



Published: 07.16.2007

English learners to spend four hours a day on language

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHOENIX - Arizona students who are learning English will have to spend at least four hours a day in language lessons starting this fall.

That's a big change for children who have been spending about an hour on English a day and the rest of their school day with kids who already know the language.

The new model is based on a law passed last summer that state officials hope will help students become proficient in English within a year or two so they can master other subjects.

Arizona has an estimated 135,000 students who need to learn English.

While the primary language for most of them is Spanish, for others it's Navajo, Somali or dozens of other languages.

Supporters of the new method say four hours of English a day will replace a dizzying variety of instructional methods used with varying success.

Critics say the plan limits lessons in all subjects but English and will cut back on students' ability to socialize with peers.

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