

MLER Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group

The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research



MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION RESEARCH
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Message from the Chair

Points of Interest:

- Message from the Chair
- Executive Advisor Report
- AMLE Conference Presentations
- Featured Article: Primary Language Literacy

Inside this issue:

News from the Executive Advisor **2**

AMLE Conference Presentations **3**

Cont'd: Message from Executive Advisor & Call for Submissions **4**

AMLE Presentations Continued & Message from Chair Continued. **5-6**

Featured Article: Interaction with a Web-Based Learning Environment **7-15**

Greetings to you all from Vermont. One of the things I most appreciate about our MLER SIG is the opportunity to work with other researchers across the nation and the globe. Many of us lack fellow researchers at our institutions who share a focus on middle grades education and early adolescents; and by networking with SIG colleagues, we broaden our scope of work; deepen our support; and discover exciting leadership prospects. I thought I would use this column to tell you a bit

about our SIG's leadership development and opportunities.

One of our SIG's founding leaders was recently honored with the establishment of the Richard "Dick" Lipka Lifetime Achievement Award, the highest honor that can be awarded by the MLER SIG. The award is given only when an individual has demonstrated a level of service and leadership in middle grades education that warrants this special recognition. I encourage you all to reflect on viable candidates for this award:

(Continues on Page 5)

Penny Bishop

University of Vermont



We're on the Web!
www.rmle.pdx.edu

The purpose of the MLER SIG is to improve, promote, and disseminate educational research reflecting early adolescence and middle level education.

Membership in the MLER-

SIG connects AERA members who are committed to research issues related to young adolescents. SIG members exchange information and ideas through Annual Meeting presenta-

tions, newsletters, and informal gatherings.

Membership cost is \$15/year. The MLER-SIG (#88) is listed on the third page of the AERA Membership Application Form.

RMLE Online Call for Manuscripts

The editor of *Research in Middle Level Education Online* is seeking manuscripts concerning quantitative and qualitative research studies, case studies, action research studies, as well as research syntheses.



RMLE Online is an international, peer-reviewed research journal published by the National Middle School Association.

Guidelines for Contributors, a listing of the Editorial Review Board, and past issues

of *RMLE Online* are available at www.nmsa.org

If you have questions, please contact Karen Swanson, Editor, at SWANSON_KW@merc.edu.

NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE ADVISOR

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., The University of Tennessee

In my last update to the MLER SIG membership I indicated that I had completed my tenure on the AERA SIG Executive Committee. I recently received a phone call from Phoebe Stevenson asking that I continue on this committee and complete the term of an executive committee member who had to resign due to medical reasons. So, it looks like I will be a part of the AERA SIG Executive Committee until AERA 2013. From the perspective of the MLER SIG, it is good that we will have access to information as the

rules and regulations that govern SIGs change and the landscape of SIGs within AERA is painted with a "new" brush.

I also informed you that as a SIG we need to focus on: (1) leadership capacity building, (2) graduate student and new/emerging scholar development, (3) membership numbers and membership building initiatives, (4) advancement of the knowledge base and dissemination of educational research in the related field, and (5) proposal submissions and acceptance rates.

The AERA Council accepted the report of the SIG Executive Committee, so therefore these are the criteria which will be used to evaluate our SIG (as well as the criteria that will be used in petitioning to establish new SIGs).

Cognizant of this information, I make the following recommendations to the MELR SIG for immediate action: (1) *We engage in strategic planning* that is focused (at a minimum) on the five criterion established by the AERA SIG Executive Committee (*continued on pg. 4*)

MLER SIG Officers

Penny Bishop, Chair
University of Vermont
penny.bishop@uvm.edu

Steve Mertens, Chair-Elect & Program Chair
Illinois State University
smertens@ilstu.edu

Chris Cook, Vice Chair & Newsletter Editor
Northern Kentucky University
cookc2@nku.edu

Shawn Faulkner, Treasurer
Northern Kentucky University
faulkners1@nku.edu

Cynthia Reyes, Secretary
University of Vermont
creyes@uvm.edu

Micki Caskey, Immediate Past Chair & Webmaster
Portland State University
caskeym@pdx.edu

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., Executive Advisor
University of Tennessee Knoxville
vanfara@utk.edu

SIG Association Council Members

Tariq Akmal (2010-12)
Washington State University

Kenneth Anderson (2010-12)
Howard University

Robert Capraro (2009-11)
Texas A&M University

Lisa Harrison (2011-13)
Ohio University

Molly Mee (2010-12)
Towson University

Nicole Thompson (2011-13)
Mississippi State University

Nicole Miller (2009-12)
Graduate Student
Mississippi State University

AMLE 2011 Annual Conference Presentations by MLER Members

November 10-12, 2011 - Louisville, Kentucky

The following members submitted their presentation information to the Chronicle for the AMLE Conference :

Gayle Andrews
Connecting Curriculum to Community Issues: Students, Standards, and Service-Learning
11/10/11
8 AM- 9:15 AM
Hyatt Regency, Pimlico Room

Ellis Hurd, Steve Mertens, Keith Tilford, Lynette Mehall, Dan Lamboley, Zack Gilbert, & Liz Czaplewski
Creating and Sustaining a Quality PDS Partnership: A Collaborative Demonstration of the Professional Development Schools Approach across Three Middle Schools within a Small Urban Area
11/11/11
12:15 PM - 1:30 PM
Kentucky Ballroom C (Marriott)

Janet Stramel
Ideas and Materials to Support Multiple Learning and Teaching Approaches
11/10/11
2:00-3:15

Heather Rogers Haverback & Molly Mee
The Lure of the Profession: A Glimpse into the Reasons Why Teacher Candidates Choose to Teach Middle School
11/10/11
9:45-11:00
Convention Center-L15

Francine Falk-Ross
Literacy Lessons Via Video Conferencing
11/10/11
3:45 PM - 5:00 PM
Convention Center-L15

Mary Beth Schaefer
Who are the Readers in My Class? Understanding Middle Level Students' Motivation to Read
11/11/11
10:00 AM - 11:15 AM
Kentucky International Convention Center-L15

Mary Beth Schaefer & Lourdes Rivera
The Career Institute: Six Years of Building and Studying Career and College Readiness
11/11/11
12:15 PM - 1:30 PM
Kentucky International Convention Center-107

Mary Beth Schaefer & Lourdes Rivera
Career and College Readiness in Advisory and Beyond (this is for the Research strand)
11/11/11
2:00 PM - 3:15 PM
Kentucky International Convention Center-107

Kathleen Roney & Dick Lipka
Middle Grades Curriculum: Let's Not Forget About the Self-Enhancing School
11/11/11
12:15 PM - 1:30 PM
Kentucky International Convention Center-205

F. Clark Power, Kathleen Roney, & Ann Marie R. Power
Developing Parent Partnerships in Sports: The Play Like a Champion Today Approach
11/11/11
3:45 PM - 5:00 PM
Kentucky International Convention Center-205

Dick Lipka
An instructional technology decision tree for middle school leaders.
11/10/11
3:45-5:00PM
Convention Center-L15

Dick Lipka
Middle Grades Curriculum: Let's Not Forget About the Self-Enhancing School.
11/11/11
12:15-1:30PM
Convention Center-205

Melanie Greene
Preparing Quality Middle Level Teachers: From Start to Finish
11/12/11
12:00 PM - 1:15 PM
Convention Center-114

John M. Niska
Using a Four-part Cycle to Develop and implement a Successful Advisory Program
11/11/11
10-11:15 Am
Convention Center-209

John M. Niska
Advisory Activities : The Vehicle to the Relationship
11/11/11
12:15PM -1:30 PM
Convention Center 209



(Continued on pg. 5)

The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research, the online publication of the Middle Level Education Research SIG, is seeking submissions. The MLER SIG publishes the *Chronicle* three times a year in spring, summer, and fall. We invite you to submit book reviews, brief articles of scholarly work, (including original research and reviews of literature), descriptions of research, or other events/information of interest to MLER SIG members.

Manuscripts should (a) be approximately 2,500 words in length; (b) be double-spaced with 1-inch margins in 12-point font; (c) follow the 6th Edition of *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010) style guide; and (d) include a separate title page with author name, affiliation, and contact information. Aside from the title page, manuscripts should have no reference to the author(s) to ensure a blind review. Note: Manuscripts need to be prepared and submitted electronically as Word documents.

Submit the manuscript and title page to Chris Cook at cookc2@nku.edu



American Educational
Research Association

Save the Date!

2012 Annual Meeting

**April 13-17, 2012
Vancouver, British Columbia**

<http://www.aera.net>

NEWS FROM EXECUTIVE ADVISOR (cont.)

(continued from pg. 2)

as evidence of a “healthy and vital” SIG. In 2002-2003 we engaged in a strategic planning initiative which has guided us well, but sufficient time has passed that warrants a new look at where we as an organization are heading, whether or not we are addressing the needs of our membership, and the degree to which we are serving and advancing the field of middle grades research.

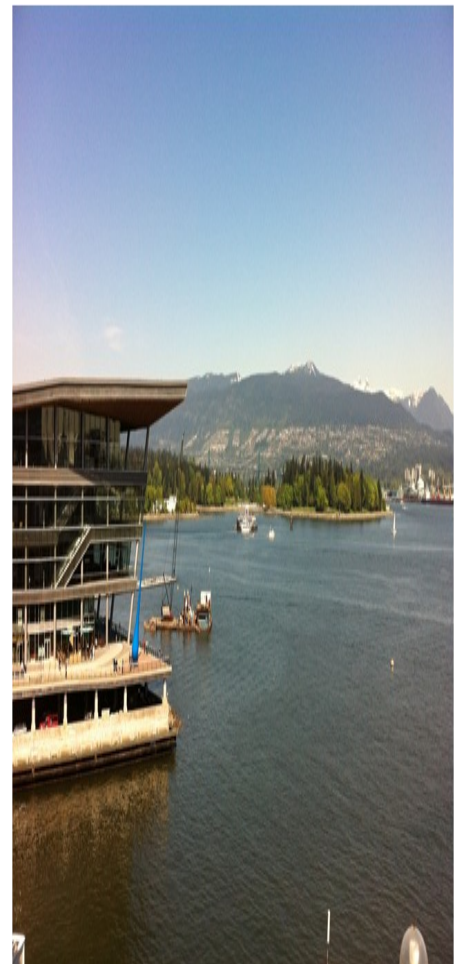
(2) We **document the initiatives** in which we are currently engaged that address the five criteria.

(3) We **consider Bylaw revisions** which remove the Executive Advisor from the

status of an officer. AERA regulations limit officers to serving for a three-year period of time. We also review the MLER SIG Bylaws in light of these five criteria and consider the currently stated duties of officers in light of these new criteria.

I am completing my term as Executive Advisor and want to thank each of you for the support you have afforded me and the MLER SIG. I look forward to staying actively connected to our special interest group and to assisting the new executive advisor in her/his transition to this role.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at AMLE in Louisville. I end with a picture of Vancouver Harbour/Burrard Inlet, looking at the convention center in Vancouver, BC. Hope to see all of our members in British Columbia in April 2012.



Message from the Chair (continued)

those who have made a significant impact on middle level education, with demonstrated scholarship of the highest level in research and writing and sustained service to middle level education through local, state, regional, and national organizations. More information can be found on our SIG website. The deadline for nominations is December 31, 2011.

In order to continue the strong leadership tradition and our commitment to our shared field, our SIG

also serves as an important conduit for developing new leaders in middle grades research. Last year we began to formalize networking opportunities for our graduate students by creating the Graduate Student Mentoring Initiative. This is an informal way for graduate students in middle level education research to network with experienced researchers in their shared field. I'm happy to report that we are revising and expanding the program based on last year's feedback.

If you're interested in participating as either a mentor or mentee,

please contact me at pbishop@uvm.edu for more information.

Graduate students are also supported through our annual award that recognizes outstanding student research in the field of middle-level education. The 2011 award winner was Dr. Jacqueline Gale, whose doctoral dissertation, *Examining Principals' Perceptions of Middle Grades Leadership*, identified crucial skills, knowledge and dispositions for middle level leaders.

I encourage you all to consider nominating a graduate student

(or recent graduate) for this award. Again, more information and an application can be found on our SIG website at <http://www.rmle.pdx.edu/>. The deadline is January 15, 2012.

Additionally, our SIG has a very active slate of officers and council members who meet regularly, in person twice a year and in the interim via Skype, to improve, promote, and disseminate educational research in middle grades research. Each year, new opportunities arise through an election.

(Continued on Page 6)

AMLE 2011 Annual Conference Presentations by MLER Members

(continued from pg.3)

Sara Davis Powell & Jesse White
Structures and Strategies for Overcoming Poverty and Language Barriers
11/11/11
2:00 PM -3:15 PM
Kentucky Ballroom D (Marriot)

Steven Turner
Do You See Me: Diversity, Culture and Difference in Middle Schools
11/11/2011
12:15 PM - 1:30 PM

Regency Ballroom, South B
Laurie Ramirez
Using Moments of (Dis) Engagement as a Critical Reflection Tool to Improve Practice In Middle Grades Diversity Courses
11/11/2011
12:15 PM - 1:30 PM
Convention Center-L15

Cheryl Ellerbrock
1. AMLE's Research Advisory Board's Spotlight on Research
11/10/11
8:00-9:15am

Conference Room-208
2. What do We Need to Fit in and Succeed in School: Understanding Young Adolescents' Social Goals
11/10/11
9:45 AM - 11:00 AM
Convention Center-111
3. Meeting Students' Needs During the Transition: School Structures at the Middle and High School Level
11/11/11
3:45 PM - 5:00 PM
Convention Center-L15

4. Help Us Make a Successful Transition Into High School: Listening to Student Voices
11/12/11
8:00 AM - 9:15 AM
Convention Center-L15
Chyrese S. Wolf
Power of Classroom Discourse in Urban Middle Level Classrooms: Transformational Agency
11/11/11,
3:45-5:00
Kentucky Ballroom D (Marriott)

Message from the Chair (Continued)

(continued from pg.5)

This year we will be electing three new Council Members, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Graduate Student Representative, a Vice Chair, and an Executive Advisor. Serving as SIG leadership can be a terrific way to serve a field about which you care deeply; connect with like-minded professionals; and enhance your own research and scholarship. Self-nominations are encouraged and close on November 15, 2011. Nominations, accompanied by a brief biography, can be sent to Dr. Chris Cook at cookc2@nku.edu.

Finally, I often hear from members who would like to become more involved with the MLER SIG but who are not currently officers. There are many, many ways to participate in advancing our mission and we welcome the participation of any interested member. Opportunities include joining one of our Working Groups in the areas of Outreach, Recognition, Leadership Development, and Publications. Please contact me at pbishop@uvm.edu if you would like to join us in our work.

In a short time many of us will gather in Louisville, Kentucky at the Association for Middle Level Education's annual conference. Please join us at our business meeting on Friday, November 11, 2011 from 5:45-6:45 in Convention Center Room 208. There is a strong line-up of research sessions at the conference, including many by our SIG members. Details of these are provided within this edition of the *Chronicle*.

I hope to see you in Louisville!

AMLE Sessions Sponsored by AMLE's Research Advisory Board

When	What	Where	Who
Thursday November 10th			
8:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.	<i>Spotlight on Research</i>	CC 208	Penny Bishop (facilitator) RAC members
9:45 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	<i>What Research Says session... Designing Higher Reliability Middle Schooling for All Our Children: The 21st Century Challenge</i> [Samuel Stringfield]	CC 208	Micki Caskey (facilitator) Introduce the speaker
2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	<i>What Research Says session... National Research Project on Common Planning Time</i> [Steve Mertens, Nancy Flowers, Vince Anfara, & Micki Caskey]	CC 208	Karen Swanson (facilitator) Introduce the speakers
Friday November 11th			
10:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.	<i>Research and Resources in Support of This We Believe: Connecting Research and Practice</i>	CC 208	Dave Strahan (facilitator) Chris Weiss, Penny Bishop, and Karen Swanson
2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	William Alexander Memorial Lecture		Micki Caskey
3:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	<i>Pathways to Publication</i>	CC 208	Karen Swanson (facilitator) Robert Capraro, Micki Caskey, Dave Strahan(editors)
5:45 p.m. - 6:45 p.m.	MLER SIG Business Meeting	CC 208	Penny Bishop (MLER SIG Chair)

Primary Language Literacy and its Relationship to Learning English for Middle Level English Language Learners

Karen R. Bostic & Jeffrey B. Kritzer, University of Nebraska Kearney

Across the country, middle school teachers are encountering students in the process of learning English as a second language. In the United States, it is estimated that over four million public school students received English Language Learner services in the 2003-04 school year, approximately 8% of all public school enrollment that year (NCES, 2006). In the past two decades, this population of students, most commonly known as ELLs, has more than tripled, reaching nearly 15 million students in 2008 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Six states – Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas- account for nearly 70% of the nation's total ELL population. Despite the high concentration of ELL students in these states, other states are experiencing rapid growth as well. From 1995-2005, Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee experienced a 300% higher growth of ELL students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). California educates one-third of all the nation's ELL students (1.6 million students) and 85% of ELLs in California are Spanish speaking (California Legislative Office, 2008). While California and the other five states may account for the majority of our nation's ELL population, the numbers across the country are on the rise.

Review of the Literature

Researchers recognize that ELLs achieve better academically if learning connects with both background and culture simultaneously (Curtin, 2005). Factors, including age on arrival, length of residence in the U.S., and grade of entry into school constitute variables that one must consider. Parents' educational/economic status prior exposure to Western/urban lifestyles and languages spoken in the family also contribute to the cultural capital that ELL students bring to the classroom (Gibson, 1988; Rumbaut, 1995).

Understanding the culture of immigrant children is a necessary component for teachers to provide a more successful educational experience for these students (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000; Olson, 1997; Sleeter & Grant, 1991).

To date, many studies of middle level ELL's have focused primarily on meeting their linguistic needs in English. Discussion of ELL's initial Spanish proficiency has largely been ignored by the research, thus the teaching of these students has been interpreted only as the teaching of English.

Research has shown that many ELL classrooms are teacher dominated, with children treated as passive learners and assigned only cognitively simple tasks (Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991). Learning styles of ELL students tend to be more field-dependent or sensitive, as they are more global in their thinking in comparison to Anglos (Sleeter & Grant, 1991). Garcia (1992) summarized studies of effective instructional practices used with linguistically diverse and culturally diverse middle level students. Eight common attributes were identified as successfully meeting the needs of ELL students: (1) high level of verbal communication between teacher and students, and among students; (2) integration of basic skills instruction with instruction in other subjects; (3) organization of instruction around themes; (4) use of collaborative learning groups; (5) students allowed to progress naturally and without pressure from writing in their native language to writing later in English; (6) highly committed teachers who act as student advocates; (7) principal support for teachers; and (8) parents active in school activities. Passive learning, however, constitutes the primary means of instruction in many American middle school classrooms, with negative consequences for ELL students.

While urban schools in the United States are not alone in their growing populations of middle school students who are learning English (ELLs), most ELLs attend urban schools, and most "high-ELL" schools are in urban areas (Cosentino de Cohen, Seterding, & Clewell, 2005). Assisting ELLs grow into capable and engaged readers is a challenge facing all educators. One of the purposes of this study was to investigate whether differing levels of entering Spanish primary language proficiency was directly associated with the differing levels of

middle school English language arts achievement. This article is a follow up of a previous study (Kritzer, 2009) and continues to track the English language Arts achievement of the sample in that study. The data on their 6th grade English language arts achievement is now available, and the results shed further light on factors that influence this group's educational success. The study further attempts to determine whether poverty status, gender, initial Spanish language proficiency, initial English language proficiency, nativity, and bilingual program of entering Hispanic language learners is a significant predictor of 6th grade English language arts achievement.

New Research Questions

The new research questions addressed by the continuation of the original study are as follows:

1. Are the differing levels of Spanish primary language proficiency of entering Hispanic English language learners associated with differing levels of middle school English language arts achievement?
2. Are poverty status, gender, initial Spanish language proficiency, initial English language proficiency, nativity, and bilingual program of entering Hispanic English language learners significant predictors of 6th grade English language arts achievement?

Methods

Students from the previous study were further tracked in this follow-up study. All 6th grade Hispanic English language learners had been enrolled in a sub-district of a very large urban school district since Kindergarten. Only students with initial assessments in both English and Spanish language proficiency (in Kindergarten) and not identified as having mental retardation were included in the sample. Approximately 2600 students remained from the original study sample. All the students in the sub-district participated in the free or reduced lunch program.

Measures

These measures were obtained electronically on each student:

- Initial Spanish Language Proficiency (Pre-LAS-Espanol Oral Scaled Scores; Interval, Continuous, and associated ordinal levels of proficiency).
- Initial English Language Proficiency (Pre-LAS-English Oral Scaled Scores; Interval, Continuous, and associated ordinal levels of proficiency).
- California Standards Test-English Language Arts Scaled Scores for grade 6. Achievement scores on the California Standards Test for English Language Arts were used because they assess the progressively more demanding domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing that English language learners must negotiate in their second language, regardless of any first language proficiency.

Dependent Variables

California Standards Test for English Language Arts. The California Standards Test for English language arts is administered in all public schools in California during the spring for all students in grades 2-10. Results are reported as scaled scores, ranging from 150-600. Students need to score at least 350 to be considered proficient.

Independent Variables

Pre-Language Assessment Scales-Spanish Version. The Pre-Language Assessment Scales (Spanish) is administered to all Hispanic English language learners when they enroll in a California school in Kindergarten or first grade. Results are expressed in scale scores, ranging from 0-100. Results are also expressed as ordinal levels of language proficiency ranging from “5” as the highest to “1” as the lowest.

Pre-Language Assessment Scales-English Version. The Pre-Language Assessment Scales (English) was administered to all Hispanic English language learners when they enrolled in a California school in Kindergarten or first grade. The Pre-Las measures a child’s receptive and expressive abilities in the areas of

morphology, syntax, and semantics. Subtests have internal consistency reliabilities in the .80s and range from the .80s to .90s (Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation). Results are expressed in scale scores, ranging from 0-100. Results are also expressed as ordinal levels of language proficiency ranging from “5” as most proficient to “1” as the lowest.

Nativity.

Many Hispanic English language learners are actually born in the United States, but enroll in our schools with little or no English proficiency. This variable was included to determine whether one’s country of origin is an explanatory independent variable.

Poverty.

While school district data indicate that all students in the study receive a free lunch, data from the U.S. Census website shows that the schools where both samples emanate have diverse poverty percentages. The United States Census Office has defined the poverty threshold for a family of 4 in 2000 to be \$17,463 (United States Bureau of Census, 2009). The schools in the two samples have a range of percentage of students at poverty level from 10.0% to 60.2%, so there is significant diversity amongst schools with regard to this poverty variable.

Program.

Students in Sample 1 were either in a Transitional Bilingual Education program for up to 4 years or were instructed using a Structured English Immersion model. This study examined whether bilingual instruction mediates the academic achievement of these Hispanic English language learners for Sample 1, however these data were unavailable for Sample 2.

Gender.

Data were explored to determine if there is a significant effect for gender on any dependent measure.

Results

Sixth grade English language arts achievement continues the trend and is significantly predicted by SES ($t = -4.563$, $p < .001$), gender ($t = 4.106$, $p < .001$), instructional program ($t = -9.674$, $p < .001$), initial Spanish language proficiency ($t = 9.013$, $p < .001$), and initial English language proficiency ($t = 10.121$, $p < .001$). Initial Spanish language proficiency accounts for the most variance ($\beta = .153$). Girls ($M = 341.00$, $SD = 43.643$) once again outperformed boys ($M = 321.89$, $SD = 48,034$), and students in English Only programs ($M = 324.37$, $SD = 46.38$) outperformed those in "bilingual" programs ($M = 305.79$, $SD = 37.68$).

Table 2: 6th Grade English

	B	SE	β		Predictors
Poverty Status	-0.0334		0.07	-0.073	*
Gender	4.571		1.665	0.052	*
Initial Spanish	5.35		0.669	0.153	*
Initial English	11.612		1.611	0.138	*
Nativity	5.669		2.661	0.041	*
Bilingual Program	-13.155		2.033	-0.123	*
Note: R ² =.069		*p<.05		N=2,625	

Discussion

Two important findings resulted from this study. The first finding is consistent with Cummins' research that proficiency in the primary language is related to subsequent language acquisition and maintains this consistent relationship through elementary school. Initial proficiency in the Spanish language was the best predictor for all of the outcomes concluded in this study. As stated in the previous review of the literature, this is consistent with the research of Cummins. First language Spanish proficiency was significantly related to all future outcomes in English Language Arts. Levels of English Language Arts achievement were directly related to the entering levels of Spanish proficiency.

The second important finding showed us that the four betas of the initial Spanish predictors in the elementary grades were smaller than the initial English betas. In addition, to these findings, it must be mentioned that an overwhelming number of the students were born in the United States. This is surprising, as the previous study noted 51.7% of students in this study lacked proficiency in either Spanish or English. This would lead us to wonder if bilingual education is not simply related to immigration.

As the American school system struggles to find success educating Hispanic English Language Learners, researchers are examining predictors that explain their academic achievement. Kritzer (2009) examined various predictors and found that initial Spanish proficiency, initial English proficiency, nativity, gender, socioeconomic status, and instructional program were all significant predictors for English language arts achievement of this population throughout the primary grades (1-3), and that all were significant predictors through grade 5 with the exception of nativity. While it makes sense that these factors would influence achievement, it also proved somewhat surprising that the 8th and 10th graders in the Krtizer 2009 study had larger beta weights attached to initial Spanish language proficiency than initial English language proficiency, thus noting the increasing value of primary language development throughout schooling. This is further confirmed by the National Research Council Panel of the Committee on National Statistics (Meyer & Fienberg, 1992), where kindergarten students who receive academic instruction in Spanish have higher achievement in reading in middle school than comparable students who received academic instruction in English.

Implications

Better insight into the relationship between initial language proficiency, educational programs, and academic achievement have strong implications for both practice and policy. Students in special education often require more time, resulting in such an accommodation being written into their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), to progress academically despite their learning difficulties. Further research is needed to discover if Hispanic English language learners would benefit from a similar accommodation or an extended school year in

order to increase their academic success. If such a period were available, it would be an ideal time to allow additional time for supplemental first language instruction. Although this is provided in bilingual classrooms, this study showed how critical primary language proficiency is for all Hispanic English language learners and at most, only 20% of all of the students had been in bilingual programs (Kritzer, 2009).

In conclusion, this study offers findings that could impact the way we teach Hispanic ELL students in U.S. schools. The knowledge that the initial primary language fluency with which children enter school has implications for their entire education and programs could and should lead to developing programs to assist students who enter lacking this vital foundation. While this study was conducted with students with an initial language of Spanish, it is safe to generalize that the importance of first language acquisition is not confined only to the Spanish language, but most likely crosses all languages. How we choose to use this information remains to be seen, but millions of childrens' English language acquisition, and thus futures, are at stake.

References

- August, D. (2002). *Transitional Programs for English language learners: Contextual factors and effective programming*. Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk: Baltimore, MD.
- Banks, J. (2001). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching*. (4th Ed.). Boston, Allyn & Bacon.
- California Legislative Analyst's Office. (2008). *Budget book – Education analyses*. Sacramento, CA: State of California.
- Cosentino de Cohen, C., Deterding, N., & Clewell, B.C. (2005). *Who's left behind? Immigrant children in high and low LEP schools*. Washington DC: The Urban Institute.
- Garcia, E. E. (1992). *The education of linguistically and culturally diverse students: Effective instructional practices*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Statistics.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, & practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gibson, Margaret A. (1988). *Accommodation without assimilation: Sikh immigrants in an American high school*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Kritzer, J.B. (2009). The Relationship between Initial Primary Language Fluency and the English Language Arts Achievement of Hispanic English Language Learners, *Journal of Research Methodology*, 22(1), 1-19.
- Meyer, M.M., & Fienberg, S.E. (Eds.) (1992). *Assessing evaluation studies: The case of bilingual education strategies*. (Panel to Review Evaluation Studies of Bilingual Education, Committee on National Statistics, National Research Council.) Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2008). The Condition of Education 2008 (NCES 2008-031). School year 2007-08. NCES, Indicator 23, Washington DC: NCES.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), Pub. L. No. 107-110.
- Olson, L. (1997). *Made in America: Immigrant students in our public schools*. New York: The New York Press.
- Ramirez, D., Yuen, S., & Ramey, D. (1991). *Final report: Longitudinal study of structured English immersion strategy, early exit, and late-exit transitional bilingual education programs for language minority children*. Washington, DC: Office of Bilingual Education.
- Rumbaut, R. G., & Cornelius, W. A. (Eds.). (1995). *California's immigrant children: Theory, research, and implications for education*. La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego.
- Sleeter, C.E. & Grant, C. A. (1991). Mapping terrains of power: Student cultural knowledge versus classroom knowledge. In C. E. Sleeter (Ed.), *Empowerment through multicultural education* (pp. 49-67). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2006). *U.S. Department of Education's survey of the States' limited English proficient students and available educational programs and services*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.