

Factors Influencing Implementation of Mandated Policy Change: Proposition 227 in Seven Northern California School Districts

Julie Maxwell-Jolly
University of California, Davis

Abstract

Proposition 227 limits instructional use of students' primary languages but allows bilingual programs if adequate numbers of parents request an alternative to English-only instruction. Researchers interviewed district and school personnel at seven sites to determine influences on policy responses to Proposition 227 and observed the impact of these policies on classroom practice. The history of support for bilingual programs, disposition of district staff toward primary language instruction, and community attitude and involvement, influenced district policy. Researchers concluded that district decisions largely determined school policy; policy responses varied to a surprising extent; change occurred at all sites and was most evident in the classroom; and Proposition 227 policy contributed to the existing inconsistency in programs for English learners.

Introduction

In June of 1998, California voters passed Proposition 227, an initiative to reform education programs for English language learners (ELLs), students whose primary language is not English and who are in the process of gaining English proficiency. A fundamental goal of the proposition was to restrict educational approaches that use students' primary languages. As the 1998-1999 school year began, three teams of University of California (UC) researchers, one from UCLA, one from UC Berkeley, and one from UC Davis, began a project exploring the effects of Proposition 227 during its initial implementation. This paper describes the UC Davis team's work in seven northern California school districts.

The team focused their observations on the development of district and school policy with regard to Proposition 227, how policies at the two levels interact, and how they affect teachers and classroom practice. This paper describes some of these effects and explores possible influences on the various policy responses in the seven sample schools and districts. The paper also includes discussion of some potential future effects and additional policy implications of Proposition 227.

Proposition 227 Background

As an approach to public policy decision making, Proposition 227 is not unusual in the current context of California politics. It continues a state trend of policies introduced by laypersons and instituted by the general public via voter initiative. The proposition is a mandated top-down reform, and like a wave of other educational reforms beginning in the mid-1980s (Jennings, 1996), seeks to improve education by regulating content and methodology. The initiative proposes replacing primary language approaches with a structured English immersion approach (SEI). SEI classrooms are comprised of ELL students who are at a similar level of English proficiency, sometimes in multi-age classrooms. The focus of these classrooms is on improving students' English proficiency; academic content is secondary. Theoretically, students are to remain in SEI programs for only one academic school year and no longer than two. Proposition 227 attempts also to prohibit or curtail strongly the use of students' primary language for instruction. Under certain conditions the proposition allows for parents to sign a waiver requesting that rather than SEI, their children participate in an alternative program, usually one that includes bilingual methods. When parents of 20 or more students per grade choose this option, the law requires school districts to provide an alternative to the SEI program. However, the district does not have to provide this program at any particular school site so that parents who choose this option may have to transport their children to a school outside of their local area.

Proposition 227 contains a provision allowing parents and others to assign personal legal liability to any teacher, school, or district that does not implement the English language program as designated in the initiative. This provision sets the new law apart from most other mandates and introduces an approach to policy enforcement rarely taken with regard to classroom practice.

As districts have interpreted and implemented Proposition 227 it has not, in fact, led to the demise of the use of the primary language of ELL students in California's classrooms as was feared by some and hoped by others. However, it has unquestionably led to changes in many schools and classrooms around the state.

Summary of Findings

The principal findings of the team are that:

1. District response to Proposition 227 set the tone: If a district did not actively support primary language programs, these programs were unlikely to continue.
2. Although districts set the tone, responses to the proposition vary among these schools.
3. There was change, particularly evident at the classroom level, even in districts where ostensibly there was no policy change.

4. For individual ELL students, Proposition 227 has contributed to increased inconsistency in their education programs.

Sample and Methodology

The seven districts that are the subject of these observations are not representative of California school districts in the true sense of the word, nor is the sample large enough to allow for generalizations of the researchers' findings. Furthermore, because we focused attention on schools and teachers whose students are largely English learners, our sample may be biased in favor of teachers and administrators who oppose the pedagogical ideas embodied in Proposition 227. In fact, though a few of our interview subjects conjectured that some benefit might come of the initiative in the long run, no one we interviewed agreed with the pedagogical or philosophical premises of the proposition. Thus, we offer these observations as an exploration of the implementation of this policy in these specific districts. It is a small piece of the larger picture of how Proposition 227 is unfolding around the state and may provide some insight into the questions that researchers and policy makers ask as they continue to pursue education reform.

The seven K-12 districts in this sample are all within 75 miles of the state capital, and include rural, urban, and suburban school systems. Their student populations range from very small to moderately large as do their numbers of English learner students. In two of the districts English language learners comprise fewer than 10% of the student population. They make up approximately one-third of the student body in three districts, one-quarter in another, and slightly under one-fifth in another (see Table 1). Most of the English language learners in the seven districts are native Spanish speakers. In two of the districts Russian-speaking students make up a relatively large percentage of the English language learner population.

Researchers conducted observations and interviews in one district-administrator-recommended school from each district. Recommendations were made principally on the basis of size of ELL population. The team postulated that schools with the largest numbers of English language learners were most affected by Proposition 227 and therefore most likely to produce insights about its implementation and effects. Researchers also sought to include districts that represented a variety of interpretations of Proposition 227 policy, and chose schools that typified each district's approach.

The primary goal of the team from UC Davis was to discover through interviews and observations how districts devised their 227 policy and how this influenced school policy and ultimately, classroom practice. To this end researchers interviewed the district level administrator most directly responsible for English language learner programs. At each school site, they interviewed the principal, bilingual coordinator or resource teacher if such a position existed, and three to five teachers who had significant numbers of ELL students in their classrooms. Researchers also interviewed instructional

Table 1

Sample School District Selected Demographic Characteristics

District	Total Enrollment	% Major Ethnic Groups (>10%)	% School Lunch	% English Learners
Elm	7,660	White 73 Hispanic 13	18	9
Oak	2,416	White 58 Hispanic 37	38	17
Maple	51,240	White 27 Hispanic 23 Asian 24 Black 22	62	31
Ash	47,819	White 77	33	6
Willow	35,154	White 17 Hispanic 41 Asian 22 Black 13	69	32
Pine	5,968	White 47 Hispanic 32 Asian 14	62	32
Birch	9,297	White 48 Hispanic 45	47	24

aides and non-bilingual resource teachers at two sites where these individuals spent considerable instructional time with the students. In all, the team interviewed over 50 individuals and observed in more than 25 classrooms.

District Level Response to Proposition 227

Ron Unz, the principal engineer of Proposition 227, has stated that the intention of the initiative was to virtually eliminate primary language approaches. However, the range of policy responses to the proposition, the interaction of other contemporaneously enacted policies (class size reduction and testing in particular), and local implementation of these policies have contributed to varied interpretations of Proposition 227. The convention of policy implementation research regarding the influence of local variability on the result of reform applies in these seven districts. The findings support McLaughlin's (1987) observation that the "actual consequences of the policy

will depend finally on what happens as individuals throughout the policy system interpret and act on them” (p. 172).

These seven districts took four basic policy approaches to primary language programs after the passage of Proposition 227. Variation in the provision of access to the waiver option largely defined these differences. School districts made a decision about whether or not to offer parents the option of a waiver and if so how rigorously to promote or pursue this option. District policies in some cases encouraged and in others deterred parents from seeking a waiver. One response included strong support for continuing bilingual programs and active involvement in the parental waiver process. The other three ranged from no waiver option for a bilingual or other alternative program to a “hands-off” approach to school policy in regard to the initiative (see Table 2).

Table 2

227 District Level Policy Response

- I. No waiver option offered (1 district)
- II. Waiver option (1 district)
 - In Name only. Parents actively discouraged from seeking a waiver.
- III. Waiver option (2 districts)
 - Local school control. The decision about whether and how rigorously to pursue parent waivers was left to the school site.
- IV. Waiver option (3 districts)
 - Strong district support. The district worked actively and cooperatively with local schools to help them inform parents of the waiver option.

Influences on District Response

Community influence on district response

How and why districts decided to pursue particular policies depended on a variety of factors. Tyack & Cuban (1995) identify local political and social climate as important factors influencing local program implementation. McLaughlin cites “local capacity and will” (1987, p. 172). Among the influences we observed and discussed with our informants was the current degree of community support or opposition for certain approaches, the extent to which community members expressed these attitudes, and the history of community attitudes and relations in regard to this issue. We discuss each of these areas separately although they are, of course, inextricably intertwined.

Despite disparate local characteristics, in all three school systems in which district policy unequivocally and actively supported providing parents with the option of a waiver, the communities were strongly supportive of bilingual programs. The mostly white middle class parents in the Elm school district community were vocal proponents of the bilingual dual immersion program. Although their children, whose primary language was English, did

not require a waiver to stay in the program, these parents mobilized as soon as the proposition passed. They informed the parents of ELL students at the school about the waiver option and how to pursue it. In this school district, virtually every parent of an ELL student who had been in the bilingual immersion program opted for their child to remain. Maple was an urban district with a history of strong support for bilingual approaches in a few of its school communities. All parents at these schools opted for waivers, thus the primary language programs that existed in the district before the proposition continued after its passage. The multi-ethnic Pine school district had a long history of strong community advocacy for bilingual programs, and Pine also continued its programs for ELL students much as before the proposition. In addition, the district implemented a multi-age structured English immersion program including primary language support for students who spoke a first language in which there were few trained bilingual teachers.

Both of the districts with “mixed” outcomes also had mixed community support. In one district, families were from a variety of ethnic groups. Within these groups there were immigrant families who were fairly new to the country as well as families who had been in the area for generations. Some local school communities had been strongly supportive of bilingual approaches for decades while others were more equivocal. This was reflected in the outcomes in which some schools continued programs while others did not. The families of ELL students in the other “mixed results” community were virtually all from the same ethnic group and had traditionally supported primary language programs. In this district informants said that Proposition 227 created strong discord within local school communities. Some parents thought that primary language programs should be eliminated altogether while others continued to support bilingual approaches. In the end most, but not all, parents of ELL students sought waivers. Thus, all these schools continued their bilingual programs although some reduced the number of bilingual classrooms.

Finally, two districts discontinued primary language program components altogether, despite substantial support for such programs from the parents of ELL students. These parents did not traditionally have a voice in school decisions, nor did they in this case. Informants said this was due to factors such as the dependence of these parents for jobs on community members who supported Proposition 227, reluctance to draw attention to themselves because of uncertain immigrant status, and lack of English proficiency.

Influence of school board and district personnel on district response to 227

Another factor determining district response to Proposition 227 was the prevailing disposition toward primary language programs among district staff and the school board. In the three districts where these programs remained viable after the initiative, district staff and school board members generally supported primary language programs. In fact, in one of these

districts the school board took a public stand against the proposition during the election campaign.

The school level response to Proposition 227 varied across individual schools in the two districts where the support of district staff and the school board was equivocal. In both of these cases, the decisions about whether or not and how rigorously to pursue parental waivers were relegated to the local school. In these instances where district policy was not prescriptive, the local principal was much more influential in determining the character of programs for ELL students. Researchers learned that some principals who had not strongly supported the primary language programs at their schools before Proposition 227 did not inform parents of the waiver at all. Others, who had a pedagogical, philosophical, and/or moral commitment to these programs, actively backed efforts to pursue the waiver option.

Finally, in one of the two districts that discontinued bilingual programs completely, district decision makers chose to avoid the waiver option altogether. The study's district level informant professed a belief that primary language instruction methods promised better academic and social outcomes for ELL students. However, the district had always struggled to find enough appropriately certified teachers because of its relatively remote location. District administrators therefore saw the policy change as a reprieve from restrictions and requirements that they frequently had trouble meeting. As a result, after Proposition 227 passed they no longer attempted to hire bilingual (BCLAD) teachers or provide professional development toward this goal. There was very little district level support for primary language approaches in the other school system that discontinued these programs. Their Proposition 227 policy and procedures so strongly discouraged the waivers that only a handful of parents opted for an alternative approach—too few to trigger a program under the conditions of the new law. Although there was never a strong preference for hiring BCLAD teachers in the district, post-227 there was no preference at all.

The impact of the history of primary language programs on districts' policy response

The history of primary language programs in a district, the history of community relations among different groups, and the tradition of involvement in the community power structure of various groups, contributed to the local policy approach to Proposition 227. Although the histories of districts that had similar outcomes are not identical, they share common elements that are likely to have contributed to how the district approached Proposition 227 policy. For example, in the three districts where primary language programs continued much as before the initiative, there was long-standing support for these programs. In one, the advocacy of mostly middle class, white parents and the school board had been the major impetus for the decade-old bilingual immersion program, and the community continued to strongly support the program. The families of approximately 20% of the immersion students in the

program who were English learners had also been supportive over the years. The urban district that continued all programs had a history of activist support from Latino and Asian community groups in selected school communities. Thus, although many schools with large numbers of ELL students in this district had not had primary language programs, a few schools had a long history of bilingual programs. The third district that continued as before 227 had one of the longest lived bilingual programs in the state with a history of district support and particularly strong backing among the community.

The two districts with a mixed outcome regarding continuation of primary language programs had quite different histories. One had had difficulty in regard to compliance with state regulations for ELL programs and had expended considerable energy correcting this situation. This experience with compliance issues may have made district personnel more sensitive regarding the “right” way to interpret the new law and thus more cautious in articulating their approach to 227 policy. The final result was that most decision-making power went to those at the local school. The other district with mixed outcomes had a history of divided support among both the community and district with factions on both sides strongly committed to their positions. Thus, although the bilingual programs in this district had been strong, there had always been constituencies who wished to see them eliminated.

The district that did not offer the waiver option to parents had a century-long community profile of “growers and workers,” with the latter dependent on the former for economic stability. Thus, these parents were unlikely to speak out politically even though informants reported that many parents of ELL students supported bilingual programs. Finally, the other district that discontinued primary language approaches and that was described as “strongly discouraging” the waiver, historically had little support for bilingual approaches among any local constituency (district staff, teachers, or the overall community.) However, this was another case where parents from the local school community voiced support within the school environment but felt powerless to do so within the district context.

Sample School Responses to the Four Major District Approaches to 227 Policy

Previous research has demonstrated the importance of local school factors to the consequences of reform policy. “The lessons of federal experience with reform all seem to lead to the same places: the school and the classroom” (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988, p. 7). However, district level support or lack thereof has been shown to be critical to the consequences of reform. “The active commitment of district leadership is essential to project success and long-run stability” (McLaughlin, 1990, p. 12).

In all seven of these school systems, the district approach to Proposition 227 policy strongly influenced the response that evolved at the school level. School principals interpreted the district policy—to the extent that they

could—in order to develop a school policy that was acceptable to staff, the local community, and themselves. Overall, the sample schools took the following approaches:

1. Two dismantled primary language programs that existed before Proposition 227.
2. Two continued bilingual programs much as before Proposition 227.
3. One continued a structured English immersion program begun previously.
4. One was implementing a new structured English immersion program.
5. One continued a bilingual program in some grades but not in others.

Not every principal was successful in establishing school policy that was harmonious both with district policy and principal and teacher beliefs. In two of the schools, district policy which eliminated or discouraged primary language programs after Proposition 227 was virtually irreconcilable with the pro-bilingual beliefs of teachers and administrators at the school. However, concern regarding legal or other repercussions of non-compliance ensured that school policy was aligned with district directives. At two other schools, principals were allowed to make virtually all decisions in regard to the waiver. Principals at these schools developed an approach to the waiver option based on their views and knowledge of the needs and desires of the local students, community, and teachers. In one of these cases virtually all of the parents of English language learners opted for a bilingual program for their children. This was due in equal parts to the actively pro-bilingual community and the strong teacher support for bilingual programs, combined with the tradition of communication and trust between parents and school staff. In the other case, the community was more divided and the principal and teachers less proactive in promoting the waiver option. The result was that some of the grade levels had enough parental exception waivers to have at least one bilingual classroom while others did not (see Table 3). In the three remaining communities, programs were much the same before and after Proposition 227 at both the district and school levels. In two of these cases the transition from pre- to post- Proposition 227 policy and practice was smooth. However, in the third, it was almost two months into the school year before the district decided whether or not and how to offer the waiver option, leaving schools in limbo regarding appropriate guidance to students, parents, and teachers in the meantime.

All of the schools that were continuing bilingual programs had to meet the additional challenge of conducting the first 30 days of instruction solely in English. This was a formidable undertaking particularly for bilingual teachers who often had not taught reading and other subjects in English for a number of years, received no training for approaching this demanding situation, and were without adequate materials designed for teaching academic subjects to English learners in English. Most of the teachers we interviewed at these three schools said that the requirement that instruction during the first 30

days of the school year be only in English was a hindrance to students' academic achievement, and that its effects continued into the school year.

Table 3

How Seven Sample Schools Interpreted and Responded to the Four Major District Approaches to 227 Policy

District Response	Reported results at unobserved schools	Observed result at sample school	% of ELLs in L1 '98	% of ELLs in L1 '99
Waiver option not offered	All primary language instruction discontinued at all sites	No Program (pre-Proposition 227, sample school had most complete bilingual program in district)	9%	0%
Waiver option discouraged	All primary language instruction discontinued at all sites	No Program (pre-Proposition 227, sample school had only full bilingual program in district)	3%	0%
Waiver option offered but not actively supported by district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program eliminated in some classrooms in district but no school eliminated bilingual program • Program eliminated in many schools in district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program continued in some grades and not in others 	41%	35%
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program continued 	16%	2%
Waiver option offered and actively supported by district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program continued at all schools • Program continued at all schools • Program continued at all schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program continued 	9%	4%*
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program continued 	9%	11%
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New structured English immersion program including primary language component for speakers of one language 	20%	19%

* Personal communication with district level informants indicated that rather than a diminution of the numbers of students in primary language program, this number represents a change in the district definition of a primary language program.

Role of Principals in Determining Schools’ Responses to Proposition 227

That principals have an important role in determining the consequences of reform is a convention of education policy research. However, “the role is not as straightforward as we are led to believe” (Fullan, 1991, p. 145). Nevertheless, the principal is central to changes in the school. Although the district response to Proposition 227 set the tone in all of these districts, principals’ decisions were critical to school level programs. A combination of factors resulted in school level policy and practices. These included a principal’s attitude about primary language programs, relationship with the community, and level of experience as well as the degree of discretion the district allowed schools in formulating Proposition 227 policy. As was discussed above, in the two districts where the major decisions about how to approach the initiative were left to the local school, principals had considerable influence. Even in the two cases where the district was either strongly discouraging or outright prohibitive in regard to the continuation of primary language programs, principals made a difference. For example, in the district where the waiver was not offered as an option the principal was new. Thus, despite a personal belief in primary language programs this administrator may not have felt confident making policy or supporting activity that was not sanctioned by the district.

In the district where policy was “strongly discouraging” of the parental waiver, and where the district had never been supportive of bilingual programs, the principal “went to battle” over continuation of some aspects of the bilingual program in Kindergarten and first grade—and won. However, in this case the significance to teachers of the reprieve from a hard and fast approach to the district policy should not be overstated. The general feeling at the school was one of disappointment and frustration over the loss of what teachers and administrative staff described as a standout primary language program with documented positive effects on ELL student learning. Notwithstanding knowledge of the principals’ attitude in these schools, teachers were hesitant to use students’ primary language because of the district policy and fear of possible sanctions. Finally, none of the seven districts provided teachers with preparation and materials for adapting to the new policy. Thus this became the responsibility of principals, and researchers found that some principals provided considerable support while that of others was minimal.

Teacher Response to Proposition 227

Teachers are at the forefront of education policy implementation and as such are central to the consequences of reform. In fact, some feel that teachers are the most critical factor in determining policy outcomes. “Educational change depends on what teachers do and think—it’s as simple and as complex as that” (Sarason, 1971, p. 193).

Each of the teachers we interviewed had a unique response to school and district Proposition 227 policy. Nonetheless, there are certain themes that emerge in regard to what teachers said about Proposition 227 and what they did in the classrooms at these seven schools.

A common theme of comments from teacher informants referred to the lack of training and materials available despite what was for many a major shift in instructional focus for part or all of the school year. The California Department of Education (1998) survey of district responses to Proposition 227 reinforced this finding. The survey revealed that very few districts were providing teachers with training in relation to the initiative and the changes it necessitated. Thus, those who taught for the first 30 days in English and then returned to a program incorporating both English and the primary language had no materials nor preparation for how to make the best use of those first 30 days of instruction. Teachers adapted to this situation by designing their own materials, translating primary language materials into English, and spending the majority of classroom time on oral English skills while “letting academic content wait.” Several teachers in alternative (bilingual) classrooms told us that this first part of the school year during which only English was allowed was very difficult for some children, particularly the youngest students and those who were newest to the school or the United States. They reported that students manifested their anxiety in increased absences, complaints of stomachaches and other illnesses at school, and crying in class. Preparation for teachers who were permanently changing from bilingual to all English approaches was equally lacking. Every informant we interviewed noted the absence of professional preparation in regard to Proposition 227. Nor were materials provided to help with the transition and changes. In some cases teachers were told to remove all primary language reading materials from their classrooms, yet were given nothing with which to replace them.

An increased focus of classroom activities on oral English language development was a change mentioned by many teachers, whether or not they taught in a primary language program. They attributed this not only to Proposition 227 but also to the combination of Proposition 227 with the increased focus on testing and the standards related to it. The long-term impact of this change remains to be seen. However, narrowing the range of academic and intellectual skills in favor of a more limited focus on oral language communication could well result in persistent academic deficits for ELL students (Hakuta & August, 1997).

Increased translation was another trend observed in these classrooms. Thus, rather than present a lesson using bilingual teaching techniques (for example, preview-review or alternate languages on alternate days), teachers presented all material in English and engaged in ad hoc translation for students with the most incipient English language skills. Teachers who knew the student population well commented that these same students were not as engaged in the classroom as they had been in bilingual classrooms.

Finally, the words “anger” and “frustration” were common in teacher interviews. Teachers used these terms in referring to the prohibition against “an important teaching tool” i.e., the primary language. These teachers stressed the need for a variety of tools and strategies for teaching ELL students, a view supported by the literature:

The more linguistically and culturally diverse the students are in the school community the greater the variety of teaching and learning strategies should be, with multiple opportunities to learn from peers as well as the teacher and other adult staff. (Faltis & Hudelson, 1998, p. 66)

Teachers we interviewed were dismayed over the attempt to limit a set of strategies that they felt were critical to the effective learning of these students. They expressed similar feelings about the disregard of teachers’ views and wishes by voters who passed the initiative, disrespect for the expertise of educators who teach ELL students by those who designed Proposition 227, and lack of training and materials for coping with the new policy. These motifs also emerged in relation to the use of language. The emotional and political importance of the prohibition against the primary language of students and many teachers, was a critical aspect of this initiative to many of the teachers we interviewed. It has had the effect of making their use of students’ primary language furtive and made children’s primary language “unwelcome” in the classroom. This is contrary to a fundamental goal of primary language programs, which is to help students and families view having two languages as a plus rather than a minus.

There were other teacher adaptations to Proposition 227. As mentioned above, each of the more than 30 teachers we spoke with and observed had a unique voice and response. Table 4 includes a summary of the teacher responses we gathered and of classroom behaviors we observed.

Summary of Principle Themes of Findings

Four principle themes emerged from the team’s observations and interviews. Although researchers could have focused on other aspects of the data, or taken a different perspective on the factors presented here, this approach and these factors seemed to be the most salient at this early stage of implementation and investigation.

Districts set the tone

Researchers found that without strong, active, and long-standing district support, bilingual programs were unlikely to persist. Districts that continued programs were those where there was a history of strong support for primary language programs among the community, the school board, and district staff, as well as an existing corps of bilingual teachers. Thus, even in districts where there was mixed support for bilingual approaches, many classrooms and/or schools discontinued programs. The support of district staff or the community alone was not enough.

Table 4

Summary of Teacher Responses, Reported and Observed Classroom Behaviors in Sample School Sites

School response to district politics	Teachers' feelings in regard to changes in school policy resulting from Proposition 227	School	Changes in classroom activity resulting from Proposition 227
<p>No Program (sample school had bilingual program pre-227)</p>	<p>Frustration over lack of access to all teaching tools. Fear of litigation brought by parents of English speaking children. Anger that district was "heavy-handed" in its approach to 227 policy.</p>	<p>Elm</p>	<p>Reading remediation pul out of EL students. Elimination of all signs, books, etc. in students L1. Elimination of L1 in instruction. Some translation for students with fewest English language skills.</p>
<p>No Program (sample school had only full bilingual program in district pre-227)</p>	<p>Fear about using the primary language of students (less than at school w/o waiver option). Principal and teacher frustration because previous program had proven successful. Anger over district's obstruction of parents who wished to seek waivers. Teacher disussion of leaving the field or transferring to school without ELs.</p>	<p>Oak</p>	<p>Stricter attention to separation of English and any use of students' L1. More reliance on ELD pullout. Ad hoc translation of hard words or concepts by teachers and/or paraprofessionals.</p>

Variation

There was surprising variation in what happened in these districts and schools especially given the small number of sites. The seven districts took four basic policy approaches to the initiative and each school interpreted the district policy response somewhat differently.

Change

Another theme that emerged from our observations in these schools was that change occurred in most of these situations and it was most evident in the classroom. Thus, even in districts where there was ostensibly “no change” in district policy, we saw changes at the classroom level (see Table 4). There were varying degrees of change among the sites, and the nature and extent of these changes were influenced by factors discussed earlier such as local community support, principal and teacher beliefs, and the degree of trust between teachers and the community. These factors combined with local district and school policy and other policy changes, including class size reduction and various testing mandates, to create the particular post-Proposition 227 environment at each site. Although the character of these changes was somewhat idiosyncratic to

Table 4 (continued)

Summary of Teacher Responses, Reported and Observed Classroom Behaviors in Sample School Sites

School response to district politics	Teachers' feelings in regard to changes in school policy resulting from Proposition 227	School	Changes in classroom activity resulting from Proposition 227
Program continued in some grades and not in others	Anger and frustration on part of <i>some</i> teachers.	Maple	More focus on ELD translation in classrooms without programs. Less sophisticated concepts tackled in primary classroom without bilingual program. More hands-on activities for younger ELs in classroom with no more bilingual program.
Program continued	Teacher anger, frustration, and sadness over EL students' predicament during first 30 days. Frustration that district did not offer more support and assistance. Frustration that students who came late in the year such as migrant students did not have place in bilingual program because of need for 20/grade level.	Ash	More attention by teachers to academic progress of ELs in order to "prove that the bilingual program is the best approach." More focus at school on ELD. Fewer bulletin boards and displays in students' LI.
Program continued		Willow Pine Birch	More focus on ELD. More attention to standardized testing in English. More attention to reclassification. No observed or reported changes. More time spent by ELD specialist with NEP students and LEP students not receiving ELD pullout. Some classes have concentration of NEPs* who are gone all morning in ELD pullout.

* NEPs: non English proficient students

each locale, there were some common themes. In particular, there was the already mentioned shift toward a greater focus on oral English language skills. Teachers at six of the seven schools mentioned this change, although they noted that it resulted from a combination of Proposition 227 with other reforms, in particular, standardized testing in English and the associated grade level standards. Another change that was present in the same six schools was the pervasive feeling and attitude on the part of teachers that Proposition 227 was imposed on them against their will and their own better judgment and that it impeded effective teaching and learning.

Inconsistency

Inconsistency is a well-established feature of English language learner education. The standards and practices of what is called bilingual education have always varied and continue to do so. However, Proposition 227 has introduced another layer to this inconsistency. For example:

1. Some aspects of a bilingual program survive in some classrooms but not others.
2. At the same school some grade levels have a bilingual program and others do not.
3. Some teachers continue using the primary language while others don't, or teachers use the primary language depending on "who's looking."
4. There are varying definitions of Proposition 227 terminology among districts, schools, and teachers, particularly "overwhelmingly in English," "reasonable fluency," and a "structured English immersion."

Inconsistency also characterizes districts' definition of what constitutes a bilingual program. This variation, both before and after Proposition 227, can result in misleading conclusions about changes in programs for English learners. For example, one district administrator said that there were no changes to the program because they didn't really offer a bilingual program before Proposition 227. However, in reality at least one school in the district had had a strong primary language component and changes in district policy after the initiative prohibited any use of the primary language. Thus, although it was not called a bilingual program in this particular district, a program that would be defined as bilingual in many districts, one which included literacy and other activities in the students' first language, was eliminated. In another example, a district changed their working definition of a bilingual classroom after Proposition 227. This resulted in an "on paper" change in the number of students in primary language programs in the school system, even though virtually all of the small percentage of students who had been in bilingual programs before Proposition 227 remained so. Therefore, researchers and others should be cognizant that in addition to the real changes that programs may be undergoing in the wake of Proposition 227, flux in the definition and description of programs and terms in relation to these programs may contribute to over or under estimation of change.

Finally, interviews with teachers at these schools showed an inconsistency between their beliefs and goals for their students and the beliefs and goals underlying Proposition 227's all-English approach. Organizational research indicates that workers are more productive when they identify with the goals of the organization (Prawat, 1996). Extrapolating this to the education context, we would anticipate that teachers work harder and more effectively when they share common goals for their students with school and district administrations than when these are in conflict.

Future implications

Research and experience with reform leads us to surmise that the adaptations and responses to Proposition 227 during the first year of implementation are unlikely to represent the final response to this policy. Rather, there is likely to be an evolution of adaptation and change from the original approaches to Proposition 227. This is especially likely due to the rapid implementation schedule of the initiative in which schools were expected to have their policies, procedures, and programs in place barely three months after the passage of the new law. The current wave of multiple education reforms that were enacted at or near the same time as Proposition 227 will further complicate the implementation course of this initiative. Based on this assumption and trends we observed in these seven districts and schools, we might expect to see changes developing along the lines discussed below.

Decreased demand for BCLAD

Informants in two districts discussed a policy change resulting from Proposition 227 that discontinued hiring preferences and district sponsored training of BCLAD teachers. If we assume that this decrease will continue, there is likely to be a market response in which fewer potential teachers sign up for these programs and eventually fewer such programs exist. An additional reduction may come from current bilingual teachers leaving the field. A few of the teachers we interviewed were seriously considering this possibility.

This issue has the potential for making a tremendous impact on the teacher corps over the long term. BCLAD teachers are presumably the most extensively trained for working with ELL students no matter what the method or language of instruction, and are thus the most likely to aid in their academic achievement. These teachers also have language and cultural knowledge that facilitates communication with students' families. A decrease in the corps of BCLAD teachers could eventually lead to a greater reduction in bilingual methods and approaches, less parent-teacher communication, decreased ability of students and teachers to communicate, and in the long run, decreased student achievement resulting from these changes.

Increased demand for CLAD

At the same time there is likely to be an increasing reliance on English language development (CLAD) certification as every teacher is more likely to have English language learner students in class. Therefore, we might conjecture

that all California teachers would be required to have CLAD training in the future. We would also hope that the rigor of CLAD training programs might increase as more and more mainstream teachers have ELL students in their classrooms. In the words of one study participant “The CLAD was just the beginning. It taught me how much I needed to learn in order to work with ELL students.”

Increased focus on ELD and skills on SAT-9

Our observations indicate that a continuing increased emphasis on oral English language development driven by the SAT-9 and Proposition 227 is likely. This may or may not result in more rapid acquisition of English communication skills for ELL students. A significant potential downside, however, is the possibility of a narrowing of the band of academic skills, learning activities, and types of learning that these students are exposed to. We recently spoke to several principals from our sub-sample who said that testing has become a significant focus of school and district activity and is driving many of their decisions about curriculum. This tension between the potential benefit of standardizing curriculum and the possible detriment of limiting its scope too much is even greater when the students in question possess limited English oral and literacy skills.

Ongoing inconsistency

At least in the short run we would expect a continued inconsistency in programs for ELL students as schools and districts figure out how to interpret Proposition 227, how to facilitate learning for all English language learners, and how to approach the SAT-9 skills. We might expect, on the other hand, the development of a more consistent definition of “structured English immersion.” Finally, we can expect continued inconsistency between the goals of teachers who disagree with Proposition 227 and the goals of the initiative, except to the extent that teachers change their views or that Proposition 227 policies change.

Conclusion

This study is a snapshot of Proposition 227 implementation in a few districts rather than a broad based investigation from which extensive generalizations can be made. However, we hope that it provides some hints about what other districts might be doing and thus some suggestions of directions for future research.

The well-documented “local variability” that is characteristic of reform efforts (McLaughlin, 1987) was found among these districts, schools, and classrooms. The unintended consequences were there as well (Tyack & Cuban, 1995), as we saw for example in the district implementing a “no change” policy that in fact resulted in significant classroom changes. Furthermore, the long-term consequences of this initiative remain to be seen. Assuming that the

goal is improved academic achievement and English language proficiency for English language learners, it may be some time before outcomes can be observed. Teasing out the effects of Proposition 227 among all the other reforms currently taking place in California will also be difficult. In the meantime, reformers and others can learn more about how to enact policy that is likely to have the desired consequences by continuing to observe the unfolding of Proposition 227 implementation.

Reform is messy and may not have the intended consequences—this was evident in our small study. However, equally evident was the potential and desire to inspire learning present in each and every teacher we spoke with. As we look to improve teacher preparation and the quality of teachers, we should keep in mind the wealth of experience, preparation, and commitment that is already there.

Finally, we close with some questions that researchers and others might ask as Proposition 227 implementation continues to unfold.

1. Will Proposition 227 mandates improve performance in the long run as the supporters of the proposition hope, or will the time spent on English and not on learning subject matter put English language learners too far behind? What will be the consequences to children’s learning of the classroom adaptations observed here and in other studies, and how long will it take us to document some of these consequences in order to reinforce any positive outcomes and mitigate the damage from those that are harmful?
2. Will the reduced morale of teachers on whom these requirements have been imposed result in their leaving California or abandoning the teaching profession all together and if so, how can we avoid this? Will those parents wanting to have primary language instruction for their children be unable to find it because schools will not hire the staff needed to teach these classes or universities will stop preparing them? If so, will there be a policy response to parents’ desire for more primary language programs?
3. How will the combined effects of Proposition 227 and other reforms such as mandatory standardized testing, grade level standards, and reforms to increase the supply of teachers impact education outcomes for English language learners in the short and the long run?

References

California Department of Education (1999). *Proposition 227 interim report*. Sacramento, CA: Language policy and leadership office.

- Elmore, R.F. & McLaughlin, M.W. (1988). *Steady work: Policy, practice, and the reform of American education*. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation.
- Faltis, C. J. & Hudelson, S. J. (1998). *Bilingual education in elementary and secondary school communities*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Fullan, M. G. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hakuta, K. & August, D. (1997). *Improving schooling for language-minority children: A research agenda*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- Jennings, N.E. (1996). *Interpreting policy in real classrooms: Case studies of state reform and teacher practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). Learning from experience: Lessons from policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 9(2), 171-178.
- Prawat, R. S. (1996). Learning community, commitment, and school reform. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 28(1), 91-110.
- Sarason, S. (1982). *The culture of the school and the problem of change* (rev. ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Tyack, D., & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.