

There is also considerable variation in access to technology among different ethnic groups and particularly among families with differing levels of income and parental education. For example:

- Seventy-six percent of white households have access to the Internet, compared to 70% for African American and 60% of Hispanic households.
- Ninety eight percent of high-income families own computers, and 94% of these families have access to the Internet, whereas 65% of low-income families own computers, and 60% have access to the Internet (Rainie, 2010).
- Ninety four percent of students whose parents have a college degree reported access to the Internet at home versus 39% for households where parents failed to complete high school.

When students are expected to complete assignments at home that require computers and information from the Internet, access can be a serious problem. Long term, access to computers can also influence the career options available to students: Students are less likely to pursue high-tech careers in areas such as science and engineering if they have inadequate technology backgrounds or haven't been introduced to ways that technology can be used in these areas. Preparing all students to compete in such an environment can be a challenge.

But access to technology, alone, might not be the "Great Equalizer" that narrows the achievement gap between poor and wealthy students and minorities and nonminorities. Several studies, both in this country and elsewhere, show that access to computers is only the first step in increasing student learning (Stross, 2010). Left on their own, students tend to use computers to play games and interact with each other instead of accessing the wealth of information available on the Internet or developing their skills with technology. Encouragement and close supervision from adults are essential to increase student learning through access to computers (Stross, 2010).

There is a lesson in this for classroom teachers—just throwing technology at students doesn't guarantee learning. As educators we're tempted to view technology as a "magic bullet" that can solve all of our educational problems, but this is far from true. Classroom teachers need to plan carefully when they use technology, structure lessons strategically, monitor students while they are using it, and evaluate both students and the technology afterward to ensure that using it translates into learning for students.

Check Your Understanding

- 1.1. Explain how cultural diversity influences learning.
- 1.2. Describe three ways in which effective teachers respond to cultural diversity in their classrooms.
- 1.3. Describe the relationship between urban schools and cultural diversity.

For feedback, go to the appendix, *Check Your Understanding*, located in the back of this text.

Language Diversity

Teaching and You

Have you ever tried to learn a language different from the one spoken in your home? Was it easier to learn to speak the language, understand it when spoken, or read it? How proficient were you after 2 or 3 years? How successful would you have been if all the instruction in your other classes were in that language?

Think about the questions we asked in "Teaching and You," and also imagine trying to help students make sense of a topic you're teaching if they can't understand the words you're saying. And what if you can't understand what they're trying to say to you? This is the challenge many teachers in today's schools face.

Language is one of the most important parts of any culture, and language influences learning more than any other single factor. Let's see how one school responds.

Ellie Barton, a language arts teacher at Northeast Middle School, is the school's English language learner (ELL) Coordinator. (You'll also encounter the term English learner [EL], as both are used in education.) She teaches ELL classes and is also in charge of the school's testing and placement program.

Her job is challenging, as her students vary considerably in their knowledge of English. For instance, one group of Somali-Bantu children just arrived from a refugee camp in Kenya. They cannot read or write, because there is no written language for Mai-Mai, their native tongue. Language isn't their only challenge; many had never been in a building with more than one floor, and others found urinals and other aspects of indoor plumbing a mystery. At the other end of the continuum is a young girl from India who can read and write in four languages: Hindi, the national language of India; Urdu, the language of her Persian ancestors; Telegu, a regional language in India; and Arabic.

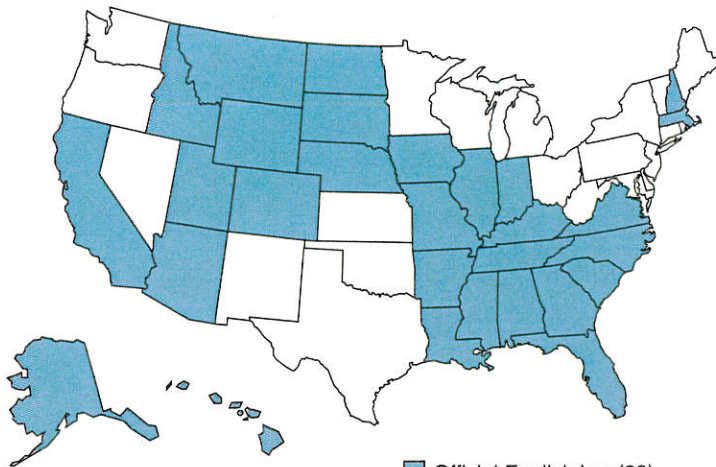
To sort out this language diversity, the district uses a placement test that categorizes students into three levels: newcomer classrooms for students who have little or no expertise with English; self-contained ELL classrooms, where a primary emphasis is on learning to read and write English; and sheltered English, where students receive structured help in learning academic subjects such as science and social studies. However, the placement process is not foolproof, since English skills are sometimes nonexistent, and some parents don't know the exact ages of their children. Ellie's principal deals with this information void in creative ways; he recently asked a dentist friend to look at a student's teeth to estimate the child's age. (Based on Romboy & Kinkead, 2005)

As you saw earlier in the chapter, immigration has brought increasing numbers of students with limited backgrounds in English to our country's classrooms. The number of **English learners (ELs)**, students whose first language is not English and who need help in learning to speak, read, and write in English, increased by more than 60% between 1995 and 2009, totaling more than 5 million students, or more than 10% of the student population (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011). Currently, over 22% of our students are either foreign-born or have at least one foreign-born parent. Experts predict that by 2030 two of five students will be enrolled in programs designed to teach English (Shah, 2012). Currently, 440 languages are spoken in the United States, with Spanish (73%), Chinese (4%) and Vietnamese (3%), the most common (Migration Policy Institute, 2010).

Language Diversity: The Government's Response

Public interest in educating students who are ELs increased with the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which required states to document the educational progress of each specific group of students, including ELs. The federal government, through legislation and court rulings, initially attempted to address the needs of EL students through bilingual approaches, strategies intended to maintain the first language while students learned English. In 1968, Congress passed the Bilingual Education Act, which provided federal funds for educating nonnative English speakers. In the controversial 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* case, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the San Francisco School District unlawfully discriminated against minority students by failing to address non-English-speaking children's language problems (Schimmel, Stellman, & Fischer, 2011). But in 1998 more than 60% of the voters in California passed Proposition 227 to replace bilingual education programs with a fast-track to English; EL students were provided with a special pullout English immersion program for 1 year and then shifted into mainstream English-only classrooms (McCloskey, Pellegrin, Thompson, & Hakuta, 2008). And 29 different states have passed legislation making English the official language in that state (see Figure 3.4). The effectiveness of these actions is still being debated, as you'll see in the *Issues You'll Face in Teaching* feature in this chapter.

FIGURE 3.4 States with Official Language Legislation



■ Official English law (29)
 □ No official English law (21)

Alabama	(1990)	Massachusetts	(1975)
Alaska	(1998)	Mississippi	(1987)
Arizona	(2006)	Missouri	(1998)
Arkansas	(1987)	Montana	(1995)
California	(1986)	Nebraska	(1920)
Colorado	(1988)	New Hampshire	(1995)
Florida	(1988)	North Carolina	(1987)
Georgia	(1986 & 1996)	North Dakota	(1987)
Hawaii	(1978)	South Carolina	(1987)
Idaho	(2007)	South Dakota	(1995)
Illinois	(1969)	Tennessee	(1984)
Indiana	(1984)	Utah	(2000)
Iowa	(2002)	Virginia	(1981 & 1996)
Kentucky	(1984)	Wyoming	(1996)
Louisiana	(1811)		

Source: U.S. English. (2011). *Official English: Why is official English necessary?* Retrieved from <http://www.usenglish.org/view/10>

English then increases in each subsequent grade. The future of maintenance programs is uncertain, given the English Acquisition component of NCLB, which discourages such programs.



Educational responses to language diversity differ in the degree to which they build on and attempt to maintain students' first language.

Bowing to public pressure, the federal government has more recently changed course, advocating that schools should teach English, with little attempt to preserve minority languages. With this shift in thinking, the previous federal Office of Bilingual Education now has become the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). In 2006, during a debate on immigration reform, the U.S. Senate voted to designate English as the national language (Hulse, 2006). Now the federal government's major goal is to teach English to students who are ELs as quickly as possible.

Language Diversity: Schools' Responses

Despite the federal position on EL instruction, schools across the country, when faced with the reality of educating EL students, have responded to the challenge of language diversity in very different ways (see Figure 3.5). Although all of the programs are designed ultimately to teach English, they differ in how fast English is introduced and to what extent the first language is encouraged and maintained.

Bilingual maintenance language programs place the greatest emphasis on using and sustaining the first language while teaching English. In these programs, students initially receive most or all of their instruction in their first language, which is usually Spanish, and a corresponding small percentage in English (Tong, Lara-Alecio, Irby, Mathes, & Kwok, 2008). The emphasis on

At the opposite end of the continuum, **immersion and English as a second language (ESL) programs** emphasize rapid transition to English, with no efforts to maintain students' native language. ESL programs, the most common educational response to linguistic diversity, vary across the country, with some focusing on general education classroom-based ESL, others on pullout ESL instruction, and still others on sheltered or structured English instruction (Viadero, 2009b). Halfway between the two ends of the continuum, **transition programs** maintain the first language until students acquire sufficient English to succeed in English-only classrooms; the primary goal is to help students reach English proficiency.

Logistics are often a factor when schools consider which type of program to use. For example, transition programs can be effective when classes are composed of large numbers of EL

FIGURE 3.5 Different EL Instruction Programs

Bilingual Maintenance	Transition Programs	English as a Second Language	Immersion
Teach English while still maintaining students' native language.	Use students' first language initially, and then introduce English gradually.	Provide instruction in English, but attempt to adapt instruction to learner needs.	Place students in English-only classes with minimal adjustments to the curriculum or instruction.

students who speak the same language, such as Spanish-speaking students in Los Angeles, because a teacher who speaks the students' native language can be hired. This isn't possible when several first languages exist. This happened at Northeast Middle School and is a primary reason why Ellie Barton teaches in an ELL program that places minimal emphasis on students' first language.

ISSUES YOU'LL FACE IN TEACHING

Bilingual Education

Bilingual education is controversial and reflects our country's changing views about immigration and assimilation. Through the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and guidelines drafted as a result of *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974, the federal government signaled its commitment to providing services for nonnative English speakers. But in 2002, Congress failed to renew the Bilingual Education Act, instead packaging funds for English language learners into NCLB, which requires students to attain "English fluency" in 3 years and requires schools to teach students in English after that time period (Viadero, 2009b). In addition, state-level proposals, similar to Proposition 227 in California, passed in 26 other states and sharply curtailed the use of bilingual programs across the country, replacing them with English-only immersion programs (R. Garcia, 2006).

The essence of bilingual programs is an attempt to maintain and build on students' native languages while they learn English. Proponents claim that maintaining and building on students' native language not only make sense from a learning perspective but also produce adults who can navigate in other languages. Critics contend that bilingual programs are divisive and slow down the rate of English acquisition.

THE QUESTION

Are bilingual programs designed to maintain students' native languages an effective way to teach English, or are other approaches, such as English immersion, more effective? Here are the arguments on both sides of the issue.

PRO

- Bilingual programs make sense educationally because they build on and reinforce students' first language (Hakuta, 2011; Tong et al., 2008).

- Immersion programs place unrealistic demands on students who are faced with the dual task of learning English and a content area at the same time (Gollnick & Chinn, 2013).
- Because bilingual programs produce students who can speak two languages, they make sense economically. People who can speak more than one language will become increasingly valuable in today's global economy.
- Research shows that knowledge and skills acquired in a native language are "transferable" to the second language, providing students with a better understanding of the role of language in communication and how language works (Gugliemi, 2008).

CON

- Critics of bilingual education contend that it is divisive, encouraging groups of nonnative English speakers to remain separate from mainstream American culture.
- Bilingual programs are ineffective, slowing the process of acquiring English for ELL students.
- Bilingual programs are inefficient, requiring expenditures for the training of bilingual teachers and materials that could be better spent on quality monolingual programs (U.S. English, 2011).

YOU TAKE A STAND

So what is the best way to help EL students learn English? Do bilingual maintenance programs provide a more effective and humane way to learn English, or is it better to immerse students in an English-rich environment to speed up the process?

Go to *Issues You'll Face in Teaching* in the MyEducationLab™ Book Resources that accompany this text to log your thoughts and receive feedback from your authors.

Language Diversity in Your Classroom

As you work with EL students, it's easy to fall into the trap of tacitly assuming that they're all similar in terms of their backgrounds in their native languages. This isn't true (Zehr, 2009). As with students in general, some come from homes where books, newspapers, and the Internet are a regular part of their lives, but others come from families whose members can barely read and write in their native language. When these students enter your classroom, they bring considerable diversity in terms of their grasp of the mechanics and power of language.

Also, the ability to converse in English doesn't mean students can learn effectively in English (Hakuta, 2011). Students who are ELs usually pick up enough English to communicate with peers and teachers after 3 or 4 years, but it can take up to 8 years to learn enough English to function effectively in academic content areas.

The likelihood is high that you'll have students in your classroom whose first language is not English. Your ability to make informed professional decisions will be essential to help them learn. In working with students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds, your professional knowledge will be tested, perhaps more than in any other area of your work. If you have ever tried to learn another language, you can understand how difficult the process is. Vocabulary and grammar are constant challenges and often interfere with understanding. Try to remember your own struggles as you work with students attempting to master English.

Teaching EL Students

Research offers a number of suggestions for working with students from varying language backgrounds (Echevarria & Graves, 2011; Peregoy & Boyle, 2009):

- Create a warm and supportive classroom environment by taking a personal interest in all students and involving everyone in learning activities. Get to know students, and strive to personalize the content you're teaching.
- Mix whole-class instruction with group work and cooperative learning to allow students to interact informally and practice their developing language skills with the topics they study.
- Use question-and-answer sessions to involve all students in classroom activities and concrete examples to provide reference points for new ideas and vocabulary. Continually check for understanding through questions, assignments, and quizzes. Misunderstandings are a normal part of teaching and are even more common with students who are members of cultural minorities. Use these checks to adjust instruction.
- Avoid situations that draw attention to students' lack of English skills, such as making students read aloud in front of the whole class.

These strategies represent good instructional practice for all students; for ELL students, they're essential.

How will language diversity affect you as a teacher? First, although bilingual programs have been reduced, the need for teachers with EL expertise will only increase. Experts estimate that in the near future, U.S. schools will need almost 60,000 additional teachers with ESL certification to meet the demands of these students, and 11 states have incentive policies to encourage teachers to pursue studies in this area (Honawar, 2009). In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor has targeted bilingual teachers as a critical need area, especially in urban and rural districts (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Teacher candidates who speak two languages, especially Spanish, are in high demand across the country.

Revisiting My Beliefs

This section addresses the second question in *This I Believe*, "Students who aren't native English speakers learn English most effectively by hearing the teacher use correct English." This statement isn't true: The only truly effective way for students to learn English is to practice it in language-related activities.