



IDRA Research for Curriculum Quality

In 2002, IDRA rigorously studied exemplary bilingual education programs in schools across the nation as determined by English learner academic achievement. Amid a backdrop of great language diversity among the students and parents that U.S. schools serve are schools with exemplary bilingual education programs and extraordinary individuals who are committed to equity and excellence. One of the 25 common characteristics that contribute to the high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs is a quality curriculum. In the 10 schools IDRA studied, the curricula were planned to adapt instruction in ways that respect students' native language and reflect their culture. All of the classroom instruction was meaningful, academically challenging, and linguistically and culturally relevant. Teachers used a variety of strategies and techniques, including technology, that responded to different learning styles. Teachers and administrators reported their bilingual program was designed to meet the students' needs, including recognition of the need for alignment between the curriculum standards, assessments and professional development. Teachers were actively involved in curriculum planning and met regularly with administrative support to plan.

At another school, a researcher noted: "There is a day set aside for teachers to plan Russian and Spanish classes and to make sure they are in their native language but along the same theme, so all children are getting the same thing in their native language."

A teacher stated: "During training we learn about not watering down the curriculum. We expect the same things for all students." An observer reported: "I tried to press them [teachers and staff] to talk to me about 'problem students,' and no one saw any student as such." IDRA uses its research to help others identify successful programs and/or raise the bar with their own bilingual education programs so all students succeed academically.

IDRA's study was funded by the U.S. Department of Education and informed IDRA's publication, [Good Schools and Classrooms for Children Learning English: A Guide](#). IDRA continues to work with teachers and administrators to assure rigorous bilingual programs have high quality curricula that produce excellent outcomes for children.

Samples from IDRA's Curriculum Quality Research and Development Work

Curriculum Tracking: An Ill-Conceived Panacea

This 1983 newsletter article by Dr. José A. Cárdenas criticizes the introduction of tracking into the curriculum that set children on three different tracks – academic, general or vocational. This model was supposed to be a "quick fix" to remedy issues that plague the education system but, as Dr. Cárdenas states, there is no way this system will do anything to address the problems of finance, inadequate staff and the education of special populations. Though Dr. Cárdenas agrees that some students would benefit from vocational training and that not every student should or even wants to pursue college, forcing students onto a tracking system takes away their choice is an anathema to our democratic society. It is preposterous to think that a sixth grader is able to make reasonable decisions about careers at such a young age given the many years ahead of them to grow and mature. Tracking should not be required in schools.

HB 246: A Synopsis of the Law: Part One

This 1984 newsletter article by Dr. Bradley Scott helps fulfill IDRA's purpose to disseminate information and analysis on current legislation. This article is a breakdown of HB 246 as it revised the curriculum. Dr. Scott specifically focuses on the requirements for elementary and middle schools in Part 1 of a two-part series on HB 246. The new law repealed all former laws requiring courses in favor of 12 subject areas that constitute a well-balanced curriculum. Each school district was required to offer this balanced curriculum which includes English language arts, other languages (to the extent possible), mathematics, science, health, physical education, fine arts, social studies, economics, business education, vocational education, Texas history and U.S. history as individual subjects and in reading courses. It also specifies learning certain aspects of computer science at the secondary level. The article goes into more detail about the requirements per grad level or grad level range.