

I would like to start off by thanking you all for creating the time to focus on such an important issue as we have here today. My name is Josue Lopez, and I am a second grade teacher in Windham, CT. My parents were born in Honduras, but I was born in the United States. My first language is Spanish and I struggled to learn English in school. Firsthand, I know the value of bilingual education to the academic success of a student, as well as its impact on the confidence and comfortability of students in an academic setting.

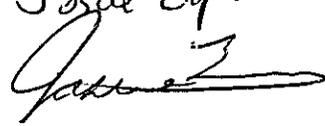
I will first explain why the thirty months to sixty months change is not only significant, but also necessary. The research has shown that students can learn their basic interpersonal communication skills, or BICS, in a short time. Some students can do it within the three years that are currently allotted for bilingual education. BICS, however, does not refer to your preparedness for an English-only classroom with high academic vocabulary. BICS refers, as its name implies, to interpersonal communication which is developed as students simply converse with each other. We may here students talking casually and believe that those students are just as capable in English as any other student.

The problem is that the BICS, the interpersonal communication, is not the language that students need to truly achieve in an English-only classroom. The language that we need to focus on and develop, which an extension to 60 months of bilingual education can address, is your cognitive academic language proficiency, or CALP. To quote Socorro Herrera and Kevin Murry in their work *Mastering ESL and Bilingual Methods* (2005), "academic language proficiency in L2 [that is a student's second language] involves the capacity to understand and produce language that is both abstract and complex" (pg. 54). While a student may be able to tell you about what they are going to do this weekend in a smooth conversation, that same student will struggle having to learn and explain less concrete concepts in a second language where their vocabulary is limited and so is their familiarity with such a concept.

Now I am short on time, so I will discuss one more point. Some may say 'well students will always struggle with vocabulary so why not put them in an English classroom and make them learn?' Though this sounds cruel, if you are unaware of the bilingual research, conceptually it makes a bit of sense. Shouldn't we totally immerse a student if we expect them to learn the language? The problem, though, is that research shows that this sink-or-swim method is ineffective compared to bilingual education. I am sure that there will be other presenters who will speak to this, but I would like to highlight a concept called common underlying proficiency, or CUP. Common underlying proficiency refers to the fact that skills learned in a first language are transferrable to a second language. For example, if you know how to make a prediction based on what you have read in one language, you do not need to be retaught that skill again. Writing is also a concept that is transferred from one language to another. Common underlying proficiency shows that providing students with bilingual education, providing students with education in their first language, is not slowing their English acquisition. The academic skills they are learning in their first language are transferrable to English and, therefore, we are *promoting* their English growth, not hindering it, by offering bilingual education.

In summary, I believe that you all, as representatives of the people, are prepared to do what is in the best interest of the public. Perhaps when the thirty months law was enacted some of this data was unavailable to you all or was not presented. However, with all this evidence in front of you, I put my trust in you when I say I am confident that you can look at the data and say extending this law is not only the right thing to do, but also the most effective thing to do as well.

Thank you for your time,

Josue Lopez - Grade 2 Windham, CT Teacher


3/17/14

A quien pueda interesar:

Yo Edward S. Vaquiro y Aixa Rivera padres de Anniushka Vaquiro y Stephanie Vaquiro estudiantes de la Escuela Windham Center, quiero expresarme nuevamente a través de esta carta de cual entiendo que es beneficiario tener programa bilingue para todos los estudiantes latinos. Porque en un momento dado a mi como padre me hizo falta en mis estudios y creo que si mis hijos obtienen les va a ayudar en un mejor futuro académico tanto como a mis hijos y a los estudiantes latinos para que así sean mejores profesionales académicamente. Con su ayuda pueden ayudar al sistema académico para así crear mas profesionales bilingue en algun mañana. Como padre me siento responsable haciendo todo lo necesario de que mis hijos obtengan un programa bilingue porque así entiendo que van a hacer mejores preparadas en su educación y puedan comprender ambos idiomas a la perfección.

Att. Edward Vaquiro, Aixa Rivera