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Welcome!

by Robert H. Leos

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Thank you for visiting www.robertleos.com. I am very pleased to include in this issue of *The Report* a discussion with Dr. Frank Lucido, Associate Professor of Education at Texas A&M University Corpus Christi (TAMUCC). Dr. Lucido is also Program Director of the Institute for Second Language Achievement (ISLA). I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Lucido at the First Annual Hispanic Heritage Conference held in Corpus Christi in October 2005. In April 2006, Dr. Lucido was invited to present the findings of the Texas Successful Schools Study to the State Board of Education. The study was conducted by the Texas Education Agency in collaboration with TAMUCC. See "Spotlight on Dr. Frank Lucido" on Page 2.

State Board of Education, July Activity

SBOE Discussion/Action: Among many discussion and action items on the agenda, please note the following.

Proposed Amendments to Curriculum Rules, 19 TAC, Chapter 74. In September the SBOE will consider options to address the requirement that students in the Recommended and Distinguished high school plans take four years of science and four years of mathematics.

TEKS for English and Spanish Language Arts and Reading. TEA staff and an appointed work group are working on the revisions. First reading by the SBOE is scheduled for April 2007; second reading in July 2007. For Spanish, first reading is scheduled for July 2007, second reading and final adoption in September 2007. Implementation of the revised TEKS is scheduled for school year 2008-2009.

For more information on specific SBOE meetings, use the following link:
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/sboe/>

Listen: Live audio of some SBOE meetings is available to the public through the SBOE link included above. In addition, the Division of Instructional Materials and Technology offers information on SBOE activities and other matters of importance through TEA's listserv. You can subscribe to the

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/sboe>

Click on "Audio Files"

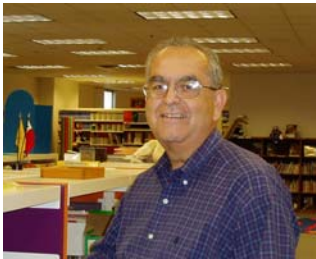
Please see *SBOE* on page 2

SBOE from page 1

mailing list by clicking on the following link and pulling down the appropriate mailing list (Instructional Materials).

<http://miller.tea.state.tx.us/list/>

Spotlight on Dr. Frank Lucido, Texas A&M Corpus Christi



Dr. Frank Lucido

Dr. Frank Lucido, Associate Professor of Education at Texas A&M University Corpus Christi, is also Program Director of the Institute for Second Language Achievement. ISLA is quite an appropriate acronym for the Institute since Texas A&M University Corpus Christi is known as the “Island University.” The ISLA offices are located in the Early Childhood Development Center, a building that offers an expansive view of Corpus Christi Bay. Dr. Lucido, an expert in English language teaching and bilingual education, spoke to The Report about his work with ISLA. He also offered his views on a number of topics affecting the education of English language learners and the teachers who teach them.

RHL: Tell us about ISLA and what you hope to accomplish with this project.

Dr. Lucido: ISLA is a collaboration with the Texas Education Agency. The program was designed to provide technical assistance to school districts in Texas that have received LEP (Limited English Proficient) Student Success Initiative funding. We began in January 2004 and are currently working with about 80 school districts.



Texas A&M University
Corpus Christi

RHL: In addition to providing technical assistance to the LEP SSI school districts, ISLA is also charged with developing programs to increase the number of teachers prepared to teach English language learners (ELL). How are the teachers selected for the program?

Dr. Lucido: The teachers are selected by their school districts to attend the trainings and institutes. This year, we added the requirement that teachers actually have to register for the TexES ESL (English as a second language) exam before they come to the ESL institutes. The first year we didn't require them to register for the exam before participating in the training.

RHL: And how have they performed on the test?

Dr. Lucido: Most of the participants that we heard from after the program had passed the test. This year, we still don't have a read on the number taking the test, yet we feel that requiring them to register for the test prior to enrolling in the institute and having the institutes rather close to the testing date will help them on the test since the information will still be fresh in their minds at that time.



Early Childhood Development
Center, TAMUCC

RHL: In terms of the broader field of teacher education, are there more or fewer young people entering teacher preparation programs? In other words, is there still interest among young people in becoming bilingual education and ESL teachers?

Please see *Dr. Lucido* on page 3

Dr. Lucido: In the past, here at this university, we had U.S. Department of Education grants for teacher training. Those went away about three years ago. But since then, all of the classes that I teach preparing undergraduates for ESL or bilingual certification have been full. I always end up with a class of thirty or thirty-five. These are students who are not getting any kind of bilingual scholarship. When we had bilingual scholarships we had approximately fifty students going through the program at any one time. Now we have thirty to thirty-five, but the interest is still there.

RHL: You're an Associate Professor, Program Director of ISLA, an expert in the education of English language learners, and responsible for preparing students to enter the teaching profession. What influenced your decision to pursue a career path dedicated to working with English language learners?

Dr. Lucido: I was born in Mexico City. My father was from Mexico; my mother was from Corpus Christi. We moved back to Corpus Christi when my father passed away. So I grew up in a bilingual home. In the summers I would go back to Mexico and would get the flavor of the Mexican culture and who I was as a Mexican American. I went to school here in Corpus Christi and I would notice that many of my friends were having trouble with school. I always wanted to be a teacher; to be able to help students who were struggling; to help all kids be successful, but especially those who were having trouble with language or who were at risk.

I went to Wynn Seale Jr. High and Miller High School in Corpus Christi. Then I received a tennis scholarship and went out to Odessa College, in west Texas. There were only twelve Hispanics in Odessa College. From there I came back and got my degree. I started teaching in Catholic schools and then in public schools. I taught ESL and social studies at Moody High School and then went back to the Catholic schools as a principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. I worked with schools in Corpus Christi and Laredo. During that time I always taught at the university as an adjunct;

for twelve years part-time and eight years full-time. My doctorate is in bilingual education.

RHL: So you've been associated with this university since it was the University of Corpus Christi?

Dr. Lucido: I was here when this university was the University of Corpus Christi, a private Baptist university. I also attended Texas A&I College of Arts and Industry in Kingsville. When I received my master's degree, it was Texas A&I University. When I received my doctorate it was Texas A&M University Kingsville. So all my degrees are from Kingsville but the university had a different name each time (laughter). I also received a masters degree in administration from Corpus Christi State University. So all my degrees are from Kingsville but the university had a different name each time (laughter). I also received a masters degree in administration from Corpus Christi State University.

RHL: Your presentation to the State Board of Education on the Texas Successful Schools Study was prompted by a presentation in February related to the success of a total immersion program in Oceanside, California. What are your views on immersion and why is it that some English language learners from languages other than Spanish do well academically without the benefit of instruction in the native language?

"I always wanted to be a teacher; to be able to help students who were struggling; to help all kids be successful, but especially those who were having trouble with language or those who were at risk."

Dr. Lucido: I believe that Dr. Stephen Krashen also testified at the same State Board of Education meeting about the Oceanside results. We now know that there were some deep flaws in how the results of that project were reported. Also Thomas and Collier have done some longitudinal studies, following the kids in California, since Proposition 227. Those studies are showing that the progress is not really there. What we understand about language learning is that at the beginning of learning a new language, yes, the growth is going to be rapid. Any program is going to show that the kids are learning English; but we're interested in what happens over a long period of time. *Worldwide* research is showing that the kids who have a strong base in their first language do better in the long run. For example, many of the Asian students succeed in English because of the level of literacy development they have in their first language.

RHL: With regard to Hispanic students, isn't there major pressure for them to master English quickly in order to pass the English TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills)?

Dr. Lucido: The criteria for exiting a bilingual program is that the student passes TAKS. But what is the level that they're passing TAKS? If a child gets lucky on test day and passes with a 71, does that really indicate that the student is able to perform at the fourth or fifth grade level with a high level of academic language? In other words, they might have enough English to pass the test at the third grade level, but as the curriculum gets harder, the TAKS scores keep on going down because the schools were too quick to exit them out of a bilingual program that would have helped them strengthen the first language. In many schools, probably in most schools, the students are already in all-English by the third grade because the principals are so concerned about the kids passing the TAKS. Consequently, the students are not getting much development in their home language so that they can deal with the demands of the higher academic language. And as you go up the grades, the test is not

going to get any easier. If they don't have that background in their first language they are not going to do as well the following year.

We exit the students and we're very proud of exiting them and they pass the TAKS, but really, what is the level of their academic language? What would it have been had they developed a solid foundation in their home language? That's why dual language programs are so effective—where you can develop both English and the home language up into at least the sixth grade and close the gap between native Spanish speakers and native English speakers. English language learners not only have to make a year's progress each year but rather a year and a half of progress in order to close that gap.

RHL: One of ISLA's objectives is to develop online instruction. Is ISLA primarily focused on developing online instruction for teachers?

Dr. Lucido: Yes, the online instruction is for teachers. We've developed a framework for an introduction to bilingual teacher certification. I stress *introduction* because I feel that the best instruction is instruction where there is interaction between a facilitator or a professor and the students. The research shows that you are going to get the best results from an online course where there are also class meetings with the group that's taking the online course.

The brain has to be interactive in learning. We learn by experiences and teachers can acquire the knowledge but the most important thing is what's going to happen in the classroom once the teacher closes that door? If the teacher hasn't had enough opportunity to practice the methodology or hasn't had the opportunity to have the methodology modeled or hasn't spoken with other colleagues about what has worked then there's a gap in the preparation of that particular teacher. So while it provides access to people in the rural areas I think we have to be careful in how we facilitate that and make sure that if instruction is going to be online then there has to be some follow up in the classroom for the teacher with some support because if not, the brain is very

comfortable with patterns. Brain research tells us that our brains like patterns so we might get a lot of knowledge (from online instruction) but we fall into our old patterns as soon as we move away from the computer (laughter). So I think it has to be a combination with support and follow up as to how it's actually being implemented in the classroom. With College Station A&M we developed, as part of this initiative, an ESL online course. They offer a masters degree in bilingual education using teleconferencing and are able to reach out to different people in all parts of the U.S. but especially Texas.

RHL: You were involved in the Texas Successful Schools Study and are responsible for preparing teachers of English language learners. Based on your observations and research, what are some of the characteristics of successful teachers of English language learners and what are the common elements of successful schools?

Dr. Lucido: The most important characteristic for teachers is the *affect* that the teacher brings to the classroom. Most of the children that are English language learners, especially Hispanics, are very field sensitive. The Ramirez and Castañeda research says that the field-sensitive child needs to be interactive with the teacher, working with others, working in groups. The bilingual teachers in the Successful Schools Study continuously referred to the students as *my kids*, *mis hijos*, and they had that affect, that positive classroom environment with the kids interacting. Because kids will do anything for a teacher if they feel comfortable with the teacher.

The second is *knowledge of second language acquisition* and the theory that goes with it. You don't mix languages, you don't translate back and forth.

Third is *methodology*. The teacher must have a good grasp of methodologies for teaching reading, math, science, and social studies, and are able to provide the student with a lot of meaningful activities.

Fourth is *assessment*; always being aware of the students' level, their language level, and

being able to teach them at that particular language level. Also very important is the teacher's *command of the students' first language*. If it's Spanish, they must have good command of Spanish in order to teach them correctly, including grammar and punctuation. The teacher should be a good model of language, both the home language and English.

With regard to successful schools: The effective schools research shows that if you have a good school overall, you will have a good bilingual education program; you will have a good special education program; you will have a good G/T (gifted and talented) program. You can't have one without the other.

It's the instructional leader, *the principal*, who sets the tone for the school and the collaborative spirit that the principal and the teachers share—they feel that they're contributors to the school and to the program and they have a supportive principal who's going to work with them.

Of course, there's *access to the materials* that they need; and *parental involvement* is also very important; that the parents are kept abreast of what the school is doing.

"The most important characteristic for teachers is the affect that the teacher brings to the classroom."

Also, *assessment*. The principal knows what's going on in the school and keeping up with the level of development of all the children. The whole *climate* of the school; does the school really value bilingualism and the culture of the children? For several of the successful schools, the schools were not just an educational places but community places where parents could share in the activities of the schools. For example, in one of the schools they were having an exchange of uniforms. It was

toward the end of the school year and the principal and teachers facilitated, with parents, the exchanging and sharing of uniforms that they were no longer using so that they could trade them or sell them for a very low price and provide them to the children coming in at the lower levels.

RHL: The Texas Legislature took some action this year to address the issue of teacher pay. Compensation is certainly part of the broader issue of teacher retention. In addition to addressing the issue of teacher pay, what are your thoughts on how good teachers can be motivated to stay in the teaching profession?

Dr. Lucido: There needs to be less emphasis on testing. Not that teachers are not going to be held accountable. Testing and assessment are supposed to be used to guide instruction. If we used the assessments more as guidance for instruction rather than to tell teachers that they haven't done their job, there would probably be less stress and you would retain more teachers.

RHL: Dr. Lucido, best wishes for your continued success with ISLA and with your work on behalf of English language learners. We appreciate the time you've taken to talk with us.

Contact information for Dr. Lucido and ISLA:

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Web Site for Texas A&M University Corpus Christi:

<http://www.tamucc.edu>

See "Special Programs" in the College of Education for the Institute for Second Language Achievement.

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