

Forming school networks to educate 'the new mainstream'

April 17 2015

As immigration increases the number of non-English speaking "culturally and linguistically diverse" students, schools will need to band together in networks focused on the challenges of educating what has been called "the new mainstream," according to a Boston College professor.

"The formidable challenges to improve the way we educate culturally and linguistically diverse students mean teachers and schools can no longer work in isolation," said Lynch School of Education Associate Professor Martin Scanlan, co-author of a study presented today at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting. "Our goal is to understand how teachers and schools form networks and internal communities to improve teaching and learning."

The percentage of non-English speakers in the U.S. grew by 140 percent between 1980 and 2007, while the nation's overall population grew by 34 percent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Schools across the country have seen this demographic shift reflected in the student population.

Scanlan and colleagues spent two years studying five schools in the newly formed Two-Way Immersion Network for Catholic Schools (TWIN-CS), an initiative of BC's Roche Center for Catholic Education that supports schools educating increasingly diverse student populations. Scanlan served as a visiting professor at the Roche Center and is a member of the TWIN-CS design team.

The researchers found educators connecting within and between schools to focus on central goals as they shifted from monolingual to bilingual instruction. Those connections tended to emerge organically, tentatively and at the school level, according to Scanlan, who co-authored the report with BC graduate students Minsong L. Kim, Mary B. Burns and Caroline E. Vuilleumier.

Teachers reported they felt they were meeting the needs of students and findings suggest a need for more professional development and additional planning time as these networks take root. In addition, [school](#) leaders need to foster structures that support teachers embracing new practices.

For researchers, Scanlan said, initiatives like TWIN-CS are at the forefront of the new approaches required to educate an increasingly diverse U.S. society and can reveal strategies that may benefit all schools.

Provided by Boston College

Citation: Forming school networks to educate 'the new mainstream' (2015, April 17) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-04-school-networks-mainstream.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.