Coming Out of the ESL Ghetto: Promising Practices for Latino Immigrant Students and English Learners in Hypersegregated Secondary Schools

Christian Faltis
Arizona State University

Beatriz Arias
Arizona State University

Abstract

In this paper, we suggest promising educational practices for secondary schools with large numbers of Latino immigrant students, who are increasingly left to languish socially and linguistically in an ESL ghetto, segregated from access to mainstream classes, including college preparatory courses, and unexposed to English speakers. We argue that segregation is based on the racist perception that because these students are brown-skinned, speak Spanish and are mainly immigrants, they don’t deserve a quality education. To counter these perceptions, we suggest a number of steps schools can take to become more inclusive in ways that not only promote successful language and content learning, but also positive intergroup relations among immigrant and native born students. Our goal is to offer schools ways to ensure that English learners and immigrant students have the kinds of social and academic experiences in school that not only lead to graduation, but to higher education as well.

Introduction

Latino immigrant students who are English learners are now the most segregated of all minority students in U.S. schools (Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield, 2003; Gifford & Valdés, 2006; Arias, 2005). Their segregation in school is particularly acute at the secondary level because the numbers of immigrant students entering school at this level is at an all time high (Passel, 2006) and because secondary schools are largely unprepared to address the language and learning needs of this burgeoning student population (Faltis & Coulter, 2007). At the secondary level, the most typical policy for teaching immigrant students who do not have enough English abilities to participate in and benefit from instruction in English is to hypersegregate these students into classes where the curriculum consists primarily of English as a second language (ESL) and sheltered content classes for most of their day, condemning them to what Valdés (1998) refers to as an ESL ghetto.

In this paper, we suggest promising educational practices for secondary schools with large numbers of Latino immigrant students so that these students are not left to languish socially and linguistically in the ESL ghetto, but instead are invited into the whole school environment in ways that increase their chances for learning English and achieving academic success. We are convinced that secondary schools need to rethink the benefits and detriments of excluding English learners from access to mainstream classes, including college preparatory courses, and take bold steps to reconceptualize instruction to ensure that Latino immigrant students are exposed to and acquire a wide range of language proficiencies and academic knowledge needed for success in secondary school and beyond. We argue that segregation is largely a matter of language proficiency and racism, particularly the perception that because these students are brown-skinned, speak Spanish
or worse, Spanglish (see Faltis, in press). Likewise, the dominant view is that Latino immigrant students should not be integrated with native English speaking students, lest they slow them down, nor should they be taught by the best teachers in the school, whose talents are more suited for students who speak, understand, read, and write (standard) English well (Olsen, 1997; Valdés, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). To counter these perceptions and practices, we suggest actions schools can take to become more inclusive in ways that not only promote successful language and content learning, but also positive intergroup relations among immigrant and native born students.

A Few Notes on the Hypersegregation of Latino Immigrant English Learners

Nationally, the typical Latino immigrant English learner attends a school where over 60 percent of the students are also Latino and English learners (Lee, 2006). These schools are likely to be in urban centers, and have large enrollments, large class sizes, and high incidences of student poverty. Poverty exacerbates all aspects of students’ lives, often pressuring students to work to help the family survive, provide child care for younger siblings and manage the household. The students tend to have health problems – many have never been to a dentist or vision specialist, and few have regular health exams (Kozol, 2005).

Schools with high numbers of Latino immigrant students have a greater reliance on un(der)qualified teachers than schools with low numbers of Latino immigrant students. In California, for example, teachers in schools with high numbers of English learners tend to be novice teachers in their first three years of teaching and teachers with no specialized training in working with English learners (Darling-Hammond, 2004). In urban cities such as New York City, Chicago, Dallas and Phoenix, teachers working in large schools populated almost exclusively with Latino students are likely to have little or no background in teaching English learners, especially at the secondary level. Moreover, many of the content area teachers may be “highly qualified”; that is, they have obtained enough college credits to teach in their content area as specified by NCLB requirements, but they have little or no preparation for teaching in inner school settings (Kozol, 2005). This is not to say that these teachers are not dedicated or concerned about their students. The point is that in general, they do not have the knowledge, experience, or background to orchestrate instruction in classrooms full of students of varying English proficiencies or in classrooms where English learners and English speakers share classroom space.

Secondary schools with high numbers of Latino immigrant English learners are hyper-segregated schools; that is, they perpetuate student segregation on a variety of levels. First, school enrollment is segregated. Secondly, curricular tracks can be identified which require and sustain the segregation of the students; for example, the ESL program. Thirdly, students are socially and physically segregated, meaning that students attending these schools have little or no contact throughout their school day with students outside of their ethnic and language group identities. This is partly due to self-selected, within-group segregation, and partly to the school structure, which cuts off interaction between Latino immigrant students and students who attend mainstream and college-prep content classes (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004). When Latino immigrant students leave their hypersegregated schools they return to their communities, to live among and interact mainly with members of their ethnic and language groups (Arias, in press).

Generally speaking, secondary schools attended mainly by Latino immigrant students assure curricular segregation through the implementation of newcomer programs, ESL programs and curricular tracking for students who are still developing English. Newcomer programs are specifically designed to address the acculturation and linguistic needs of recent arrivals who are unfamiliar
with U.S. schooling practices and in the early stages of English proficiency. By design, newcomer centers and programs are short-term efforts at socializing and acculturating adolescents to the comprehensive high school. Once the time allocated for the newcomer program has been completed (usually no more than one academic year) the student is then assigned to the ESL or bilingual program. Depending on the state in which they reside, Latino immigrant students may be placed in either structured English immersion (SEI) programs (Arizona, California, and Massachusetts) or in some form of ESL language development program that may or may not use Spanish for literacy and for some content instruction while students learn English (See Faltis & Hudelson, 1998 for an overview of bilingual education in elementary and secondary school settings). The states that use SEI have recently passed laws prohibiting the use of languages other than English for instruction. In all other states, schools may design programs in which certain content areas are taught in Spanish so that students can earn credits toward graduation while they are also learning English.

Nationwide, however, few secondary schools have strong bilingual programs because of a shortage of teachers capable of teaching high school level content in Spanish (Guerrero, 1997), and because of a lack of quality materials in Spanish suitable for the secondary level (Faltis & Hudelson, 1998). Instead, what happens to Latino immigrant students who enter secondary school with little or no English proficiency is that they are placed in a newcomer program for up to a year and then into an ESL program for another couple of years, or they go directly into an ESL program, and in both cases, usually remain tracked as ESL learners for the remainder of their secondary school experiences (See Boyson & Short, 2003; Faltis & Coulter, 2007 for descriptions of newcomer programs and practices). The ESL program consists of leveled ESL classes (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) coupled with sheltered content area classes, which are usually offered sparsely and dependent upon teachers’ availabilities (Faltis, 1993).

In the absence of sheltered content courses, schools often have bridge courses that rely on content-based instruction to provide students with advanced English proficiency reading, writing, and study skill strategies that are considered essential by content area teachers (see Haley & Austin, 2004). Once students are placed in the ESL classes, it is quite rare for them to gain access to higher level college preparation or advanced placement courses in math or science (Harklau, 1999). It is even more difficult for Latino immigrant English learners to move from ESL and sheltered classes to regular and college-prep English literature courses because as Valdés (2004, p. 119) points out:

In many schools, mainstream English teachers continue to insist that second language learners have not yet developed the kind of English that they need in order to do well in their classes. They worry about the errors ELL students make in written English; they worry about their ability to read the texts they assign; and they worry about their ability to engage in discussions about literature at the level that they require.

This reluctance on the part of English teachers to include immigrant English learners is due in part to the lack of communication between English teachers and ESL teachers about how to work with English learners, but it is also the result of more widespread acceptance of ghetto-like conditions for Latino immigrant students, based on the belief by many secondary teachers that Latino immigrant students are not worth the effort (Valdés, 2001).
On the Potential Benefits of Separating Newcomers

Reasons for separating Latino immigrant students from other students during secondary school experiences are complex (See Arias, Faltis, & Cohen, in press, for structural and historical explanations), but there are some defensible reasons for keeping newly arrived immigrants separate from students who are native English-speaking students or students with advanced English proficiencies, with the fundamental understanding that this is a temporary and instructionally beneficial separation. From the point of view of ESL teachers in bilingual programs, having newly arrived students stay with them for the majority of the day over an extended period of time is critical for successful language development early on, especially for immigrant students who have gaps in their formal education experiences. Teachers can group students into broad language as well as academic proficiency levels and work on moving them to the next highest level, to prepare them for sheltered content classes where in addition to acquiring academic language, students also are challenged to use the tools and resources needed to participate in multiple discourse communities affiliated with the academic content areas being studied.

From the newcomer students’ perspective, there are several benefits to being segregated from all-English classrooms while they are becoming attuned to English and becoming familiar with American school routines and practices. Four of the main benefits are as follows (Faltis & Coulter, 2007):

1. Greater participation. When newly arrived immigrant students are placed in settings where they don’t have to compete with fully proficient English speakers, they have more opportunities to use their developing English in a safe environment, where errors are considered a natural part of learning to speak and write in a new language. The opportunity to try out oral and written language facilitates language acquisition.

2. Cultural sensitivity. Teachers who work with newly arrived Latino immigrant students are generally more sensitive to the students’ language and school cultural needs. These teachers often have more experience and preparation in working with immigrant English learners than do mainstream content area secondary teachers. Students feel safe in classrooms where teachers understand their social and academic learning needs.

3. Collective sense of belonging. Separate classes and programs enable immigrant students to develop a collective sense of belonging. Students who study and learn together, and who experience the same difficulties in school due to language and cultural differences, tend to develop a bond that intimately connects them to their school program.

4. How to get by during and after school hours. Students who are new to U.S. schools need lots of preparation, patience, and practice to understand how secondary school works. They need to learn about school passes, tardy policy and repercussions, detention, hallway behavior, class scheduling, cafeteria schedules, etc. Most high schools also have after school programs and activities that may be beneficial to immigrant students and their families.

Separation as Detrimental for Latino Immigrant Students

Although there may be some advantages to separating Latino immigrant students initially to ensure they participate in and benefit from classroom learning experiences, keeping them apart
from native English speakers beyond a year is inimical to their long term language and content learning needs (Feinberg, 2000). Four issues to consider are as follows:

1. **Linguistic Isolation.** Separating Latino immigrant students from native English speakers can deny them access to academic conversations and the language-related tools and resources involved in acquiring multiple forms of oral and written communication. Linguistic isolation is especially detrimental for students who have gained conversational proficiency in English, but been denied access to the multiple discourse communities considered indispensable for academic success in content area classes where proficiency in oral and written communication is highly valorized.

2. **Physical and Social Isolation.** The physical and social segregation of minority students along class and ethnic lines is already a problem in many schools (Arias, in press; Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield, 2003; Kozol, 2005). Nearly all English learners are also members of language minority groups who experience physical and social isolation, especially from White, English speaking students. When students have few or no opportunities to interact socially and physically, there is a greater chance that students will develop negative stereotypes and come to expect negative intergroup practices (Arias, Faltis, & Cohen, in press).

3. **Labeling.** Latino immigrant students who are placed into newcomer centers and ESL programs for long periods of time are often labeled as monolinguals, LEPS (limited English proficient), and other terms that denote some kind of language limitation. The meanings of these labels may be extended to infer some kind of intellectual inferiority or learning disability. Moreover, when students are referred to by these labels, their identities as individual students may be minimized, making it difficult for them to be viewed as capable members of academic communities.

4. **Separate but unequal.** Separate newcomer classes and ESL programs for immigrant English learners may not be equal to regular classes and programs in terms of the texts, materials and the types of oral and written language practices and activities available. One study of newcomer centers (Constantino & Lavandez, 1993) found that English instruction was little more than pattern-practice drillwork, coupled with memorization and other rote work. Language activities in ESL classes and sheltered content classes using SIOP and SDAIE methods tend to be teacher-directed and focused on comprehensible input, with few opportunities for students to engage in inquiry study, peer interaction, or language and literacy rich assignments (Faltis & Wolfe, 1999).

Taken together or individually, these factors work to prevent Latino immigrant students from gaining access to, participating in, and benefiting from schooling that is open and available to all students. In other words, these factors exclude Latino immigrant students from schooling in general, and from language and literacy learning, and academic content learning in particular. From our perspective, Latino immigrant students need a range of opportunities beyond ESL and sheltered content classes to gain proficiency in language and academic content at the levels that are recognized as valuable to the schools and society.
Language Learning as Community Identity and Membership

Furnishing Latino immigrant students with access to native speaker interaction and to regular content areas classes is the sine qua non, not only of becoming fully proficient in English, but also of gaining access to membership in academic communities of practice. New research on language acquisition in school settings points to the relationship of identity affiliation and community membership to language proficiency for academic purposes (See Block, 2003). Accordingly, the extent to which English learners become proficient in academic language is only partially a function of how much comprehensible input they receive, how much output they produce, and how much interaction they are engaged in. In addition to comprehensible input, output and interaction, students also need to take on new identities as members of particular academic communities; for example, the communities of math, science, history, and literature. Membership to these academic communities requires learners to talk, understand, and otherwise use oral and written language in ways that are recognized, valued, and reinforced by existing members of the academic community (Faltis & Coulter, 2007). In this manner, participation in academic communities of practice goes hand in hand with the creation of new identity affiliations, both of which facilitate the acquisition of language abilities involved in community membership. When Latino immigrant students are excluded from participation in academic communities of practice because they are kept in ESL ghettos, there is little chance that they will become full members of academic communities of practice. Moreover, exclusion of this type pushes students to leave school before graduating, and for those who stay in school, it offers them little support for post-secondary education (Gándara, 2005).

Secondary Schools that Defy the Hypersegregation of Latino Immigrant Students

Not all secondary schools with large numbers of Latino immigrant students keep these students in ESL ghettos. There are schools in which Latino immigrant students and Latino English learners are successful. By successful, we mean that not only are these students staying in school, but they are also learning English and doing well academically in all other content areas (Casanova, 2006; Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Gibson, Gándara & Peterson Koyama, 2004; Gándara, 2004; Olsen, Jaramillo, McCall-Pérez, & White, 1999). We begin with what these schools know about the students that attend them, and how they adjust to students needs.

Teachers, educators and researchers who care about Latino immigrant youth know what needs to happen in school environments to create powerful learning environments for immigrant students and English learners (Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999). There is now a solid body of knowledge and research on how immigrant youth acquire a second language in school; on how long it takes to acquire academic language in a second language; and on the role of first language literacy and formal schooling on how well and how fast students progress in a second language. The research points to what has to happen first so that the subsequent actions taken have a chance to succeed: Teachers and schools must know who their students are and be able to look beyond the unitary label, “English learner.” While most Latino immigrant students are English learners, they differ in the social and regional dialects of Spanish they speak and prior experiences with English, in the socioeconomic and cultural groups they come from, and the kinds of prior formal schooling they have had as well as their experiences coming to the United States.
Of particular relevance to classroom teachers are the kinds and extent of literacy and formal schooling experiences of immigrant students. Faltis and Coulter (2007) distinguish between immigrant students with parallel and non-parallel schooling experiences. Immigrant students with parallel schooling experiences typically enter school at grade level or above, and may have had prior exposure to English in school or at home with tutors. These students tend to have smooth transitions into school culture and they often excel academically. For example, Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) have documented how Salvadoran immigrant children with parallel schooling experiences do very well academically in school once they gain oral and written proficiency in English.

Immigrant students with non-parallel schooling experiences and long-term English learners present the greatest challenges for secondary schools and under-prepared secondary teachers. Within this group are also what Hamann (2001) refers to as sojourner students, students who move back and forth from Mexico throughout the school year and who may also follow migrant work itineraries. Non-parallel immigrant students are typically at least two grade levels below where they should be for their age group (Faltis & Coulter, 2007). These students face many barriers in school. Not only do they enter school knowing little or no English, they often cope with conflicts between family values and those promoted by school (Gibson, 1998). Moreover, many of these students enter school with minimal knowledge of and experience with computer technology, which for secondary students is essential for successful schooling (Suárez-Orozco, 2005).

Long-term English learners are immigrant students who have been in English learning programs for at least five years, and they remain English learners, largely incapable of participating in and benefiting from mainstream English-only classrooms without significant changes in instructional practices (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). These students need a schooling environment that is inclusive and supportive of their specific language and literacy needs.

The best secondary schools have knowledge of the instructional needs of their immigrant students and English learners, and have practices in place that welcome them to the campus. These schools see themselves as partners with families and community agencies to provide programs and services for all students. These schools view immigrant students as part of the total school community and take ownership for their achievement and progress. As part of understanding the immigrant student population, Corson (1999) suggests that schools develop schoolwide language policies, based on self-study in which language characteristics and problems in each school are identified and all teachers are held responsible for solutions to these problems. As part of the welcoming component, schools routinely provide orientation programs for students, with teachers and counselors who assess, monitor, and provide transitioning services. The best schools primarily serving long-term English learners and students with non-parallel experiences focus their attention on providing an engaging curriculum, with specialized services based on students’ home language and literacy and English learning needs (Faltis & Coulter, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Samway, 2006).

The following section describes research-based features of effective programs and services for immigrant students and English learners that secondary schools can look to for guidance, adjusting them according to the needs and characteristics of their immigrant student and English learner populations.
Features Identified as Important for Including Immigrant Students and English Learners

1. Specialized support for newcomers. Welcoming and transitional services become increasingly important at the secondary level, and especially for students with non-parallel schooling experiences. Students (and their families) who are entering U.S. schools for the first time need a variety of support services to help them become adjusted to school rules and expectations and attuned to English. Among the most important services are home language assessments that reveal information about the prior educational experiences and academic abilities, as well as health screening with language-appropriate referrals.

For students with non-parallel schooling, it is essential to have intensive home language literacy programs, coupled with access to English classes that allow students to become accustomed to oral and written English. When home language literacy programs are not available or feasible, it is important to provide support for the home language whenever possible. This can be done by hiring community liaisons who are native speakers of the non-English language to work in both classrooms and communities. Teachers’ aides who are native speakers can work with classroom teachers to provide extra support for newcomers.

Newly arrived immigrant students, parallel and non-parallel alike, should also have access to information about the routines, school policies and procedures, and classroom behaviors that most American students take for granted. Table 1 gives a list of some of the topics that newly arrived immigrant students at the secondary level need to know to be able to function safely and appropriately. How much time and effort are spent on these topics depends on a student's experiences with formal schooling and American schools.
**Figure 1. What Newly Arrived Immigrants Need to Know about School Routines and Practices**

**During School Hours**
- School Passes and how to use them (including tardy and detention slips)
- How the cafeteria works: Line formation, lunch passes
- Fire drills, lock downs and exit plans
- Assemblies, pep rallies, awards, and award ceremonies
- Holidays, festivities, and traditional celebrations
- Fund raisers
- Health examinations and screening for vision and hearing
- What in-school suspension means; disciplinary methods
- Guidance counseling for course selection and college
- How to qualify for free lunch
- Sex education and physical education

**After School Hours**
- The nature of parent conferences and attendance
- Parent Teacher Organizations
- School dances, proms, special events
- Field days, types of permission required
- After-school and Saturday tutoring programs
- Clubs, honor societies, sports activities
- How detention and suspension work
- Summer school options
- Extra-curricular activities such as sports (competitive level in high school, not necessarily for beginners)

In order to positively integrate newcomer immigrant students into the school system, teachers, working in teams, help students transition into their new settings by talking with students about class and lunch schedules; showing them where the nurse, library, and bathrooms are; introducing them to the kinds of extracurricular clubs and sports programs that are available; and helping them with the kinds of classroom study materials and books that will be required for each of their classes.

Once newcomer students are placed in their classrooms, school counselors and teachers monitor their progress in English language development and academic content learning. Just as important, the school should also be in close contact with the teachers who have newcomer
students to offer them opportunities to participate in staff development activities related to teaching adolescent English learners. Oftentimes, these teachers have bilingual paraprofessionals to assist them throughout the day. Paraprofessionals should also be encouraged to participate in English learner-related staff development activities (Chang, 1990).

Most newcomer centers and welcoming programs provide family-oriented events and activities designed to acculturate newcomer families to the school and community (Boyson & Short, 2003). In addition to helping newcomer students with social and health services, newcomer centers and programs can reach out to families in these critical areas by using bilingual community workers and school liaisons. A majority of newcomer centers and programs offer adult-level ESL classes either at the newcomer school site or at a nearby location within the school district boundaries. Typically these ESL classes also provide parents with an orientation to school routines, policies and practices, along with information about American society.

2. School leadership with an overt pro-immigrant, success-oriented mission for all students. The principal, assistant principals, counselors, librarians, instructional leaders, and department chairs need to have a team commitment to the sustained success of English learners and immigrants (Casanova, 2006; Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Olsen, 2006). A team approach helps ensure that responsibility for high quality instruction and an inclusive and affirming school climate is placed on a number of key school leaders rather than one (Harris, & Chapman, 2002).

Successful secondary schools with large numbers of Latino immigrant students have an inclusive and affirming environment that permeates the entire school, from classrooms to the cafeteria. There is a school mission or vision statement which explicitly refers to the value of linguistic diversity and academic achievement. Here are some examples (adapted from Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999):

- Language is an essential aspect of identity. It is a symbol and marker of cultural membership. We ask all students to respect all the languages in this school.
- Language is an important means for access to a quality education. All students in this school have the right to learn the language of the school and to achieve academically while they are learning language.

3. Teachers are hired who represent the students’ communities and languages. There are concerted efforts to promote intergroup interaction and cooperation among students of diverse backgrounds (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004). Finally, there is a zero-tolerance policy on harassment, racial epithets, and discrimination based on language, ethnicity, or gender (Olsen, 2006).

4. Counseling and counselors that are readily available to all students. In schools that have large newcomer and refugee student populations, it is critical to provide culturally and language-appropriate counseling and support services to address culture shock, post-traumatic stress syndrome, cultural mourning (Ainslie, 2005) and family separation (Jaes Falicov, 2005; Olsen, 2006). Family and newcomer counselors work closely with teachers in welcome and newcomer centers (Chang, 1990). Counselors can provide important information to parents about community resources as well as how to navigate through school and basic social services.

At the secondary level, English learners and immigrant students, especially those whose families have little or no experience with higher education, need a team of counselors who speak their home language and can communicate with students, teachers, and parents (McDonough,
2005). Academic counselors need to ensure that English learners and immigrant students enroll in challenging coursework that leads to high school graduation (See Casanova, 2006). This requires academic counselors to work closely with individual students, their parents, and their teachers, and most importantly, counselors who are bilingual. Academic counselors need to be located in prominent areas in the school with easy accessibility to all students.

5. **High expectations for immigrants, minority students, and English learners.** There are behavioral expectations and academic expectations for all students. Behavioral expectations, developed with input and support from parents, are communicated through clear, consistent, and fair rules for classroom and school behavior. Counselors and newcomer teachers make sure that new immigrant students understand expected classroom behaviors, dress codes, and rules for movement on the campus. Once newcomer students enter regular classrooms, there is continued communication among the counselors, newcomer teachers and the classrooms about behavioral issues and actions.

Academic expectations for immigrant students and English learners are high. Teachers are knowledgeable about oral and written language development in English learners, and make adjustments accordingly, while keeping learning intensive, challenging and flexible (Samway, 2006). The ESL program promotes acquisition of academic English, the English skills necessary to access “grade appropriate” instruction in academic subjects (Valdes, 2001). Teachers are also knowledgeable about the benefits and detriments of testing and assessment for English learners, and use multiple forms of assessment to guide instruction (Faltis & Coulter, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2002).

Gifted programs are open to students regardless of their English proficiency. Likewise, placing students into special education is done carefully and with full attention on the potential for misdiagnosing a language issue for a cognitive one. At the secondary level, tracking is either eliminated or kept to a minimum to ensure that immigrant and minority students and English learners have access to challenging classes (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Advanced placement and honors classes are open to a wide range of students, and additional support is provided for tutoring after school and on Saturdays.

6. **A Comprehensive English Language Program for English Development and Academic Proficiencies.** Immigrant students need to learn English to participate in and benefit from classroom activities in the content areas that are conducted in English. This means that English learners need an English Language Development curriculum to help them acquire and improve their oral and written English language proficiency. In effective secondary schools with large numbers of immigrant students, intensive instruction aimed at English language development is available to students who are in the early and intermediate phases of learning English. Beyond English development, immigrant students have the opportunity to acquire tools and resources for learning oral and written English so they can more fully participate in academic content classes and do so in ways that foster identity affiliation. For this to happen, all teachers in the school have specialized preparation in teaching literacy and academic language and content to English learners as well as being highly qualified secondary level teachers (see Casanova, 2006).

In schools where there are many newcomers to English, there is a dedicated English language development curriculum, focusing primarily on students’ acquisition of oral and written English language proficiency, to enable students to use English for multiple purposes in a safe learning environment, in preparation for academic content classes. Students have structured opportunities to read and write in English with developmentally appropriate experiences that tap into and build
upon what they already know (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005; Samway, 2006). The English language development curriculum addresses variation in levels of English proficiency, from true beginners to learners who are communicatively fluent, but need various types of assistance and practice with academic literacy.

A comprehensive English program requires teachers who are well prepared to address the needs of all types of immigrant students and English learners. English learners placed in grade-level content classes achieve academically when teachers rely on principles of practice and use appropriate resource material and instructional support in the students’ home language to support participation. Among the principles of practice that provide English learners with a safe learning environment, help them make sense of school, and identify favorably with school practices are the following (Faltis & Coulter, 2007):

1. Teachers enable all students (through invitation and nudging) to participate actively in social and academic classroom practices.
2. Teachers socially integrate students of diverse language and social backgrounds (using a variety of whole-class and small group strategies) to build on the unfolding identities, prior knowledge, and interests students bring with them, and to affiliate to new ways of understanding and using academic content. Identity affiliation and language learning go hand in hand.
3. Teachers integrate language and literacy acquisition strategies into all academic content learning activities so that as students actively participate in academic practices, they also gain greater proficiency in their new language. Home language literacy is promoted to the extent possible, based on solid research that literacy learned well in the home language transfers to English (August & Shanahan, 2006).
4. Teachers assess what students are able to do well and where they need additional assistance, using a variety of approaches and when needed, use systems for evaluation and accountability, including performance assessment based on local standards and home language assessment.
5. Teachers invite and promote critical consciousness within the classroom, the school and the community to confront racism, social stratification, and exclusionary practices that may occur (e.g., tracking and limited access to gifted and advanced placement classes).

Generally speaking, these principles of practice have been found in all effective programs for English learners (see Casanova, 2006; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly & Callahan, 2003; Olsen, 2006; Sadowski, 2004). In addition to these principles, schools that create comprehensive English programs for immigrants and English learners develop a lasting relationship with community members and parents of students in school. Unlike most parental involvement approaches, these schools understand that involving the parents and local community in school-related activities requires a deep understanding of the cultural ways that families and communities have for making sense of education, a sense that may be quite different from mainstream, middle-class patterns (Delgado-Gaitán, 1987; Schecter & Bayley, 2002; Valdés, 1996).

In secondary schools which address curricular segregation, the principal, counselors, department chairs and content teachers work together to ensure that immigrant Latino students have access to the range of academic classes available to all students. The curriculum is challenging, but flexible enough to include English learners who vary in oral and written language proficiency.
Importantly, there are a range of support services and alternative routes to academic success for English learners: ESL and content-based tutoring, Saturday school, after school literacy programs, and one-on-one access to teachers (Casanova, 2006; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003).

Widening the Responsibility for Latino Immigrant Students in Secondary School

There is a strong and growing research knowledge base for what schools need to do to ensure that Latino immigrant students are successful in school. There is no excuse for the long-term gaps between Latino immigrant students and White, English-speaking students. Part of the challenge is how to share with educators and politicians what is known about effective practices for immigrant students and English learners. While there will continue to be political battles over the education of Latino immigrants and English learners, from an advocacy point of view the following policy goals need to be continually addressed if educators and policy makers want to ensure that Latino immigrant students are not left to languish in ESL ghettos:

Policy Goal No. 1:

Pre-service and in-service secondary teacher education needs to focus its energies on preparing teachers who understand second language development, the integration of language learning with content teaching, the value of physical and social integration for language learning and the development of social networks between immigrant and non-immigrant students, and how to teach in ways that create connections with immigrant students and their families. At the secondary level, this means that teachers must be prepared not only to be content area specialists, but also specialists in conveying their content to students with various levels of English proficiency.

This goal requires leadership in Colleges of Education, and among school district administrators and school building principals. Professional development is a long-term investment to focus on theoretical foundations, understandings, and instructional practices that teachers need to effectively teach English learners, regardless of their oral and written English proficiency. In-service teachers need to be involved in workshops, reading groups, and classroom demonstrations to deepen their knowledge and practices concerning Latino immigrant students. There should be opportunities for teachers to try ideas out with supportive mentors and classroom coaches, and peer observations. Superintendents and principals need leadership development and involvement in learning groups geared to understanding and teaching Latino immigrant students and English learners so that they can lead their schools toward the effective immigrant and English-learner programs, instruction, and assessment.

Policy Goal No. 2:

Schools must be inclusive of all students. In communities with large numbers of immigrant students, schools must conduct self-study sessions to better understand, relate and communicate with their families (see Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999). Schools need to understand that separate, segregated programs developed to address the needs of the English learning immigrant Latino student can result in long-term linguistic and social isolation. Newcomer, ESL, and structured immersion programs have the laudable intention of promoting English acquisition. However, at the same time, participation in these programs may effectively isolate English learners from meaningful interpersonal interaction with native English speaking peers. The balance between facilitating and hindering language learning and academic success is critical.
Policy Goal No. 3:
Additionally, schools need to have in place a meaningful accountability system for English learners, their teachers and their parents. For practically all English learners, state-developed and state-mandated annual achievement tests are largely inadequate because they were developed for native English speaking, English literate students. Academic achievement testing instruments need to be developed and used in the primary home language for students who are not ready to be assessed in English. The accountability system should include indicators of the extent to which English learners have been provided opportunities and support for learning material they are expected to learn (Olsen, 2006).

Policy Goal No. 4:
The research community needs to make a concerted effort to share models of successful school programs and contexts for Latino immigrant students and new English learners. A growing knowledge base exists about what works well with Latino immigrant students and English learners and their families (Arias, Faltis, & Cohen, in press; Casanova, 2006; Crosnoe, 2006; Gándara, 2004; Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004; Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Valdés, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). But, clearly more work needs to be done. In general, schools desperately need access to practices and programs to support their efforts in the areas of professional development of administrators and teachers. Colleges of Education, the research community and school district professional development specialists need to work together to build better programs, safer learning climates for immigrants and English learners, and stronger understandings of and connections to immigrant families and communities. In other words, making certain that Latino immigrant students have access to, participate in, and benefit from a strong academic curriculum in a safe, positive intergroup school setting is a distributed professional responsibility.

Final Thoughts
We believe that it is critical for educators concerned with the academic achievement and social integration of Latino immigrant students to understand that one of the greatest detriments to their academic progress is linguistic and social isolation. Educators must take a concerted look at the distribution of languages in their school communities and identify formal and informal settings where Latino students who are learning English and becoming biliterate can access multiple varieties of academic and interpersonal English in ways that foster new academic identity affiliations. We urge educators to take a step back and review students’ trajectories through newcomer, ESL, and sheltered instruction programs to see if there are opportunities for access to native English speaking peers in every a semester, and make deliberate efforts to promote positive contact between mainstream and English learning students. A language-rich acquisition environment requires contact, contact with learners who are motivated to learn English, contact with native English speakers who can model various registers, contact with teachers who scaffold language learning, and contact with administrators and counselors sensitive to the dangers of isolation. This human contact between English speakers and English learners, Latino immigrants and children of immigrants increases the probability that fewer immigrant Latino students will be hopelessly trapped in the ESL ghetto that awaits far too many students who come to secondary school speaking Spanish.
References


