

Measure 58 debate in 2008: Drs. Rosalie Porter and Karie Mize

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-3268024537271560610&hl=en>
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Dr. Rosalie Porter: This is my first visit to Oregon. I hope I have pronounced the name correctly, I have been corrected a few times. Um, I was chairman of the English for the Children campaign in Massachusetts. I helped write the initiative that passed in California 10 years ago with 60% of the vote. I helped the Arizona initiative two years later. And in Massachusetts 68% of the voters voted for this change. The background of Massachusetts is interesting because we were the first state in the country to pass a bilingual education law. We mandated native language instruction for children who came to school without a command of English (our immigrant children, migrant, etc.). I then entered the field of teaching a few years later because I became a true believer. I thought bilingual education must be the best way to help immigrant children since I came to America as an immigrant child myself when I was six years old and I didn't have a word of English. I really relished the idea of helping these children. Well I became a teacher, and the way the bilingual education act was written we taught the children to read and write in their native language. We taught them their school subjects and we gave them 30 to 45 minutes of English instruction a day. We were expected within a 3 year period to help these children move from learning in their native language to learning completely in English. That was the model, that was the idea. Well I discovered in the first few years of teaching that it wasn't happening. Our children after two years and three years were not mastering English skills well enough to move into a regular classroom and do school work in English. So they stayed four years, five years, six years. It wasn't that we didn't have good teachers. We have excellent teachers in Massachusetts. We didn't have much in the way of books at the beginning but we were developing good programs and materials. We weren't lacking money. What I decided on my own was, it was the model that was at fault. Not money, not the teachers.

So I became a critique of bilingual education. My first book was titled *Forked Tongue: The Politics of Bilingual Education*. I became a researcher and writer in this field and an advocate for migrant minority children. I have met with thousands of families, mostly Hispanic, and for the most part, in fact, entirely, I have never described a bilingual program to a Puerto Rican or Mexican or Cuban family to have their response be, "Oh, yes, I really want my children to be taught in Spanish, that's wonderful." No. The parents - and mostly not well educated parents - have said to me, "Teach my child English as quickly as you can. I want him to have a good education. I want him to have a better life than I have had so far." That has been the sentiment that I have found. Since the change in the law in the three states I mentioned, the results have been quite dramatic. First in California, which has almost 50% of the 5 million or so of the limited English children in our country. California has the best example of all. Oh my goodness, my time is up. I'll just finish that sentence about California, if I may. California has published data showing the increased academic achievement and English language learning of the children who come into school without the preparation in English.

Dr. Karie Mize: Hello, my name is Karie Mize and I'm speaking tonight as a teacher educator from Western Oregon University. I joined the coalition of Parents and Teachers Know Better, because as a resident of Oregon, I care about our schools and our students. I was a teacher in California when a similar referendum, Proposition 227 was passed, and I saw the devastating consequences. English Language Learners, or ELLs, stopped receiving the services they needed, teachers became frustrated trying to meet their students needs, and the administrators were tied up trying to figure out what they could and couldn't do. Because Measure 58 is so vague, there would be similar consequences here. And studies have shown that there was no benefit to California schools or the English language learner population. The other side - and Dr. Porter's opening statement - is making it sound like this is a referendum on bilingual education. But it isn't. As you may have read in the Oregonian, English only classes are already a reality in this state. 85% of students are receiving all of their instruction in English. But Bill Sizemore, someone who has no background in education, wants every elementary student to be given just one year to learn English. So, English language learners would have to perform on par with their native English speaking peers, without English as a second language services. These unrealistic deadlines don't make any sense. Not only would Sizemore's plans be ineffective, but it would be expensive to implement. The Oregon state treasure estimates it will cost a half a billion dollars in the first two years. Sizemore never says where this money is going to come from; there's no dedicated funding source. Are we going to take money out of our classrooms for a program that will hurt Oregon's kids?

Oregon is already doing a solid job of educating our students. In fact, I moved to Oregon because I was impressed with the unique programs that local schools developed. Sizemore's Measure 58 is so extreme that it would eliminate local control. Two way or dual immersion programs, along with other successful initiatives, would be negatively impacted, if not eradicated. These one-size-fits-all mandates are especially problematic for small and rural districts, where it would be hard to find the space and extra teachers for these additional classes. His idea to segregate English language learners is a civil rights violation that will definitely be tied up in the courts, and the bill for that will be left to taxpayers.

Sizemore relies on Dr. Porter's research that supports English immersion. But her claims are based on personal experience rather than empirical evidence. Experts in the field have been discrediting her methodology and interpretation of data since her book was published in 1990. In addition, her views are inconsistent. For example, she was against Arizona's proposition because it was too extreme, yet the lack of any accommodations for students with disabilities make Measure 58 even more draconian than what was passed in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts. None of these states have been able to produce controlled studies that demonstrate statistically significant improvements in the academic outcomes for English language learners. By imposing arbitrary and unrealistic time limits, Measure 58 would create obstacles for kids learning English. It is going to be bad for schools, difficult for teachers, and most importantly tragic for students. No matter what you think about the current state of education, this will not help. Please join me in voting NO on Measure 58.

RP: The California experience, the Arizona experience, I have done research in the state of Arizona. They have shown in, Arizona has a large Hispanic population. Their schools

have improved dramatically. The Superintendent of Education, Tom Horn, for the state of Arizona, has published test data showing students within one to two years have mastered English well enough to do all of their classroom work in English. And passed state tests in math and reading that are given to all students, English speakers, etc.

The one year is not fictional. Most countries in the world have one year as the goal. Israel, Sweden, Germany, England. The countries that are large immigrant receiving countries generally give one year of special help; that's where we got the one year. And one year is the goal. Students who need help beyond one year have the right to continue to have help. I don't know where the idea came from that special ed. students would not get help. The idea, the cause . . .

KM: From the Measure, Measure 58.

RP: Pardon?

KM: From Measure 58.

RP: Special Ed. students who are bilingual are not going to be help?

KM: That is what it says, yes. This, this, what this measure does, is it says for one year the elementary students will be able to be separated from English language learners in their own classroom, so they wouldn't be integrated. And they would have only one year to learn language. They would need after-school tutoring and summer help to keep up in their classes. That's why the bill, in part, why the bill is so expensive. There is a very fixed term, one year, and then they would be mainstreamed without any additional services. That is very fixed. That's why this measure is even more harsh than the English for the Children movement pin that you are wearing in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts. And, actually all of the states, all three of those states have looked at data five years later. Because it takes 1 to 2 years to learn social English, playground English, communicating, but it takes 5 to 7 years to learn academic content on level with your native English speaking peers.

RP: Absolutely not. That is a fiction, that has been promoted by the mainstream press. Virginia Collier published the study that said, "5 to 7 years to learn academic English, two years to learn to say, "my name is so and so, what's your name?" That study has never been considered reliable. Accept...

KM: That is not the only study . . .

RP: I'm sorry but the Collier study has no reliability. Even Kenji Hakuta at Stanford, who you know about, Diane August, who did the study of 30 years of bilingual education research and published their results. They did not accept the Collier study, it has no relevance, I'm sorry.

KM: What they did is they pointed out methodological flaws, which is true: in bilingual research, it is really difficult to separate language from academic content. But, in fact, the

research studies have not, um, Diane August, um, just published, a meta-analysis in 2005 that totally discredits what you are saying.

RP: And did she go back on her own statement that native language instruction shows no benefit for children ...

KM: This is not a referendum on bilingual education, as we've pointed out.

RP: I think I've made all the points I can possibly make in support of this measure that I think will be valuable for the children of Oregon. Uh, the statement about cost: Oregon is already spending 200 million a year over and above the regular cost of public education on these children, and that's wonderful. That money is going to be used in new ways. It is not a measure... I don't know where the authority who came up with this figure got it, but is not a fact.

KM: Thank you. That was the fiscal impact statement done by the balloting officers. So, I'm confident that Oregon voters will reject this vague and poorly worded measure. It would have grave and unintended consequences for our schools and students. The coalition of 70 organizations as mentioned by Dana, that you trust, unanimously oppose this measure. Measure 58 was not developed by educators and there are no school boards that support it. That's because none of Sizemore or Porter's claims are supported by empirical data, just opinions. Measure 58 imposes arbitrary deadlines that create barriers for students. It makes no accommodations for students with disabilities, and it will take away local control. It would be another expensive and unfunded mandate. It will hurt students, it will hurt schools, and it will hurt Oregon.

Dr. Rosalie Porter was flown to Oregon by Sizemore's Measure 58 campaign to serve as the expert in this debate.