

NEWS

National Association for Multicultural Education

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For Immediate Release: **Thursday, February 3, 2011**

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Nation's Foremost Multicultural Education Organization (NAME) urges Seattle Public Schools to Keep its Commitment to Bilingual Immigrant Students.

(Washington, DC) It has come to our attention that Seattle Public Schools is continuing to delay serving its immigrant students. The National Organization for Multicultural Education calls on Seattle Public Schools to move forward with its adopted plan to serve this significant student population.

The district has already developed a high quality plan to serve its immigrant bilingual students. That plan would not only serve them well, but also put Seattle in compliance with federal policy embodied in the court decision *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981), which clarified school district legal obligations under the 1974 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Lau v. Nichols*.

We believe that Seattle has the potential to serve as a high quality model for serving culturally and linguistically diverse students. Many years ago, Seattle Public Schools was noted for its voluntary desegregation plan at a time when many other school districts around the nation were having to go through litigation to desegregate their schools. Seattle also created one of the nation's first multicultural curricula to facilitate its desegregation plan, working with Ethnic Heritage Act funds. At present, Seattle has approved a well-researched plan for a school to serve its immigrant students at the secondary level excellently. The district also has funds that had been raised and allocated to implement that plan, as well as an audit by the Council for Great City Schools that underscores the tremendous need for the planned school. To delay implementation of such a program is to deny immigrant students the education to which they are legally entitled, and to fail to live up to the potential that Seattle Public Schools has demonstrated in the past.

We should point out that not only would it mean following the law to adhere to the approved plan for its secondary level immigrant bilingual students, but in the long run, doing so would also contribute to the economic and social development of the state. When students cannot complete their education, many leave school and later become an economic burden. In contrast, as research shows, developmental bilingual education programs are correlated with the strongest academic outcomes for English Language Learning students, including both academic achievement and retention/graduation. When students are offered an education program that enables them to complete high school and possibly go on for further education, they are able to become the productive and capable citizens that the city, the state, and the nation need.

Because education is so critical to the lives of young people, and so important to the development of this nation, we call on Seattle Public Schools to live up to its commitment to its immigrant students and move forward with its adopted plan, without delay.

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