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Home

Current Issue

Archived Issue

E-Newsletters

News

National

States

Federal

International

News Briefs

AP Stories

Report Roundup

People

The Daily News

International News Feed

In Perspective

Special Reports

Topics

Diversity

Curriculum & Learning

No Child Left Behind

Testing & Accountability

Leadership & Management

Law & Courts

Special Education

Technology

Safety & Health

Charters & Choice

Finance

Colleges & Careers

Research

Teachers

Community

TalkBack

Blogs

Chats

Chat Transcripts

Polls

Calendar

Grants

Opinion

## Learning the Language

Mary Ann Zehr is an assistant editor at Education Week. She has written about the schooling of English-language learners for more than seven years and understands through her own experience of studying Spanish that it takes a long time to learn another language well. Her blog will tackle difficult policy questions, explore learning innovations, and share stories about different cultural groups on her beat.

« [ELLs in the House Education Committee Draft of Revised NCLB](#) | [Main](#) | [Arizona's Evaluators Say Some Teachers Don't Speak English Well](#) »

### West Coast School District Uses East Coast Model

Oakland Unified School District in California this week opened its first school that enrolls only immigrant students. Called the **Oakland International High School**, it is modeled after international high schools in New York City for newcomers to the United States, according to a **news broadcast** by a California television station. The school aims to help English-language learners acquire the language and academic skills they need to graduate from high school and go on to college.

The school was started with help from the **Internationals Network for Public Schools**, a nonprofit organization in New York City that gives support to eight public high schools and one program within a school for newly arrived immigrants in that city. Claire E. Sylvan, the executive director of the network, said she sought out Oakland school district officials and found they were receptive to having her organization help replicate the international high school model.

Ms. Sylvan said her group chose California because it has many English-language learners and also because it provides in-state college tuition rates for undocumented students. The network rejected the idea of helping to start an international school in Minnesota, for instance, because it doesn't offer such a tuition break, she added.

Oakland International High School started with 75 9th graders and will add a new grade each year for the next three years. The school's Web site says the school has received funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Ms. Sylvan said her staff has helped the Oakland school with planning, curriculum, and fundraising. Graduation rates for ELLs who attend the international high schools in New York City are higher than for ELLs in the city's school system overall and also higher than those for all students in the system, she noted.

Commentaries

Letters

Multimedia

Photo Galleries

Audio Galleries

Photos in the News

Posted by Mary Ann Zehr on August 30, 2007 10:41 AM | [Permalink](#)

### Comments

WELL HONESTLY I THINK IS A FANTASIC IDEA, I SUPPORT THIS PROGRAM A 100% AFTER "NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND" RACE, NOR NATIONALITY SHOULDNT MATTER WHEN IT COMES TO LEARNING!!!!!!!!!!

Posted by: LILIANA PIZZATI | **September 3, 2007 12:46 PM**

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