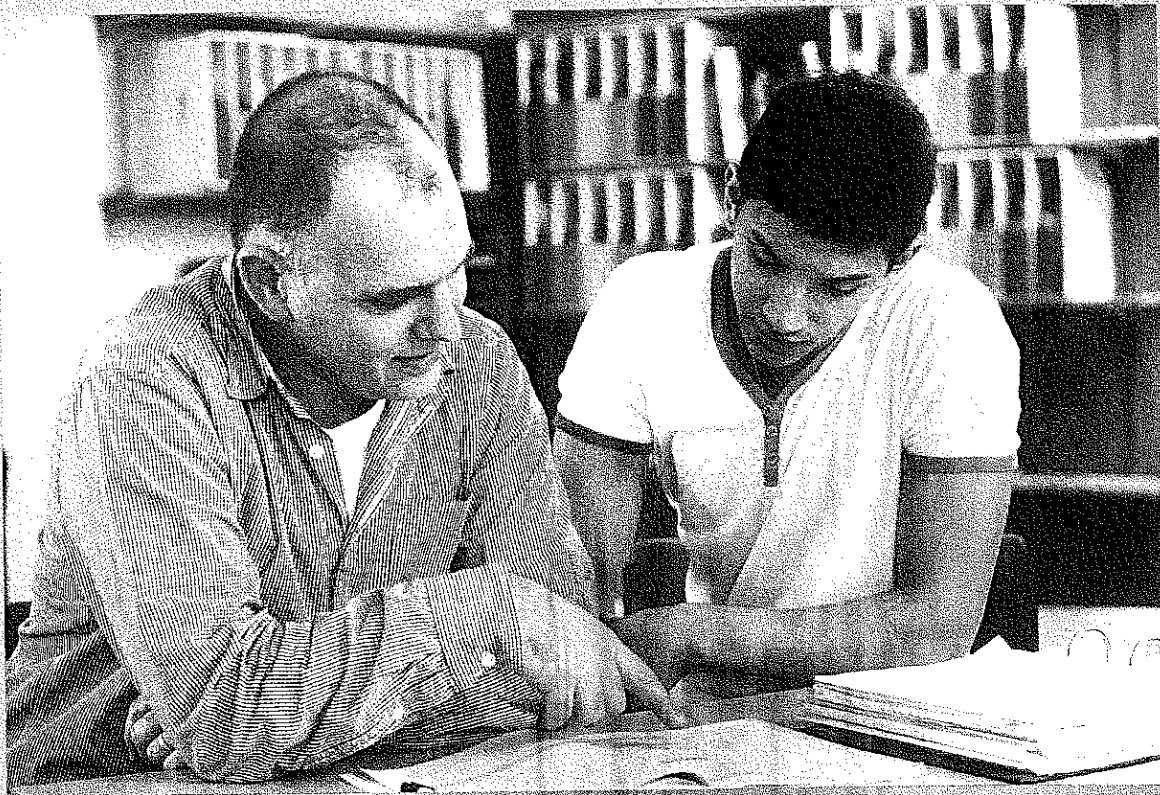


# COUNCIL CHRONICLE

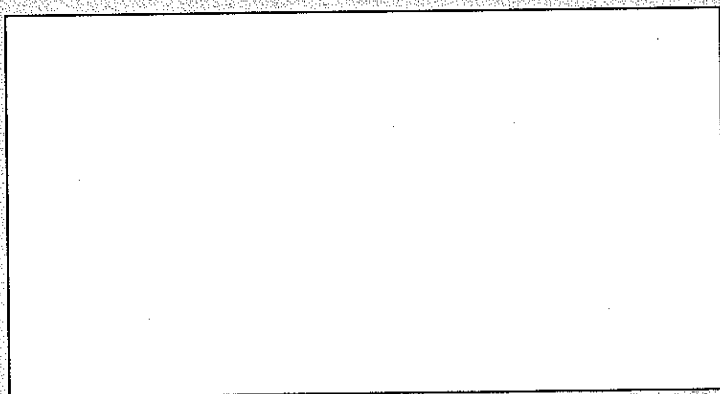
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH



## Finding and Using Evidence of Student Learning

A NEW NCTE POLICY RESEARCH BRIEF

**Implementation of the  
Common Core State Standards**



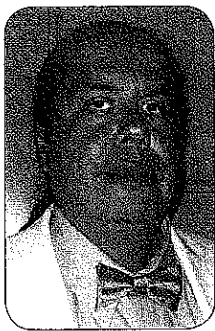
### *IN THIS ISSUE:*

**Fair Use & the "Thirty-Second Rule"**

**Reading Instruction That Meets Students Where They Are**

**Principles and Practices in Online Writing Instruction**

**Year in Trenches Turns Danza into Education Advocate**



## The Changing Demographics of the United States: Rethinking the Academic Experience of English Language Learners

According to the 2012 United States Census, the Hispanic population is rapidly growing, which can be attributed to high birth rates as well as immigration patterns, rather than an increase of undocumented Hispanic citizens, as the media commonly professes. (See sidebar.)

Unfortunately, the rise in Hispanic population has not been matched with a rise in the academic success rate among Hispanics, many of whom are classified as English Language Learners (ELL). To accomplish this, many aspects of the United States education system will have to be revamped in many ways.

Unlike the previous student population that has been primarily monolingual English speakers, the increase in Hispanic students has resulted in an increase of Hispanic students who speak a second language, or minimally have been exposed to a second language. It is imperative that the United States education system implement a curriculum and pedagogical practices that build upon students' linguistic abilities.

As a writing instructor at Texas State University (a Hispanic-Serving Institution), I have a lot of experience working with ELL students.

Although these students are most often excellent students, they have been identified as ELL students by the state because of their standardized test scores that evaluate cultural knowledge and language fluency, not intelligence.

The problem is that most ELL students do not recognize this and instead often feel intellectually inferior to White European American (WEA) students. And, unlike other students who may be labeled as "gifted and talented," and thus have a positive title, ELL students have been labeled as academic deficient, and thus often lack academic confidence, which negatively affects their academic experience.

Most ELL students have a wealth of knowledge that is deeply embedded within their culture, and more specifically, their native language. Unfortunately for them, many times the US education system has ignored (at best) and in most cases tried removing their native culture and tongue through their educational experiences. Programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL) do this by

emphasizing the importance of the English language at the cost of students' native language.

What is even further contradicting is that these same students are then later asked to enroll in classes in their native language as a foreign language because their schooling experience has successfully removed their original language. Unfortunately, foreign language instruction does not result in language fluency.

Noting these flaws in our education system, when I have ELL students in my writing classes I create an environment that makes them feel valued. I establish a culturally friendly classroom, so that my ELL students feel empowered in my classes.

I create this environment not by simply adopting a multicultural reader, as many instructors do, but by including the students' cultural and language experiences as core materials for the class.

For example, when discussing class materials, I sometimes ask a student questions in Spanish regardless of whether he/she is fluent in Spanish. In cases where the student does not know Spanish, there are always plenty of Spanish speakers who are more than happy to help. I also provide them the opportunity to respond in a language other than English.

The second thing I do in my classes is implement an anti-racist ideology. Although I recognize that the goal of any writing class is to teach students how to write, I like teaching in an environment where all students, especially ELL students, feel empowered and valued.

I do this by using videos, articles, and other materials that show other ELL individuals in power positions. YouTube is an excellent resource because it provides many examples of speeches, protests, and other critical material. Once I present this material, I require the students to respond, summarize, or address the ideas covered by the video.

Over the years I have noticed that when I use information like this, my ELL students are active participants in my classes. On various occasions my students have told me that my class is the first time in their academic career in which the teacher used resources that he/she could actually relate to.

*Continued on page 28*

As a way to further support my ELL students I use "Coalition Pedagogy" (Pimentel and Pimentel 2002), which embraces students' culture. Coalition pedagogy is an offspring of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1992), anti-racist pedagogy (Blakeney, 2005), funds of knowledge (González, Moll, and Amanti, 2005), and other student-centered pedagogies.

By using "coalition pedagogy," I am an advocate for the ELL students in my class. I ask them questions, challenge them, and make them think critically about the material being discussed. Although this might sound typical, I do this in a way that is not threatening and instead is very supportive of students' needs.


Having been a teacher of writing since 1995, I know that it is easy to stick to the training that we were all provided in graduate school (regardless of how outdated that may be).

Additionally, I am aware that it is easier to use a syllabus that we all have perfected (at least we think) for our classes. But the truth is we need to transform the ordinary, and challenge our comfort zones. We as teachers must realize that we are now teaching a different type of student, and that we must change to meet their needs. Once we begin to use students' cultural and linguistic knowledge in the classroom, we are likely to see an increase in Hispanic/ELL student academic achievement.

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## A Look at the Demographics

By far, the majority of Hispanics living in the United States are native born (70%) and belong to the following ethnic groups: Mexican (65.5%), Puerto Rican (9.1%), Salvadorian (3.6%), and Cuban (3.5%). (*The College Completion Agenda*, <http://completionagenda.collegeboard.org/latino/hispanic-population-growth>).

In comparison, the growth of the White European American (WEA) population is growing much slower. It stands at 197.8 million, and is projected to peak at 200 million in 2024, before it starts to decline. Currently, the overall WEA population stands at 63% of the total population, but it is expected to drop to 50% by 2043, when ethnic minorities (collectively) become the majority in the United States.

In 2010 the Hispanic high school graduation rate was 71%. In comparison, Asian students are graduating at a 93% rate, and WEAs at an 83% rate (Garcia).

A recent Pew report provides the following data: Hispanic college students are less likely than their white counterparts to enroll in a four-year college (56% versus 72%). Hispanic students are also less likely than WEAs to attend a selective college, to be enrolled in college full time, and to complete a bachelor's degree (Fry).

—O. Pimentel

### Help Shape Council Positions by Submitting a Resolution

If you have concerns about issues that affect your teaching or if there are positions you support and you think NCTE should take a stand, you have an opportunity to be heard! Propose a resolution that may be voted upon and passed at NCTE's Annual Convention in Boston. For details on submitting a resolution, or to see resolutions already passed by Council members, visit the NCTE website (<http://www.ncte.org/positions>) or contact NCTE at [resolutions@ncte.org](mailto:resolutions@ncte.org). Committee chair Kristin Hamilton must receive resolutions by **October 15, 2013**.