



Good News and Bad News Educating English Learners in the Age of Obama

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NABE 2012 Conference

Dallas, TX

February 16, 2012

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Advocating for ELLs

The Good and the Bad

Field is less isolated

- More 'attention' for students
 - ELLs less likely to be ignored
 - Yet NCLB-era 'attention' has a downside
- Bilingual Education Act is gone
 - Title I & Title III provide more funding
 - Yet little effort to target ELL needs
- ELLs served less by 'special programs,' more by mainstream 'reforms'
 - Issues not primarily about language anymore



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The Good News

Ebbing of the English-Only tide

- English-only movement running out of gas
 - Last anti-bilingual victory: MA in 2002
- No serious attack on bilingual education
 - Despite Republican campaign rhetoric
 - Political courting of Latinos
 - Language of instruction not an issue in ESEA
- Less good news for bilingualism
 - No action from Obama or Democrats



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The Good News

Dual immersion is thriving

- Dramatic growth of programs
- Increasing popularity with parents
- Academically impressive
- Space for creative teaching & learning
- Possible shelter from unhealthy trends



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Mixed News

No Child Left Behind is discredited

- ESEA in legislative limbo
 - No consensus on reauthorization
- Bipartisan support continues for test-and-punish ‘accountability’
 - Differences over federal role
- State legislators fall in line
 - Resistance: TEA Commissioner Scott calls testing “*a perversion of its original intent*”



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Encouraging News

States begin to resist

- TX opts out of federal initiatives
- Gov. Jerry Brown vetoes CA testing bill, which *“nowhere mentions good character or love of learning. It does allude to student excitement and creativity, but does not take these qualities seriously because they can’t be placed in a data stream.”*



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The Bad News

Rising tide of 'data-driven' reforms

- 'Common Core' national standards
 - Huge diversion of resources
 - Where's the evidence of its benefits?
 - With more standards come more tests, higher stakes
 - Divisions among ELL educators
- Classroom impact
 - The New Behaviorism



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The Bad News

Adverse political climate for K12

- Unprecedented budget cuts by states
 - 250,000 teachers laid off
- Scapegoating of American schools, educators
 - Sec. Duncan leads the charge
- Privatization agenda
 - Charter schools, online education, billions for testing, test-prep materials
 - Driven by elites, foundations



ESEA Reauthorization

What to Do about NCLB?

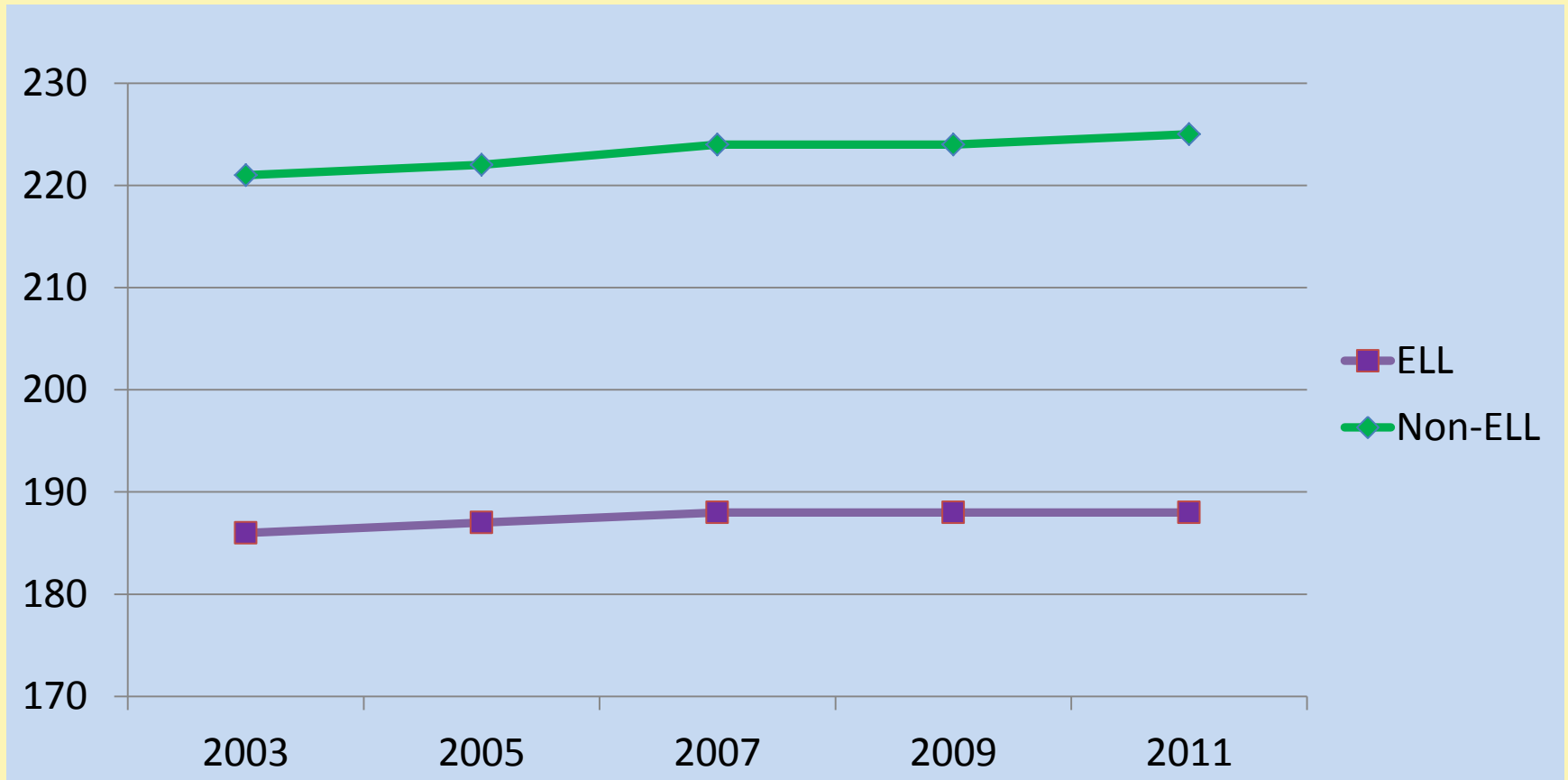
A Lost Decade for School Improvement

- Narrowed curriculum
- Excessive test-prep
- Lowered standards, gaming the system
- Rampant cheating
- Demoralized educators
- Little progress on 'achievement gap'
- Failure to address child poverty
- Flat scores on NAEP



NCLB Impact

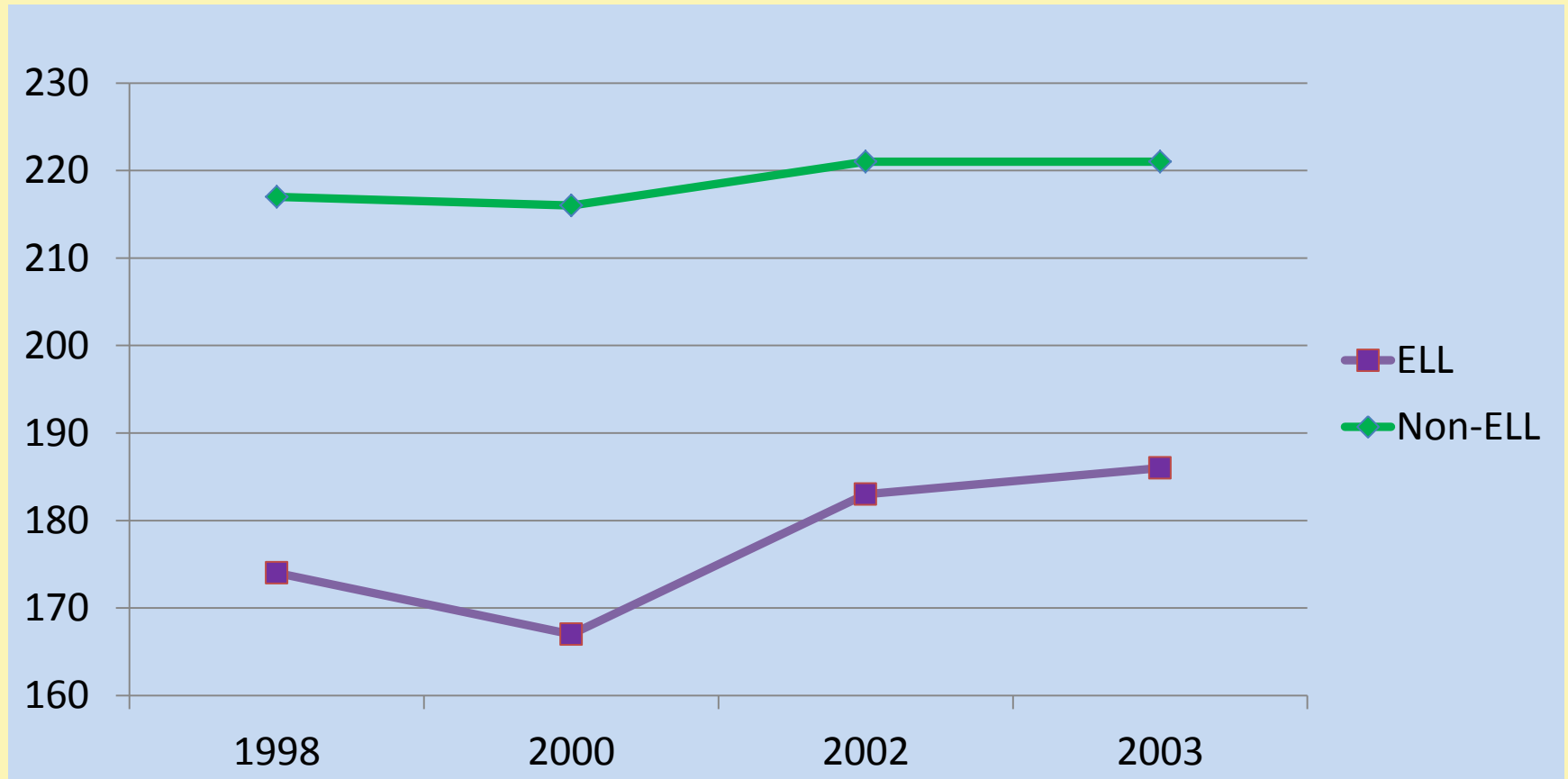
NAEP 4th Grade Reading, 2003 – 2011
National Results, ELLs vs. non-ELLs





Pre-NCLB Progress

NAEP 4th Grade Reading, 1998 – 2003
National Results, ELLs vs. non-ELLs

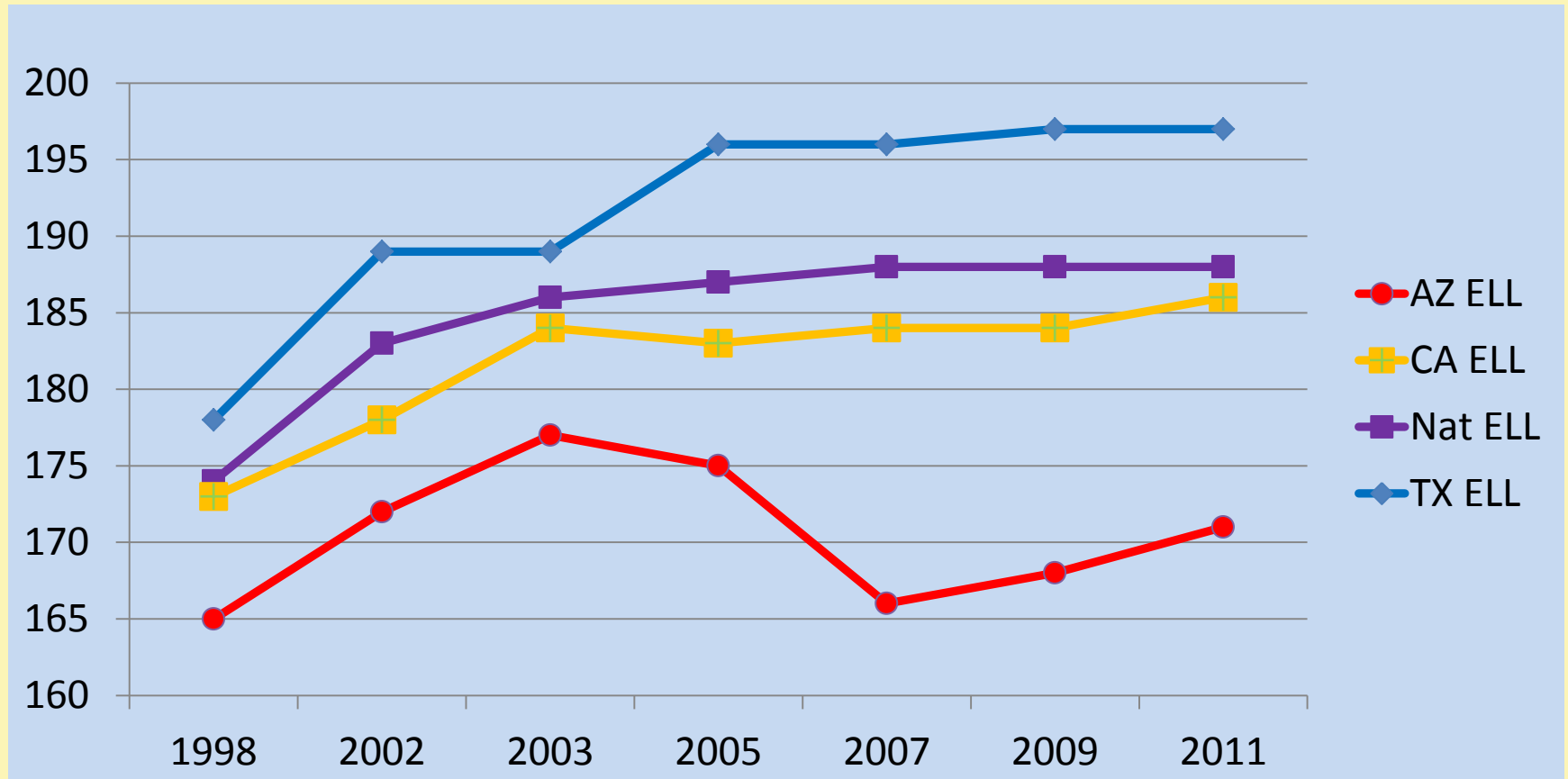




'Achievement Gap'

NAEP 4th Grade Reading, 1998 – 2011

ELLs in TX vs. English-Only States





ESEA Reauthorization

Minor Tinkering with NCLB

Senate Democrats' Plan

- Rename the law – no more No Child
- Repeal AYP, consider academic growth
- Harsh penalties for bottom 5-10% of schools
- Explosive growth of testing
 - Retains NCLB mandates
 - Adds formative assessments
 - Test-based teacher evaluations to receive \$\$\$



ESEA Reauthorization

Limiting Federal Mandates?

House Republicans' Plan

- Expand federal \$ for charter schools
- Give states 'flexibility' in Title I spending
- Eliminate Title III
- No plan to address poverty
- Explosive growth of testing
 - Retains NCLB mandates except in science
 - Test-based teacher evaluations mandated



ESEA Reauthorization

Change We Can Believe In?

From Obama's State of the Union:

“Grant schools flexibility: To teach with creativity and passion; to stop teaching to the test; and to replace teachers who just aren't helping kids learn. That's a bargain worth making.”



ESEA Reauthorization

Change We Can Believe In?

Obama version of 'reform'

- Unprecedented federal leverage over schools
 - Race to the Top, School Improvement & Teacher Incentive grants, 'Waivers' of NCLB
- New mandates, higher stakes for testing
 - Common Core standards
 - Using test scores to evaluate & pay teachers
 - Draconian penalties for lowest 5% of schools
 - Formative assessments, fall-spring growth
 - Tests in every subject
- Is Obama aware of his own policies?



Fixing NCLB

Obama on Testing

“We have piled on a lot of standardized tests on our kids. Too often what we've been doing is using these tests to punish students or to, in some cases, punish schools.”

“Let's apply it in a less pressured-packed atmosphere. Let's figure out whether we have to do it every year. ... And let's make sure that that's not the only way we're judging whether a school is doing well.”



Fixing NCLB

Obama Speaks as a Parent

“One thing I never want to see happen is schools that are just teaching to the test. Because then you're not learning about the world; you're not learning about different cultures, you're not learning about science, you're not learning about math. ...

“And that's not going to make education interesting to you. Young people do well in stuff that they're interested in. They're not going to do as well if it's boring.”



ESEA Reauthorization

Proper Federal Role in K12?

- Ensure equal opportunity
- Provide funding for
 - Educational research
 - Underserved groups
 - Worthy categorical programs
- *Not to*
 - Micromanage local schools
 - Impose accountability systems
 - Dictate curriculum
 - Mandate policies unsupported by research



Test-Based Accountability

What Does the Research Say?

No Evidence That It Works

- National Academy of Sciences review of available research (2011)
 - Test-based accountability has had very small effects in raising scores
 - High-school graduation exams have not raised scores but have lowered graduation rates
- POINT Study, Vanderbilt University (2010)
 - Test-based ‘merit pay’ for teachers does not increase student achievement



Test-Based Accountability

Why the Broad Bipartisan Support?

- Politicians seek ‘problems’ to solve
 - False claim that U.S. lags other nations
 - Simple solutions, easy to explain to voters
- Sounds ‘tough’ yet compassionate
 - Purports to benefit minority kids, ELLs
- Costs much less than addressing poverty
- Privatization has powerful constituency
 - Charter schools disempower teachers unions
- Brings huge financial benefits to education industry



Test-Based Accountability

What's Behind It?

Joanne Weiss, U.S. Dept. of Education:

"The development of common standards and shared assessments radically alters the market for innovation in curriculum development, professional development, and formative assessments. ..."

"[It] means that education entrepreneurs will enjoy national markets where the best products can be taken to scale."



Test-Based Accountability

What's the Impact on Instruction?

Widely acknowledged effects

- Teaching to (English-language) tests
- Excessive test-prep
- Narrowing the curriculum
- Instruction that stresses what's easy to measure: basic knowledge & skills
- Makes school “boring,” limits engagement



Test-Based Accountability

What's the Impact on Instruction?

Less obvious, but more ominous effects

- Transmission model
- Stress on 'direct instruction'
- Teachers as technicians
- Students as empty vessels to be filled with 'content'
- Top-down, mandated curriculum



The New Behaviorism

Impact on ELLs

- Forgetting what we've learned about language teaching
 - Ignoring Cummins & Krashen
 - Skill-building approaches
 - 'Explicit, systematic ELD'
- Shaky 'research-based' claims
 - Unscientific use of data
 - Hard evidence or 'best guess'?



The New Behaviorism

Impact on ELLs

- Rigid curriculum 'aligned' to standards
 - Ignoring Piaget & Vygotsky
 - Marginalizing creative teaching
- Discouraging students from:
 - Active, self-directed learning
 - Discovery learning
 - Collaborative learning
 - Intellectual curiosity



Constructivist Alternative

Teaching the Way Children Learn

Beverly Falk:

*“Learning is something that a learner does,
not something that is done to the
learner.”*



Constructivism and Immersion

A Natural Combination

Language learning not a passive process

- Transmission model ineffective
- Acquisition = comprehending messages & *constructing meaning*
- Requires motivation to learn
- Supported by cross-cultural relationships
- Sheltering is key



Constructivism and Immersion

A Natural Combination

All learning involves inquiry & discovery

- Making sense of the world
- Reconciling new facts with mental models & *constructing meaning*
- Internally motivated, self-directed process
- Supported by social interaction
- Scaffolding is key



Constructivism and Bilingualism

A Yearlong Narrative

DIARY OF A
BILINGUAL
SCHOOL



✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂
Sharon Adelman Reyes
& James Crawford

- Overview of dual immersion
- Overview of constructivism
- Stories from a 2nd grade classroom
- Student outcomes 15 years later



Advocating for ELLs

Changing the Paradigm

- Stress educational philosophy, methodology
 - It's not just about language
- Resist top-down mandates
 - Don't smother creative educators, students
- Combat corporate control
 - Decisions must benefit kids, not entrepreneurs
- Address child poverty and its effects
 - Key to making schools count



A New Paradigm

When & Where Will It Emerge?

- 2012 election is irrelevant
- Voters are confused over 'school reform'
- Alternative message?
- Consider Occupy Wall Street
 - Changed terms of national discussion
 - '99% vs. 1%' captured grassroots imagination
- Activism by educators, parents will be key



For more information ...

www.DiversityLearningK12.com

www.ELLAdvocates.org

www.LanguagePolicy.net