

The Civil Rights Project

Proyecto Derechos Civiles



***** NEWS RELEASE *****

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Bilingual Teachers from 3 California School Districts Receive “Courage to Act” Awards

SACRAMENTO – The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA, the nation's leading research center on issues of civil rights and racial inequality, announced today that 8 teachers received “Courage to Act, Bilingual Teacher Awards” from the California Association of Bilingual Educators, at its annual 2012 Conference currently underway in Sacramento. The bilingual educators, all participating in a CRP research initiative, were also recognized by the California Legislature and the Secretary of Foreign Relations of Mexico for their exceptional dedication and talent in bringing college preparatory curriculum to immigrant students in high school.

The 8 teachers are part of a bilingual research and demonstration project, called Project SOL, which began four years ago at 4 Southern California high schools. SOL, the acronym for Secondary On-line Learning, is the collaboration between the Civil Rights Project, University of California, Mexican government, and three California school districts with funding from The Carnegie Corporation and The Bill and Melinda Gates and Irvine Foundations.

Approximately 1.4 million California students are classified as English learners. About a third of all California’s English learners are secondary students and SOL targets those who are Spanish-dominant. The on-line Spanish-language curriculum, developed by the Mexican government in conjunction with the University of California, is aligned with the A-G requirements, and taught bilingually by these trained bilingual teachers who develop the academic capacity of the students first in Spanish and then English.

“We started Project SOL because it was evident that there was a whole class of students who were pretty much ignored by the policies that existed for educating English learners,” states Patricia Gándara, Professor at UCLA and Project SOL Director. “We knew that these kids could take rigorous courses, complete a high school diploma and be prepared for college, but there was nothing in place to do that for them.”

Gándara notes that nothing comparable to Project SOL exists in the state of California to fill this policy void. She stressed that these teachers are commendable for their work in bringing together students with disparate kinds of educational backgrounds, integrating a

new curriculum into what they would be otherwise doing, utilizing technology in this setting and grappling with all of these in two languages.

About the Civil Rights Project at UCLA

Founded in 1996 by former Harvard professors Gary Orfield and Christopher Edley Jr., the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles is now co-directed by Orfield and Patricia Gándara, professors at UCLA. Its mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It has commissioned more than 400 studies, published 13 books and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country.

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