



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Report of the National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth to be released

Washington, DC. March 1, 2006. The long-awaited report of the National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth is being released. An Executive Summary of the panel's findings is now available at www.cal.org. The full report will be published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., later this spring. This project was funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and was conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and SRI International under the leadership of Diane August, who was principal investigator.

The panel was appointed in 2002 by the U. S. Department of Education to conduct a review of the research on the literacy development of English language learners. The review is particularly important because U.S. schools now serve more than 14 million children nationwide who come from households in which English is not the primary language spoken, and because No Child Left Behind—the federal education law—requires that federally funded educational programs be supported by research. Various national studies indicate that second-language learners have not fared well in U.S. schools when it comes to reading achievement, and educators are seeking guidance from research.

The panel included major scholars in second-language learning and literacy and was chaired by Timothy Shanahan, a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Panel members deliberated for 3 years before completing their work. The report they prepared analyzes existing evidence on teaching reading and writing to language-minority students and identifies gaps in the available research. Among their findings are the following:

- Focusing instruction on key components, such as phonemic awareness, decoding, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing, has clear benefits, but differences due to children's second-language proficiency make it important to adjust instruction to meet the needs of second-language learners.
- Language-minority students who are literate in their first language are likely to be advantaged in the acquisition of English literacy. This finding is supported by studies of cross-language relationships as well as by evaluation studies that demonstrate that language-minority students instructed in both their native language and English perform, on average, better on English reading measures than language-minority students instructed only in English.

Peggy McCardle, Chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, writes in a foreword to the book that this report is "important" and that "it will contribute to an ongoing, national effort to . . . address the educational needs of language-minority children." Other scholars describe it as a "must read book," "unprecedented and thorough," and say that it represents a "blueprint for a long-term research agenda."

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (LEA), Inc., is a scholarly publisher specializing in high-quality books on literacy aimed primarily at the research community. They will publish the National Literacy Panel report in May 2006 under the title *Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners*, edited by Diane August and Timothy Shanahan. To place an order for this book online, please visit LEA's Web site at www.erlbaum.com/august.

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About CAL

The Center for Applied Linguistics is a private nonprofit organization working to improve communication through better understanding of language and culture. Established in 1959, CAL has earned a national and international reputation for its contributions to the fields of bilingual education, English as a second language, literacy, foreign language education, dialect studies, language policy, refugee orientation, and the education of linguistically and culturally diverse adults and children. CAL's staff of researchers and educators conduct research, design and develop instructional materials and language tests, provide technical assistance and professional development, conduct needs assessments and program evaluations, and disseminate information and resources related to language and culture. For more information about CAL, visit www.cal.org.

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