Late Exit Transitional Bilingual Education

What Really Works For Kids Futures Doesn’t Pass the Test Today

Can you answer this Grade 4 MSP question?

1. Hur vilda pandor panda och zoologiska åt?
   A. Vilda pandor lär sig gå; Zoo pandor kan sitta rakt
   B. Wild panda grab med "fingrar"; Zoo panda grab med tassar.
   C. Wild pandor äter mestadels bambu; Zoo panda äter kakor och godsaker.

I’m sorry, you failed. You cannot read at the 4th grade level. We will be announcing it in the paper and sending a note home to your family declaring you a non reader. And, because there are so many students just like you who don’t yet speak English in your school, we will be calling your school, teachers, and principal a failure and require them to jump through expensive hoops that make no sense or any difference in your reading.

Imagine you are 9 years old taking a test in a language you don’t yet know or understand. Or imagine if you were the teacher of that 9 year old and knew that student could read, write and comprehend 4th grade materials in his or her primary language. And finally imagine if you and your school were labeled as “failing” because of this test. That’s what the State of Washington does everyday to its most vulnerable students and the schools and educators that serve them.

In the early 1990’s Pasco set some new quality parameters for Pasco students, including English Language Learners: that all kids would be taught all day by a certificated teacher who spoke a language they could understand and English. Since then we have been following the research-proven late-exit transitional bilingual model and are pleased to be participating in the University of Colorado’s Literacy Squared™ research on this intervention approach within the late exit model. This transitional approach teaches kids math, reading, writing and all content in a language they understand for 80% of their school day starting in kindergarten. Each year more content is taught in English so that by third grade students spend half days in each language and by fifth grade they are 80% in English. While it may seem counterintuitive, it has been demonstrated around the world that the stronger a person is in their first language, the stronger they will be in their second language. In Pasco, over 6,000 students come to school everyday and work to learn the basic subjects and the English language so they can compete with their all English-speaking peers. After they learn English and their subjects in the Late Exit model, they outscore their all-English peers by 10th grade on the state assessment. But while they are still learning English at elementary and middle school, they cannot pass the state assessments that are provided only in English and their schools, teachers and principals are labeled as failures when they are not.

**Late exit works.** Because students can only learn to read when they already have the vocabulary in their oral language, our students learn to read in their primary language, then transition to English when their English oral language catches up. Check out our data on page 2. Pasco data mirror the national research.

**Making a Difference:** In Pasco, we provide the top two models for our students, the Two-Way Dual Language Bilingual and the Late Exit Transitional bilingual, both of which yield the highest student achievement for English Language Learners than any other model.
Pasco students who are not yet proficient in English are administered a Spanish-language assessment called the Supera.

We know our students can read and write in the language they understand. And we also know, based on our data, that if they stay in our school system they will become proficient in English and pass the State assessments at high levels by high school. This multiyear time line matches national research on language acquisition.

We reward these accomplishments with Supera Awards, which are determined using the same methodology that is used to determine the State’s (CEE) School of Distinction award, including three years of improved data and a positive linear slope in each subject.

Our successful colleagues accept the Supera School of Distinction award at Chess Elementary. In 2013 the award was also earned by Longfellow and Emerson elementary schools. This year the award will go to Markham and Twain elementary schools. Our students are learning and improving and we are proud of the commitment and effective work of our principals, teachers, and support staff.