



Teaching today

in our diverse, culturally complex world is a dynamic, exciting experience. Educators work in a political, economic and social environment that would challenge even the most resourceful of our national leaders. It is difficult to find material that is relevant and to find resources that are up-dated regularly.

The goal of this brochure is that it be a brief, thought-provoking guide to educators of adult second language learners. Much of the research data comes from California because demographic changes are already occurring rapidly in this part of the United States. There are serious shortcomings within the educational system serving the second language learner population and there is a resulting educational (and workforce) achievement gap.

Questions need to be asked. What do we know about adult learners? What information exists about second language learners in higher education? And what recommendations and guides can institutions and educators put into practice to foster second language learner success in higher education?

(For the purpose of this brochure, the terms Hispanic/Latino are used interchangeably to describe students whose origins are Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Hispanic/Latino, regardless of race.)

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Educators of Adult Second Language Learners

Fostering Success in Higher Education



Only the brave should teach.
Only those who love the student should teach.
If they have not the concern for humanity,
the love of living creatures, the vision of the priest
and the artist, they must not teach.

— Pearl S. Buck



Characteristics of Adult Learners

- Adults are self directed and capable of taking responsibility for their own learning
- Adults are active learners and they are most receptive to instruction that is clearly related to the situations they face daily
- Adults have a wide variety of life experiences and they benefit through reflection of their own and others' experience
- Adult's attention spans are a direct function of their interest in the experience
- Adults are part of one or more specific cultural group and their values modify both what and how they learn

Adapted from the work of: Nancy Alexander, Northwestern State University, LA, Betty Jones, Pacific Oaks College, CA

Second Language Learners in Higher Education

- Hispanics/Latinos nationwide currently represent about 15% of the total traditional college-age population (18-24 years). By the year 2025, they will comprise close to 25% of that population; in California they will be closer to 45% of that population
- In 2004, 60% of Latinos enrolled in higher education in California were enrolled part time
- Almost half of all Latino undergraduates are first-generation college students
- In 2005, 31% of Californians had earned a bachelor's degree; less than 10% of the Hispanic/Latino population had achieved this
- In 2006, 82% of all students in community colleges worked an average of 32 hours per week
- In 2006 in California, 40% of the population spoke a language other than English at home and 17% spoke no English at all

Adapted from: Census Bureau, 2005; California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2006; and Excelencia in Education, 2006.

Recommendations for Educational Settings and Services

Many faculty and staff are increasingly aware of the college supports beyond the classroom that assist students in being successful in higher education. The following reflect promising practices that support adult second language learners.

- Conduct outreach events and orientations (in several languages, if possible) to help students better understand college requirements and expectations
- Increase access to financial aid and textbook grants; ensure that part-time students have access to such programs
- Create more opportunities for students to experience "peer support" through student clubs, re-entry centers, and various campus events including internships and mentoring
- Support campus child care centers that provide high quality care for the children of current students; make sure this information is available in more than one language
- Ensure effective and inclusive counseling services with well-trained staff, including bilingual support. Note: begin with an assessment of learners' needs and goals (in their home language, if possible)
- Provide easy access to tutorial services; remember that some students may need to strengthen their home language skills first before they can take on the task of learning English
- Provide professional development for faculty to help educators use more interactive techniques with students and to become more aware and supportive of cultural and linguistic diversity



Guides for Educators

Participation and discussion may be less than democratic in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. The following guides are meant to help educators to encourage adult students who may be insecure and appear not engaged because of limited English skills and to help all students achieve academic success in higher education.

- Review and incorporate in your teaching, principles related to adult learning, acquisition of literacy skills, adult second language learning, and working with multicultural groups
- Use a variety of teaching approaches that provide adults with different learning styles and diverse needs the opportunity to be successful
- Build "scaffolding techniques" that are relationship-based so that students participate more productively (for example: small group brainstorming and whole class de-briefing)
- Give students considerable *wait-time* to process a question and frame an answer; provide some quiet time for reflection and the recording of thoughts prior to a discussion
- Incorporate information and material that is current and relevant, and immediately useful to learners in their out-of-classroom roles
- Basic, good teaching practices support students of all ethnic backgrounds. Students learn best when multiple perspectives are encouraged, material is explained clearly, and feedback on assignments is prompt and specific

RESOURCE LIST for

Educators of Adult Second Language Learners

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Los Angeles, CA 90089-4037

www.usc.edu/dept/chepa

**National Association of Latino Elected and
Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund**

1122 W. Washington Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90015

213-747-7606

www.naleo.org

Pew Hispanic Center

1919 M Street NW

Washington, DC 20036

www.pewhispanic.org

The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute

University of Southern California

School of Policy, Planning & Development

650 Childs Way, Suite 102

Los Angeles, CA 90089

www.trpi.org

**California Association of Teachers of English
to Speakers of Other Languages (CATESOL)**

21 C Orinda Way, Suite 362

Orinda, CA 94563

www.catesol.org

**California Postsecondary Education
Commission**

1303 J Street, Suite 500

Sacramento, CA 95814

www.cpec.ca.gov

Institute for Higher Education, Leadership and Policy

California State University
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819
www.csus.edu/ihe

Additional Resources and Web Sites:

4faculty .org
www.4faculty.org

California Tomorrow
www.californiatomorrow.org

Alliance for Equity in Higher Education
www.msi-alliance.org

The American Association of Community Colleges
(AACC)
www.aacc.nche.edu

American Council on Education
www.acenet.edu

The DiversityWeb for Higher Education
www.diversityweb.org

California State University
"Hispanics at the California State University"
www.calstate.edu/impact

The Education Trust
www.edtrust.org



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