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Theses / Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation addressed the rapidly growing population of English Language Learners (ELLs) and as a result the new challenges brought to schools throughout the United States. Research has also demonstrated a disparity in achievement between ELLs and the general student population in association with the increasing accountability demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001). The investigation conducted in a charter school serving students of predominately Arabic descent showed not only a misalignment between students and staff views of testing, it also demonstrated that despite all our best efforts, the school continued to yield to the pressures of standardized assessments. Teachers, administrators and students from a metro area in the Midwest participated via archival data, staff questionnaires and staff and student one-on-one interviews. The purpose of this research was to explore standardized testing practices on ELLs, specifically those of Arabic speaking backgrounds, and to analyze the role standardized tests play on the instructional time needed for Arabic-speaking ELLs to acquire CALP. Non-native English students take time, which can range from five to seven years, to become proficient in the academic language. In the current study it was found that teachers forfeited countless hours of much needed instructional time, in order to accommodate preparing for, and administering of, these assessments. Moreover, while attempts were made to minimize emphasis on testing, the school succumbed to the ongoing demands of external stakeholders. Consequently, Arabic-speaking ELLs were not receiving the instructional time necessary for them to acquire the English language proficiency which was equivalent to that of their English speaking counterparts.

Keywords: English Language Learners (ELLs), standardized assessment, perceptions, instructional time, accountability