

The Condition of Minority Access and Participation in Arizona: 2004

Executive Summary

Education policies for Arizona language minorities attempt to respond to divergent requirements: Arizona LEARNS (A.R.S. §15-241), 2002, *Flores v. Arizona*, 2000, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), 2001, Proposition 203, 2002, and *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974. Although pertinent data were easily found online, they were never disaggregated by category within minority group and often not longitudinally consistent. Arizona would benefit from a thorough evaluation of its divergent policy and consequent educational practice, both as they exist independently and as they interact with each other in Arizona school programs and practices.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) require that school districts keep data on indicators that affect outcomes, such as grade retention, disciplinary measures, and public rewards for high levels of student achievement.
- The ADE monitor and document teaching techniques, such as structured English immersion, to determine if they accomplish the desired aim: engaged students, mastery of rigorous content, high rates of student success, and successful transition into English literacy.
- The ADE make provisions for enrollment of reclassified students in English as a Second Language instruction if needed, and make special efforts to enroll English learners in advanced math and science courses and gifted or talented programs.
- School districts involve parents of English learners in school governance. This would include involving parents in redefining and redesigning gifted or talented programs that embrace unique characteristics that minority students bring, and recognizing the diversity in minority communities as a resource and not a deficiency. It would also include adopting native language communications with families, including sending information home in a language and terms that parents can understand, and using English as a Second Language (ESL) strategies to teach English learners enrolled in advanced courses.
- The ADE implement appropriate accountability procedures to assure student progress and success. These would include documenting procedures for school districts to follow that monitor and uphold prohibitions against tracking, ability grouping, assignment to special education, and other practices that limit minority student progress and success. Accountability procedures would also provide for appropriate classification of minority students who need special education or English language acquisition services, appropriate instruction, and assessment of student achievement with appropriately designed assessments.