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# AccELerate!

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In this issue of *AccELerate!*

Delis Cuéllar on *Cultural Responsiveness: Working with Mexican Immigrant Families in Early Education*

Charlene Rivera, Lynn Shafer Willner, & Barbara Acosta on *Improving the Selection of Accommodations for English Language Learners in Content Assessments*

Sara Waring on *The Impact of Teacher Training on the Achievement of English Language Learners*

Michelle N. Abrams on *The Nation's English Language Learners Count: Highlights of Quality Counts 2009*

Also in this issue:

U.S. Department of Education Issues New Guidance on Title III

New from NCELA, Call for contributors, New Resources, askNCELA's inbox

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## In Memoriam: Nancy Faber Zelasko (1951–2008)



It is with great sadness that NCELA must inform our readers of the death of Nancy Zelasko, Director of the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition from 2003 through 2007. Dr. Zelasko died December 14, 2008, in Alexandria, Virginia.

Dr. Zelasko had been active in the field of bilingual education since the 1970s, working with D.C. public schools and as a volunteer with NABE. She became deputy director of NABE in 1989. In 1999, she was appointed Deputy Director at NCELA (then the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education).

Dr. Zelasko held a doctorate and a master's degree in sociolinguistics, both from Georgetown University.

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## Cultural Responsiveness: Working with Mexican Immigrant Families in Early Education

Delis Cuéllar, Ph.D.

Important cultural discontinuities exist between the homes of non-mainstream students and their schools. Fortunately, early childhood education professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children are at the forefront of establishing guidelines for culturally responsive practice. However, we lack knowledge about teachers' conceptualizations of cultural responsiveness, which directly affect culturally diverse children and their families.

Reflecting on cultural appropriateness for teaching Spanish-speaking, Mexican immigrant children, Head Start teachers, Diana and Francisca<sup>1</sup> illustrate the conceptual chasm that can exist within one single classroom. An important aspect of cultural responsiveness for these teachers included providing an environment where the children's mothers could feel included and welcome. However, their practices to achieve this could not have been any more different from one another. Diana described her attempts and rationale by saying, "You'll always find me in my little corner. I don't want them to

think that I am out there judging them. All I want is for them to be comfortable so I pretty much leave them alone." On the other hand, Francisca mentioned, "In the mornings I move around the classroom to talk with the parents about a question or any necessities [that they may have] or simply to greet them. It is very important for them [to be greeted]. They feel more *confianza* [confidence/trust]. A warm greeting is a very important aspect of good communication with the parents.... When you don't say hello to them, they feel like they are less. They feel as if the teacher is indifferent towards them."

Diana's attempt to make the parents feel welcome by leaving them "alone" was negatively

interpreted by the mother of one of her students. This mother explained, "It seemed that she did not want to acknowledge that we were in her classroom. Maybe it was because we do not speak English.... Since she would not greet us in the mornings I thought that, well, I don't really want to say it, but I thought that it was some type of racism." This mother's statement, compelling in its own right, must be understood as even more powerful in light of the fact that Latinos are often reluctant to criticize professionals, including teachers, because of the great respect they hold for them (Jones & Fuller, 2001; Rodriguez-Brown, 2008; Valdés,

### New from NCELA

#### *Dual Language Learners in the Early Years: Getting Ready to Succeed in School*

This November 2008 NCELA report reviews the literature on getting dual language learners ready for school. Dual language learners are children from 3-6 years old who are learning a second language while still acquiring their first. The report adopts the framework of the National Schools Readiness Indicators Initiative (NSRII), and looks at ways in which ready families, communities, services and schools can work together to get children ready to succeed in the early years of education. The report reviews demographic data on the conditions of early childhood, highlights research on instruction for young English language learners with a special focus on communicative skills and literacy, and reviews research on best practices in assessment for this population.

The report can be downloaded from  
<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/resabout/ecell/earlyyears.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> These are pseudonyms for teachers in a Head Start program. Diana is American Indian with 17 years of teaching experience. Francisca is Mexican born with 12 years of teaching experience.

1996).

In short, the miscommunication and misunderstanding highlighted here is an illustration of Espinosa's (1995) insight that "a culture clash may result when Hispanic students and parents are confronted with the typical task-oriented style of most American teachers." Moreover, Francisca's attempt to be culturally responsive by incorporating friendly gestures in her interactions with the

children's mothers is validated by previous research suggesting that *confianza* must be developed so that parent-teacher partnerships can be established with Latina mothers (de la Vega, 2005). It is essential that classroom staff receive adequate professional development experiences to learn culturally responsive interactions and to work together in order to inform each others' teaching practices.

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*for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University.*

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## Improving the Selection of Accommodations for English Language Learners in Content Assessments

Charlene Rivera, Ed.D., Lynn Shafer Willner, Ph.D., & Barbara Acosta, Ph.D.

Standards-based reform requires states to include English language learners (ELLs) in state assessments. A key challenge in accurately assessing ELLs' academic knowledge is the fact that they are in the process of acquiring English. A content test in English is likely to introduce construct-irrelevant variance (i.e., extraneous language or format) that may impede an ELL from understanding the meaning of test items (AERA, APA, and NCME, 1999).

Accommodations are a primary strategy used by states to support ELLs taking content assessments in English. Accommodations for ELLs involve changes to testing procedures, testing materials, or the testing situation in order to allow students meaningful participation in an assessment. *Effective accommodations for*

*ELLs address the unique linguistic and socio-cultural needs of the student by reducing construct irrelevant variance due to language, but do not alter the test construct.* Accommodated test scores should be sufficiently equivalent in scale to be pooled with unaccommodated scores (Acosta, Rivera, & Shafer Willner, 2008, p. 1).

Historically, state assessment policies for ELLs have borrowed accommodations designed for students with disabilities (Rivera, Collum, Shafer Willner & Sia, 2006). However, the challenge of making the content of the test accessible to students is different for ELLs than for students with disabilities. ELLs need support in accessing the language of the test while students with disabilities need support in accessing the test due to a specific cognitive, physical or learning disability. For this reason Rivera et al. (2006) recommended that state

policies offer accommodations that are ELL-responsive—i.e., provide assistance in overcoming the linguistic barriers that prevent ELLs from demonstrating the academic knowledge and skills tested. Without adequate accommodations, ELL test scores cannot accurately reflect what students know and can do (LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994).

The research on accommodations designed for ELLs is sparse in comparison to similar research on accommodations for students with disabilities. Francis, Lesaux, Kieffer & Rivera (2006) identified 11 empirical studies conducted between 1999 and 2005; Pennock-Roman and Rivera (2007) identified two additional studies for a total of 13 studies conducted between 1990 and

2007. In contrast, in a one-year period from 2005 to 2006, researchers conducted 32 experimental studies on the accommodation of students with disabilities (Zenisky & Sireci, 2007, p. 4).

To provide states with more knowledge about how to assess ELLs' academic achievement, The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education (GW-CEEE) developed a guide for SEAs to use when refining state assessment policies for accommodating ELLs. As a foundation for the Guide, GW-CEEE conducted two studies. This work was funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The Guide, studies and other resources are available at <http://ceee.gwu.edu/ellaccommodations/>.

**The guide for the refinement of state assessment policies for accommodating English**

**language learners** (Rivera, Acosta, & Shafer Willner, 2008) is designed for policymakers refining state assessment policies. The Guide presents a process that state education agencies can use to refine state assessment policies to make them more responsive to the needs of ELLs taking state content assessments.

**The descriptive study of state assessment policies for accommodating English language learners** (Shafer Willner, Rivera, and Acosta, 2008) was guided by four research questions: To what extent are state assessment policies responsive to ELLs' unique linguistic needs? To what extent are state policies guiding decision making and monitoring practices? What are the most frequently allowed ELL-responsive accommodations and to what extent are these accommodations research based? In what ways have state assessment policies for accommodating ELLs changed since the inception of NCLB? Findings from the study

indicate that states have made mixed progress in extending the selection of ELL-responsive accommodations and distinguishing accommodations for ELLs from those for students with disabilities. Few states have demonstrated more sophisticated approaches to accommodating ELLs by considering the varying needs of students across a range of background variables, nor have most states developed strategies for monitoring the implementation of accommodations so that data can be collected and analyzed to improve future policy and practice.

**Best practices in state assessment policies for accommodating English language learners: A Delphi study** built on the findings of the descriptive study. Acosta, Rivera, and Shafer Willner (2008) worked with an expert panel to prioritize which ELL-responsive

### Call for contributions to *AccELerate!*

The spring 2009 issue of *AccELerate!* will focus on the theme topic of English language learners with disabilities. We are soliciting contributions from teachers, administrators, or researchers which center on promising practices for ELLs with disabilities. Contributions from individuals with disabilities are particularly welcome

Submissions should not exceed 1000 words, and should be suitable for a general audience of educators. They should provide a clear description of the practice, the setting, and the evidence for the promising practice.

Evidence of promising practices includes:

- Evidence of successful student outcomes based on measures appropriate to the practice.
- Evidence that the practice is aligned to research from a reliable source.
- Evidence of alignment with ELP, content area, or professional development standards.
- Evidence of co-ordination with Title I.

Submissions should be received by email by March 6, 2009. Submissions or questions should be directed to Keira Ballantyne ([keira@gwu.edu](mailto:keira@gwu.edu)).

accommodations should be considered by policymakers when revising state assessment policies. The research team developed an English language proficiency rubric based on an examination of currently used English language proficiency tests. Using the rubric, the expert panel mapped the selected ELL-responsive accommodations to three levels—beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Literacy in English and the native language was also considered in mapping the accommodations.

Based on the Guide and the two studies, GW-CEEE created an **Accommodations Toolkit** to highlight potential good practices described in the Guide, and to call attention to additional resources not included in the Guide. The resources will be of interest to practitioners implementing accommodations and to policymakers revising accommodation policies for

ELLs. The toolkit currently includes (a) links to up to date state assessment policies for accommodating ELLs, (b) featured resources from state assessment policies, (c) a reference list of research on ELL accommodations, and (d) training resources for policy dissemination. New resources will be added to the toolkit as they become available.

*Charlene Rivera is a Research Professor and the Executive Director of The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education. Lynn Shafer Willner and Barbara Acosta are Senior Research Scientists at GW-CEEE.*

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## The Impact of Teacher Training on the Achievement of English Language Learners

Sara Waring, Ph.D.

### Overview

Teachers are an essential factor in student achievement, and teacher quality is positively related to the effective teaching practices (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 required there be a “highly qualified” teacher in every classroom by the end of 2005.

Most teachers today are aware of the formidable educational challenges presented by the changing linguistic and ethnic composition of the nation’s public school population. School districts with limited resources, both economic and human, are pressed to address the growing demands placed on the education system by new

immigrant populations (Menken & Look, 2000).

ELLs have different linguistic and academic needs from the mainstream school population, and ELLs require teachers with specific qualifications to address these needs. Within the context of the nationwide need to hire teachers, which is projected at

2.2 million or more over the next decade, the need for teachers of ELLs is particularly acute due to this population's rapid increase and the additional qualifications required of these teachers (CREDE, 2001). Fewer than 13% percent of U.S. teachers have received any training or professional development on teaching ELL students (NCES, 2002). These figures are disconcerting considering that teachers of ELLs need at least the following knowledge and skills in order to effectively meet the needs of students (Menken & Look, 2000):

- Understanding of basic concepts in second language acquisition
- Nature of language proficiency
- Demands that mainstream education places on culturally diverse learners
- Role of first language and culture in learning
- Capacity to make academic content accessible
- Ability to integrate language and content instruction
- Understanding how differences in language and culture affect students' classroom participation
- Needs and characteristics of students with limited formal schooling
- Understanding and ability to address students from families with little exposure to the norms of U.S. schools and
- Belief in students as individuals and an understanding that limited English proficiency and

limited academic skills are not deficiencies

Researchers suggest that both pre-service and in-service programs should focus on ways to help teachers modify curriculum, deliver appropriate instruction, and practice alternative assessment strategies to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

The increasing demographic disparity between the teaching force and the public school student population has prompted both university teacher preparation programs and public school districts to reconsider not only the knowledge and skills required by new teachers but also the appropriate formats for imparting that knowledge in a manner that cultivates cultural sensitivity (Menken & Antunez, 2001). According to the *National Center for Education Statistics Report* published by the U.S. Department of Education in 2002, 43% of all teachers in U.S. public schools have at least one ELL student in the classroom, yet only 17% of all teachers who work with English language learners meet the NCLB requirement of highly qualified teachers. Research clearly shows that teachers are an essential factor in student achievement and that teacher quality is directly related to effective teaching practices. However, there is little consensus on the training and preparation that lead to effective teaching

especially when addressing English language learners.

### Study

In 2003, a study was conducted to examine the relationship between English as a Second Language teacher training and English language learners' proficiency achievement (Bradfeldt-Waring, 2003). A secondary purpose of the study was to examine whether differences in second year language proficiency test performance results of English language proficiency assessment of ESL students can be associated with teacher training in ESL.

The study collected data on K-12 ELL students in a Midwest school district for two school years. Data was also collected on 180 students' English language proficiency test results, school of attendance, and classroom teacher's training in English as a second language.

Quantitative research methods using descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Two statistical procedures were used to analyze the data. The analysis of covariance was used to assess the significance of mean differences between students' achievement scores among the teachers trained in working with ELL students and teachers not trained. The chi-square nonparametric test of statistical significance for bivariate tabular analysis was also utilized. The independent variable, teacher training, is the characteristic

that helps to predict the continued student proficiency achievement, the dependent variable.

## Results

The results of the study had several interesting outcomes worthy of discussion. There were significant differences in five of the 12 English language proficiency subtests. The results of this study indicated a relationship between teacher training and student achievement. It is important to note that students taught by the trained group always had higher test scores than the untrained group, regardless of the initial condition. Students taught by the trained groups consistently showed improvement while the untrained group did not always

show improvement. Our results indicate that schools can make a difference in an ELL student's achievement, and a substantial portion of that difference is attributable to teachers and their training.

## Recommendations for Practice

Based on the results of the study the following recommendations for practice are suggested :

1. It is recommended that ongoing professional development designed for ELL student achievement be incorporated into the training model for current teaching staff.
2. Preparation in adapting instruction and instructional methods needs to be incorporated into pre-service teacher preparation programs.

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## New Resources

The National Center for Educational Statistics released an Issue Brief in December entitled **Mathematics Achievement of Language-Minority Students During the Elementary Years**. This report uses data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) to track increases in mathematics scores as children move through grades 1-5. Download the report from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009036>

The latest issue of the journal *Educational Assessment* (2008, Vol. 13, 2&3) takes as its theme the assessment of English language learners. Educational Assessment is published by Routledge.

The Appalachia Regional Educational Laboratory published **Preparing to serve English language learner students: school districts with emerging English language learner communities** as part of the REL *Issues & Answers* series. Find the report at [www.relappalachia.org](http://www.relappalachia.org)

The November 2008 edition of *School Administrator* magazine focuses on English language learners. Read the edition online at the website of the American Association of School Administrators <http://www.aasa.org/>, or to order copies, contact Francesca Duffy at [fduffy@aasa.org](mailto:fduffy@aasa.org).

The third issue of the *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement* is dedicated to the topic of Hmong newcomers to Saint Paul public schools. The issue is online at <http://jsaaea.coehd.utsa.edu/index.php/JSAAEA/index>

# The Nation's English Language Learners Count: Highlights of *Quality Counts 2009*

Michelle N. Abrams

On January 7, 2009, *Education Week* released *Quality Counts 2009*, a report which focuses on English language learners (ELLs) in United States' schools. This timely report highlights many of the challenges and issues that ELLs, educators, policymakers, and parents face, and communicates a picture of ELLs throughout the nation. A variety of data from various sources, including from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, were used to generate a 50-state and nation report card with corresponding letter grades for all in each of the following three areas: Chance for Success, Transitions and Alignment, and School Finance.

Based on the three above areas, the overall results for all of the nation's children are average at best. As a whole, the nation earned a C-plus. In the Chance-for-Success category, covering the role that education plays in a person's life from childhood to post-secondary, a C-plus was earned. A C grade was awarded in the Transitions and Alignment category, which focuses on state-level policies that help students transition through the educational systems. In the School Finance category, concerning spending patterns on education and equity in funding, the grade was C-plus.

In addition to the state report cards, the report includes various articles on policy, statutes and relevant case law, immigration, teaching practices, teacher preparation, assessment and accountability, and financing that specifically focus on ELLs. There are colorful and easy-to-read maps, charts, and tables throughout the report that provide a visual picture of the phenomena described. Most important are the several interwoven themes and issues that are addressed in the articles along with profiles on individual ELLs. These profiles allow the reader to associate a face with the population as they reflect the real diversity found among this group of students. Each profile contains brief highlights from each of the four sections which comprise the report: "Portrait of a Population," "Teaching and Research," "Assessment and Accountability," and "Financing.

## *Quality Counts 2009* Brief Section Highlights

*The Nation's ELL Population*  
Practitioners in the field may not be surprised by the findings regarding the demographics of the nation's ELLs and may have informally witnessed them firsthand. Previous anecdotal observations are confirmed with data from *Quality Counts 2009*. Some highlights from the

"Portrait of a Population" section include the following:

- The continuing achievement gap between ELLs and native English speakers scoring proficient, based on results of state tests mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests in reading and mathematics.
- A brief synopsis of relevant case law and statutes dating from 1923 to 2008 as they apply to ELLs.
- The increase of ELLs in communities throughout the nation for various reasons (e.g., socioeconomic, employment opportunities, etc.) and the impact of this on school systems, including on funding, teacher training, and education policy.

## *Program Effectiveness and Teacher Training*

Educational research is void of research-based findings from high-quality studies focusing on teaching practices which work best with ELLs. Teacher preparation and on-going professional development opportunities are needed to meet the demands of a changing student population. The following are highlights from the "Teaching and Research" section of *Quality Counts 2009*.

- The need for conducting high-quality studies on the

best teaching practices for educating ELLs, especially in content area subjects.

- Addressing the teacher shortage in the area of teaching English as a second language (ESL) and the possibility of providing more incentives (e.g., scholarships and tuition reimbursement) to become endorsed and/or certified in ESL, and employing innovative ways to help current teachers instruct ELLs .

#### *Testing, Placement, and Accountability*

Designing a test that measures English language proficiency (ELP) accurately has been one of the many hurdles in educating ELLs. There are efforts to create a more effective ELP assessment—the report specifically highlights the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium (WIDA). Proper placement of ELLs based on ELP test results and other information (e.g., prior educational experiences and knowledge, current content area performance, etc.) is equally as important to help these students become academically successful. The following are highlights from

the “Assessment and Accountability” section of *Quality Counts 2009*:

- The importance of English language proficiency testing and proper placement, as well as utilization of such data.
- The issue of testing students for proficiency in the subject areas of reading, mathematics, and science in English—a language that ELLs are still acquiring.
- The need to reduce the dropout rate among ELLs and increase the number of ELLs who earn high school diplomas.

#### *Funding the Education of ELLs*

There are several sources available for funding ELD programs, including state-supported grants and federal grants through Title III. In addition, the diverse ways in which states allocate resources complicates providing a uniform picture of spending for the education of ELLs. The following are highlights from the “Funding” section of *Quality Counts 2009*.

- There is much variation in funding and allocation from state to state, and a need for a clearer picture as to how money is being spent to educate ELLs.
- Funding for programs to educate ELLs needs to be prioritized.

#### **The Future of Educating ELLs**

*Quality Counts 2009* brings ELL issues to the forefront by calling attention to a group of students who have been underrepresented in the past. It legitimizes the challenges and issues that educators and ELLs are facing in today’s schools. The report initiates dialog between policymakers, educators, parents, advocates, and community members to help them gain a more accurate picture of issues that schools are facing. It is a realistic beginning to a future of helping ELLs become more successful in our nation’s schools.

To learn more about the *Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population* report, visit <http://www.edweek.org/ew/to c/2009/01/08/index.html>. Hard copies of the report may be ordered from the Education Week website for \$10 apiece.

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## U.S. Department of Education Issues New Guidance on Title III

*Note: This article was prepared using documents made available to NCELA staff by the U.S. Department of Education. Further information and documents regarding the Notice of Interpretations can be found on NCELA's website.*

In October, the U.S. Department of Education issued a set of “final interpretations” regarding state implementation of a number of Title III assessment and accountability provisions. The goals of the new guidance are to address longstanding questions about Title III accountability, correct some conflicting guidance states have received about Title III assessment and accountability requirements, and ensure that states implement Title III consistent with the basic tenets and goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

The Title III Notice of Final Interpretations (available at [http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/policy/legislation/2\\_enacted.htm](http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/policy/legislation/2_enacted.htm)) addresses ten key issues related to the assessment of and accountability for limited English proficient (LEP) students.

### **States must annually assess all LEP students.**

Some states have asked the Department whether they may exempt an LEP student from the annual English language

proficiency (ELP) assessment required under Title III in any domain in which the student scores proficient and “bank” the student’s proficient scores until the student is proficient in all domains. The clearest reading of Title III is that all Title III-served LEP students must be assessed annually in each of the required language domains—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—and therefore, states are not allowed to “bank” ELP assessment scores.

### **States have flexibility in the ELP assessments they use.**

States may use ELP assessments that provide either (1) separate scores in each of the language domains or (2) a single composite score. In either case, however, a state must be able to demonstrate that its ELP assessment meaningfully measures student progress and proficiency in each language domain and, overall, is a valid and reliable measure of student progress and proficiency in English.

### **States must include all Title III-served LEP students in Title III accountability.**

In monitoring state implementation of the annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) under Title III, the Department found that some states systematically excluded Title III-served LEP students from Title III accountability in ways that are inconsistent with the law. This interpretation is intended to

ensure that all LEP students served by Title III-funded programs are included in AMAO determinations. The only two exceptions to including all students in AMAO determinations are (1) when states are unable to measure progress for AMAO 1 because a student does not have two ELP assessment scores and (2) when the rules governing how states make adequate yearly progress (AYP) determinations under Title I (e.g., full academic year) result in some students being excluded from AMAO 3.

### **States have flexibility in determining “progress” in English language proficiency.**

This interpretation addresses the fact that some states believed they were “prohibited” from including in Title III accountability any student for whom the state did not have scores from two state ELP assessments. If a state does not have two measures on the state’s ELP assessment from which to determine progress in English language acquisition, the state may propose to the Department an alternative method of calculating progress if it wishes to do so. The alternative method for measuring progress must be a valid and reliable measure of growth in English language proficiency.

### **States have flexibility in defining “proficiency” in English under Title III, but are encouraged to use the same definition they use to determine proficiency and exit**

### **students from the LEP subgroup under Title I.**

Many states have two different definitions of language proficiency for LEP students. Many states use one definition of proficiency for purposes of Title III accountability (AMAO 2), and a different definition and set of criteria for determining proficiency under Title I in order to “exit” a student from the LEP subgroup. This interpretation allows states to use different definitions but strongly recommends that states consider using the same definition of English language proficiency for Title I and Title III.

### **States may use a minimum group size in Title III accountability, but it must be the same as that approved under Title I.**

While the Department is not encouraging states to adopt minimum group size policies under Title III, the Department understands that states may have received conflicting guidance on this issue; this interpretation clarifies that the Department will allow states to apply a minimum group size for AMAO determinations. However, while states may apply a minimum group size to AMAO determinations at the district and state levels, they may not apply them to separate “cohorts” of Title III-served LEP students for which the state has set separate AMAO targets. If a state has formed consortia for the

purposes of Title III funding, a state’s minimum group size may be applied to each consortia member only if AMAO determinations can be made.

### **States have flexibility to use the AYP determination for the LEP subgroup under Title I for Title III accountability purposes and are encouraged to do so.**

Under Title III, AMAO 3 is AYP for the LEP subgroup. However, the statutory language in Title III is not clear on whether all LEP students or only Title III-served LEP students are to be included in Title III accountability. This interpretation clarifies that a state may calculate a separate AYP for only Title III-served students or use the same criteria for determining AYP under Title III as it uses to determine AYP for the whole LEP subgroup under Title I. The Department encourages states to use the AYP determination for the LEP subgroup under Title I for Title III accountability purposes because doing so ties accountability for English language acquisition under Title III to accountability under Title I.

### **States have flexibility to set different expectations for Title III-served LEP students based on the amount of time such students have had access to language instruction educational programs.**

The Department interprets Title III to mean that (a) states may, but are not required to, establish “cohorts” for Title III accountability; and (b) states may set separate targets for separate groups or “cohorts” of LEP students served

by Title III based only on the criteria specified in the law—that is, the amount of time (for example, number of years) such students have had access to language instruction educational programs. Instead of determining Title III accountability based on a LEP student’s access to English language instruction, some states have inappropriately established different expectations for LEP students based on student performance, the number of years students have been in the United States, or on the likelihood a student will reach proficiency in English in a given year. Setting expectations for Title III grantees based on student abilities rather than on the services the grantees provide is inconsistent with the basic tenets of NCLB.

### **States have flexibility in making accountability determinations for consortia.**

The statute permits a group of districts that are not individually eligible for Title III funds (due to the small number of LEP students in the districts) to form a consortium. NCLB requires states to hold a consortium, like any other eligible entity, accountable under Title III. This interpretation gives states flexibility to treat a consortium as a single entity or as separate entities for Title III accountability. States must develop a set of “decision rules” about how they will hold consortia accountable under Title III and include those decision rules in the state’s Title III State Plan.

**States must implement corrective actions as required under Title III for every Title III-funded district for every school year.**

In monitoring states, the Department has found that some states have made accountability determinations under Title III, but have not informed their districts or parents about these determinations, or implemented any measures to address a grantee's failure to meet accountability targets under Title III. This

interpretation clarifies that states must annually inform their Title III districts when the districts do not meet the state's accountability targets. In addition, states and districts must communicate this information to the parents of LEP students. These requirements are central to the purposes and goals of NCLB.

In December, state chiefs and Title III directors received a letter from the Department reminding them of the Department's process for the submission and review of amendments to Title III State Plans

for the 2008–09 school year. The Department encourages states to review their Title III assessment and accountability policies to ensure consistency with the final interpretations now. However, the Title III Notice of Final Interpretations gives states until next year's ELP assessment administration and accountability determinations to implement changes to be consistent with the final interpretations. States will be invited to amend their Title III State Plans for 2009-10 around this time next year.



### askNCELA's Inbox

In which we highlight the answers to commonly asked questions that appear in our email inbox.

#### How do I become a certified ESL or bilingual education teacher?

The process for becoming certified in ESL or bilingual education teacher varies by state. The best way to research the requirements for a particular state is to visit the website of the state department or board of education. NCELA maintains links to information on teaching certification in each state in our state profiles, accessible from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/policy/states/>

[askNCELA@gwu.edu](mailto:askNCELA@gwu.edu) is NCELA's email helpline. We are happy to answer questions and to provide technical assistance information upon request.