

BRIDGING THE GAP

UNC professors work to give English learners a fair shot in the classroom

By Tyler Silvy
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University of Northern Colorado professor Elizabeth Franklin has spent most of her life trying to ensure students who don't speak English as a first language get a fair shot in the classroom.

Her most recent research, in coordination with Mathematics and Science Teaching Institute Director Lori Reinsvold, associate professor of teacher education Jenni Haring and associate professor of biological sciences Teresa Higgins, focuses that fairness on the fields of math and science.

Those fields have historically lacked female and Latino representation, and Franklin and Co. are looking to close that gap by working with future teachers in those subjects.

QUESTION — What's the research about?

ANSWER — To prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to teach math and science effectively to English learners. The research is ongoing. We have classroom observation data, partnership surveys, pre- and post-math and science content test data, and math and science self-efficacy data.

Q — What inspired you to study this particular subject?

A — In each of the states I have lived and worked in, I have been involved in learning and teaching about the education of children and young adults who speak languages other than English. English learners have the right to an equitable education, regardless of whether they live on American Indian reservations, are refugees or come from homes where a language other than English is spoken.

Q — Why is this research important?

A — This research is important because our English learners and bilingual students are not achieving in mathematics and science in our schools. We need to change this so that all children and young people can pursue what-



STACKS OF PAPERS REPRESENTING a small fraction of research sit in front of Elizabeth Franklin as she sits in her office last week at Candalaria Hall on the University of Northern Colorado campus in Greeley. Franklin's research revolves around ensuring students who don't speak English as a first language get a fair shot in the classroom.

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ever degrees they wish. Change happens by changing pre-service teacher education and the field-based classroom experience of pre-service teachers.

Q — What's the best thing you've found so far, or what are you most excited about?

A — I am very excited about the development of our new pedagogical model. (The model) integrates the components of academic language, culture, math and science content knowledge,

strategies and work with families to support learning by English learners. (We) have worked with Centennial and Dos Rios Elementary Schools in (Greeley-Evans School) District 6, (as well as other districts) to prepare pre-service

teachers to teach math and science to English learners. We developed six new instruments to measure change, and our research results indicate positive change for both pre-service and in-service teachers.



» About this series

"UNC in Focus" is an occasional series that seeks to highlight the myriad research efforts undertaken by University of Northern Colorado faculty. Send ideas to tsilvy@greeleytribune.com.