

## Press Release

### *Bilingual Education: Cause or Cure?*

COLLEGE STATION--A report released by the Texas Educational Excellence Project (TEEP) finds a link between education programs geared toward limited English proficient (LEP) students and Latino student dropout rate. Specifically, the report finds that as the number of LEP students served by either English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual education programs increase, Latino dropout rates decrease.

The purpose of the report was to test arguments in favor of and against bilingual education. Some argue that bilingual education would decrease Latino dropout rates, while others argue that continuing high levels of Latino dropout rates are a function of bilingual education. Critics of bilingual education successfully used this argument to convince voters in California and Arizona vote to for initiatives to dismantle bilingual education these states.

"Although political actors have long argued that bilingual education affects Latino dropout rates, there has been little systematic research to test these assertions" says Nick Theobald, author of the report and Director of Research for the Texas Educational Excellence Project. "Given the number of students affected by bilingual programs and other programs geared toward LEP students," Theobald continues, "it is not appropriate to form policy on findings from a handful of successful or failing programs."

The study compared Texas school districts that utilize some form of bilingual education and those that use ESL instruction for their LEP students. ESL classes are taught in English, and they closely resemble programs that replace bilingual education in California and Arizona. The report did not find any evidence that there is a difference in Latino dropout rates associated with the type of program being used.

However, the report does offer evidence that districts need to offer some form of assistance for their LEP students. The findings suggest that Latino dropout rates increase when the percentage of Latino LEP students not served by either ESL or bilingual programs increase. This indicates that high Latino dropout rates are at least, in part, a function of not addressing the language needs of certain students within the Latino student population.

"Compared to other states," says Theobald "Texas does an exceptional job in placing LEP students in language assistance program. Not all states, though, require their school districts to offer assistance." The results of this research suggest that policy makers need to ensure that all LEP students receive some form of assistance, regardless of whether it be through bilingual or ESL programs.

The Carlos Cantu Hispanic Education and Opportunity Endowment provides funding for this study and other studies concerning Latino dropout research. This study is part of a large project studying factors affecting Latino dropout rates.

The Texas Educational Excellence Project seeks to apply scholarly research to educational policy issues in order to make recommendations for greater quality and equity in Texas school systems. Statistical data for all districts used for the report can be found at <http://teep.tamu.edu/>.

To see the entire report visit the TEEP web site at [teep.tamu.edu](http://teep.tamu.edu)

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