



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Re: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER

The voter protected, voter passed initiative on English Language Learners, specified that classes for English Language Learners must be taught in English: “all children in Arizona public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English and all children shall be placed in English language classrooms.” Dual language classes, typically taught for one-half of each day in Spanish, are an obvious violation of this initiative. A reduction in structured English immersion from 4 hours to two is okay, but the rest of the day must be spent in regular classrooms with the English-speaking students, not in classes taught in Spanish.

While this conclusion is obvious from the initiative itself, we have a letter from the lawyers for the legislature, the Arizona legislative council, dated May 31, 2023, that dual language classes for English Language Learners are contrary to law. A copy is attached as Attachment 1.

When I started my first term as state Superintendent of Schools in 2003, the initiative was unenforced, and bilingual education was a method of teaching in Arizona schools. As a result, a pathetic 4% of students became proficient in English in one year. At that rate, almost none would ever become proficient, and they would fail in the economy.

We implemented structured English immersion, combined with intensive classes, on how to teach English immersion. The rate of proficiency in English within one year went up to 29%. At that rate within three or four years, almost everyone would become proficient in English.

Professors who are ideologically motivated and are quoted as favoring bilingual education are simply oblivious to the real-world data.

When we taught these classes, a number of teachers arrived hostile, because of ideology. But by the end, our structured English immersion teachers were getting standing ovations and very high evaluations.

A schedule of upcoming classes is attached as Attachment 2, and we urge you to sign up.

Tom Horne, Superintendent of Public Instruction

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I should also mention an article that appeared in Education Next, a periodical sponsored by Harvard and Stanford. It was written by Dr. Joseph Guzman, who has been interim Director of Chicano Latino studies at Michigan State. He found that: "Hispanic ESL students, when compared with their counterparts in bilingual education programs, obtained three-quarters of a year more education, were 50% more likely to earn bachelor's degrees, earned significantly more in the labor market, and entered high-skill professions at almost twice the rate."

In any case, the voter passed and voter protected initiatives are binding. Any district or school that continues placing English Language learners into dual language classes, without the requisite parental waivers, should be aware of the legal consequences:

A.R.S. §15-756.08 provides a District found in violation by the state board loses its access to English Language Learners funds. A.R.S. §15-754 provides that any parent can sue any school board member or other elected office or administrator responsible for the violation and that person can be personally liable for damages and fees and cannot be indemnified by any third party. Any official found liable shall be immediately removed from office and cannot hold a position for five years.

I want to emphasize that these rules only apply to students who have not yet attained proficiency in English. Once they attain English proficiency, we encourage dual language, or any other programs, that will cause them to be proficient in more than one language. I personally have studied six languages. Knowing multiple languages is beneficial, and develops the brain in ways that help learn other subjects.

But the first priority is to become proficient in English. The data shows that structured English immersion is the best way to achieve this, and the law requires it.

Sincerely,

Tom Horne

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