

Language and the Common Core

Resources to help language learners deal with the new standards

Now that the Common

Core Standards have been almost universally accepted across the country, organizations are emerging with the stated goal of helping educators respond to the new directives.

Last month, Understanding Language launched a website and online community aiming to heighten educator awareness of the critical role that language plays in the new Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. Facilitated by partnerships with the Council of Great City Schools and New York City Department

of Education, the long-term goal of the initiative is to help educators understand that the new standards cannot be achieved without providing specific attention to the language demands inherent to each content area. The aim is to improve academic outcomes for English language learners by drawing attention to critical aspects of instructional practice and by advocating for necessary policy support at the state and local levels.

The first product of this initiative consists of a set of commissioned papers that focus on the shifts, challenges, and opportuni-

ties found in the new standards. These papers were presented at a conference held at Stanford University in California and represent a strategic analysis of the language demands contained in the new standards. The primary message of these papers is that language matters and cannot be overlooked as teachers, districts, and state and local agencies strive to prepare students.

In phase two of its work, Understanding Language will develop, test, and share exemplars of language-rich teaching practices in the content areas of math, science, and English lan-

guage arts. In collaboration with school districts, a third phase of work will engage educators nationally in the development of open-source teaching resources around the new standards. These resources will demonstrate ways in which students' disciplinary English language proficiency can be developed and supported in the context of content instruction.

More information can be found at <http://ell.stanford.edu/>.

In another move, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the California Department of Education (CDE), and the San Diego County Office

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Bilingual Whether Hispanic, Latino, or American

However Americans of Latin American heritage like to

call themselves, being bilingual in English and Spanish is of the utmost importance, according to a new study by the Pew Hispanic Center.

Almost 40 years after the U.S. government mandated the use of the words "Hispanic" or "Latino" to categorize Americans with roots in Latin America, the survey reveals that these words are not fully embraced by the very community they attempt to describe.

According to Pew's findings, only 24 percent of people surveyed prefer a pan-ethnic label, calling themselves "Latino" or Hispanic," while over 50 percent identify themselves with their family's country of origin. About 70 percent of those surveyed said that they consider the Hispanic community to be made up of many different cultures, rather than one common culture. In investigating how Latinos feel that they fit into American society, about half consider themselves culturally very different than the average American, while 21 percent use the term "American" most often to describe themselves.

Nonetheless, the survey showed common ground over the issue of Spanish as a heritage language and the importance of learning English. The majority of respondents, 81 percent, identify themselves as Spanish speakers, and 95 percent believe that the Spanish language is important for future generations. The survey also showed that 87 percent think mastering the English language is important for being successful in the U.S., indicating that the vast majority of Hispanics value bilingualism and place importance on being fluent in both English and Spanish.