRI web site.

### 2005-06 UC LMRI Post-Doctoral Fellowship

Deadline: February 1, 2005

Recent UC graduates: for the fourth time since 2001, UC LMRI is pleased to offer a Post-Doctoral Fellowship.

- \* year-long mentored fellowship
- \* \$40,000 in salary
- \* approximately \$2,500 in benefits
- \* \$5,000 support for research and travel expenses for the fellow
- \* \$2,500 stipend for a UC faculty mentor

Fellowships begin in September and end the following August. Further details are available on the UC LMRI web site.

### IN THE NEWS:

Three current members of the UC LMRI Faculty Steering Committee, **Kris Gutiérrez** (UCLA), **David Sanchez** (UC San Francisco), and **Barbara Merino** (UC Davis) have been re-appointed for three-year terms, ending in 2007.

### INTRODUCING:

**Glenn Jahnke** joined the UC LMRI staff in August 2004 as Computer Systems Administrator, taking the reins from **Joe Hahn** who moved to Hawaii after graduating in June.



Glenn Jahnke

Glenn will be responsible for planning, installing and maintaining the UC LMRI computer network. In his third year at UCSB, Glenn is a Computer Science major. He enjoys running, swimming and is an avid ballroom dancer.

### THE 18TH ANNUAL UC LMRI CONFERENCE

MAY 6-7, 2005

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



FEATURING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

RACHEL MORAN

PROFESSOR OF LAW, UC BERKELEY

“LANGUAGE RIGHTS”

CALL FOR PAPERS DEADLINE: MARCH 1, 2005

Find out more at:

<http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu>

## Education Policy Center News

The UC LMRI Education Policy Center has been very active since our last report in the spring:

### \* New Coordinator

A new coordinator, **Jisel Vega**, has been hired to replace former coordinator, **Julie Maxwell-Jolly**. Jisel is a first-year Ph.D. student at UC Davis and a former bilingual teacher. She received a master's degree in education policy from Harvard. Julie is now a senior researcher for **Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)** working in the UC Davis PACE office.

### \* English Learners study release date: January 2005

Our study of teachers of English Learners, based on 5300 surveys from teachers in 23 districts across the state of California, will be officially released in late January 2005.

**Patricia Gándara** and **Julie Maxwell-Jolly** will be presenting a preview of the study at the first seminar in the **2004-05 PACE Seminar series** for education professionals and policymakers on December 10, 2004 at the University of California offices in Sacramento.

### \* Biliteracy Consortium fall meeting

The **Northern California Biliteracy Consortium**, which was launched last spring to work actively on behalf of biliteracy programs and to engage in important longitudinal research on students in these programs, held its second meeting in fall 2004. **Professor Barbara Merino** made a presentation to the members on strategies for teaching English learners in bilingual contexts.

A third meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2005, to be held at UC Davis, at which **Patricia Gándara** and **Julie Maxwell-Jolly** will present findings from the statewide survey of teachers of English learners.

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#### Reports in This Issue

Complete copies of LMRI-funded Final Grant Reports can be found on the UCLMRI web site. (Abstracts featured in this newsletter have been edited for space considerations.)

Dissertation Grant Reports can be found on the UMI ProQuest Digital Dissertations Database at: <http://www.lib.umi.com/dissertations/fullcit/9993004>.

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