

Department of Education presents

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2012

12 NOON—1:15 P.M.

CONFERENCE ROOM 2024, EDUCATION BUILDING

***SPANISH-SPEAKING LANGUAGE MINORITY LEARNERS: TOWARDS
MEASURING AND ACCELERATING ACADEMIC TRAJECTORIES***

READING COMPREHENSION IS NON-NEGOTIABLE FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS, YET HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED AND EDUCATIONALLY UNDERSERVED GROUPS DISPROPORTIONALLY STRUGGLE IN THIS IMPORTANT DOMAIN. ONE SUCH GROUP INCLUDES LANGUAGE MINORITY (LM) STUDENTS—STUDENTS FROM NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING HOMES. LATINO LM LEARNERS FROM SPANISH-SPEAKING HOMES REPRESENT THE LARGEST AND FASTEST GROWING SEGMENT OF THE SCHOOL-AGE POPULATION (FRY & GONZALES, 2008; NCES, 2007) AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN U.S. HISTORY, ARE THE LARGEST SINGLE GROUP OF CHILDREN GROWING UP IN POVERTY (LOPEZ & VELASCO, 2011). THIS COLLOQUIUM WILL FEATURE A PROGRAM OF RESEARCH FOCUSED ON THIS SPECIFIC POPULATION, NAMELY THEIR PATTERNS OF GROWTH IN KEY COMPONENT READING SKILLS FROM PRESCHOOL THROUGH MIDDLE SCHOOL AND THE NEED FOR EARLY ORAL LANGUAGE INTERVENTION AND EFFECTIVE MEASUREMENT BEGINNING PRIOR TO FORMAL SCHOOL ENTRY. THE RESULTS INDICATE A STRIKING GAP BETWEEN STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENT OF WORD READING AND ORAL LANGUAGE SKILLS. SPECIFICALLY, WHILE THEIR RATES OF GROWTH AND OVERALL ABILITY IN WORD READING WERE ON PAR WITH NATIONAL NORMS, STUDENTS' ORAL LANGUAGE SKILLS STARTED OUT BELOW NATIONAL NORMS AND THEIR RATES OF GROWTH, ALTHOUGH SURPASSING THE NATIONAL RATES, WERE NOT SUFFICIENT TO REACH AGE-APPROPRIATE LEVELS. THE NEED FOR TARGETED ORAL LANGUAGE INTERVENTIONS BEGINNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD IS CLEARLY UNDERSCORED. IN LIGHT OF THIS NEED, I WILL ALSO DISCUSS FINDINGS FROM RECENTLY COMPLETED MEASUREMENT WORK THAT INVESTIGATES THE UTILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE SPANISH AND ENGLISH MACARTHUR BATES COMMUNICATIVE INVENTORIES FOR USE WITH LOW-INCOME PARENTS AND THEIR 24-48 MONTH OLD CHILDREN. THE PARENT REPORT MEASURES WERE POSITIVELY AND SIGNIFICANTLY ASSOCIATED WITH CONCURRENTLY ADMINISTERED DIRECT ASSESSMENTS OF CHILDREN'S VOCABULARY AND WERE FOUND TO HAVE UTILITY BEYOND THE AGE RANGE FOR WHICH THEY WERE ORIGINALLY DESIGNED. THESE FINDINGS OFFER ONE POTENTIAL SOLUTION FOR REGULARLY MONITORING VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT FROM TODDLERHOOD THROUGH THE END OF THE PRESCHOOL PERIOD. TAKEN TOGETHER, THIS PROGRAM OF RESEARCH—ANCHORED IN THE DESCRIPTION OF NORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN KEY LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS AND ON THE NEED FOR EARLY ORAL LANGUAGE MEASUREMENT IN THE SERVICE OF ALLOWING FOR TIMELY INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTIONS—IS A CRITICAL STEP TOWARDS ADVANCING EFFORTS AIMED AT PROMOTING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF A LARGE AND GROWING POPULATION.

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