

The Condition of English Language Learners in Arizona: 2005

Executive Summary

This brief focuses on the condition of education for English Language Learners (ELLs) in the state of Arizona. Two events – a federal court case (*Flores v. Arizona*) and voter-initiated Proposition 203 – have brought significant changes to the ways in which ELLs are educated in Arizona. Both events affected laws governing numerous aspects of education, including program options, teacher qualifications, and assessment. This brief reviews the events that led to these policy changes and the relevant program effectiveness studies, and analyzes state language testing data to address the question of whether Proposition 203's English-only requirement is providing the learning advantage it promised. The authors conclude that the increasingly restrictive manner in which the state's English-only education law has been implemented is indefensible in terms of the research and data reviewed.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) continue to refine and expand the statewide student database.
- ADE make qualitative and quantitative data more accessible to researchers.
- ADE engage in collaborative ventures with the state's university research communities.
- The Arizona State Legislature commission a scientifically rigorous evaluation study of Proposition 203.
- ADE and the State Board of Education require alternatives to standardized language testing for the statewide accountability system.