
Position Statement On the Education of Students Acquiring English as a Second Language

Adopted January 3, 2001 

The mission of the Connecticut State Board of Education is to ensure “that each child shall have...equal opportunity to receive a suitable program of educational experiences,” as stated in Section 10-4a of the Connecticut General Statutes. To accomplish this mission, and to fulfill the requirements of **Public Act No. 99-211, *An Act Improving Bilingual Education***, for those students, prekindergarten to adult, who are acquiring English as a second language, the Board affirms that programs be provided in which such students will:

- as the primary goal, acquire a level of English proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing that will allow full participation in the mainstream academic program;
- master the same content and meet the same academic performance standards expected of students whose first language is English; and
- continue developing their native language and heritage as a goal that has value in its own right and in order to assist their overall language development and content learning in English.

Moreover, in a time of increasing economic globalization and international exchange, the State Board of Education maintains that the acquisition of more than one language by all students is in the best interest of the State of Connecticut. Therefore, it is the belief of the State Board of Education that:

- every student should attain writing and speaking competency in at least two languages;
- individuals competent in more than one language and knowledgeable about more than one culture are an essential asset to the state’s schools, communities and work force, and the national and international markets; and
- such individuals will be among those best suited to assume leadership and other important positions in the national and international markets.

At the same time, the State Board of Education recognizes that:

- second language learning and learning through a second language are demanding and complex enterprises that require considerable support;
- mastery of academic subject area content in English requires a high level of English proficiency;
- approaches that promote cognitive development in the student’s primary language as well as in English enhance student achievement;

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- a suitable program of educational experiences for all students acquiring English as a second language must include a full academic program of study presented in an understandable way utilizing a rigorous sequence of English language and literacy development; and
- the number and concentrations of linguistic groups needing services will determine the types of programs that a school district must provide, including programs of bilingual education as required by Section 10-17f of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended by Public Act No. 99-211.

Accordingly, local school districts with students acquiring English as a second language have the responsibility to:

- identify and serve every student who needs to acquire English as a second language for communicative and academic learning purposes;
- employ qualified teachers of English as a second language and provide all-English speaking classroom teachers with professional development in rendering content area instruction understandable for students acquiring English as a second language;
- ensure that lack of English competency does not result in the exclusion of students from appropriate academic and nonacademic activities; and
- keep abreast of national and international research and best practices for educating students acquiring English as a second language.

In addition, local school districts required to provide programs of bilingual education must:

- establish for eligible students programs that: make instructional use of both English and their native language; enable such students to achieve English proficiency and academic mastery of subject matter content and higher order thinking skills; provide for the continuous increase in the use of English and corresponding decrease in the use of the native language for purposes of instruction;
- employ bilingual education teachers proficient in English and at least one other language in both written and oral formats and, as appropriate, English as a second language teachers and all-English speaking classroom teachers skilled in assisting eligible students in developing content area mastery in English;
- establish clear procedures for placing eligible students in the language program selected by their parents or guardians and for exiting students from required bilingual education programs according to established standards and criteria;
- ensure through the annual assessment that eligible students are making sufficient linguistic and academic progress toward meeting the state English mastery standard and, where they are not, provide them with the required language support services, identified in consultation with their parents or guardians, that will enable them to do so;

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- ensure that eligible students who do not meet the state English mastery standard after thirty months in a required bilingual education program receive appropriate language transition support services and make sufficient progress toward meeting the standard on the required annual assessment;
 - assess the effectiveness of required programs of bilingual education through the annual program evaluation and prescribed measures of effectiveness;
 - make every effort to allow eligible students and their English-proficient counterparts to be sources of cultural enrichment to one another; and
 - orient the parents of eligible students in supporting the linguistic and academic development of their children.

Finally, local school districts may include the development of native language skills of eligible students and the participation of English-proficient students in required programs of bilingual education.

The Board strongly believes that this position statement appropriately addresses the education of students acquiring English as a second language and enhances our new vision of the strength that multilingualism holds for all students in the State of Connecticut.