When kids start school, some parents lie about languages

they speak

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela sta\_

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In this Nov. 10, 2014, photo, Rosaisela Rodriguez (center) reads with her children, Isabel Gutierrez (left) and

Rafael Gutierrez, at their home in Pleasant Hill, California. Rodriguez deliberately didn't declare that her twin

son and daughter knew Spanish when she enrolled them in school, adding that most 5-year-olds are language

learners, regardless of whether they are bilingual.

LOS ANGELES|Nieves Garcia came from Mexico when she was 6. She learned English. Even

after she learned the language, her school considered her an \English learner." When she became

a mother, she didn't want her own daughter labeled the same way.

So she lied.

When Garcia signed up her daughter for kindergarten, she \_lled out a short survey. Garcia said her

family spoke only English at home. It wasn't true. Her husband does not even speak English.

\I just said we spoke English, English, English and English," Garcia said.

Afraid To Tell The Truth

California education leaders say it is tough to know how many parents lie. They say not answering

truthfully can be a problem. If children do not get the extra help they need with English, they can

1

fall behind on their schoolwork.

Parents like Garcia are afraid to tell the truth. They fear their kids will be separated from kids

born into English-speaking families or be embarrassed. Their kids could also miss out on advanced

classes.

Rosaisela Rodriguez has twins. She did not tell the school that her children knew Spanish. She

said most 5-year-olds learn languages easily so it shouldn't matter. Rodriguez did not want them

taken out of their class to work on English.

Changing The Test

California plans to use a new English language test in 2016. It may also change its home language

survey, said Elena Fajardo. She is with the state Department of Education. The survey questions

were written in 1980. Since then, more people have come to California from other countries. The

number of people who speak a second language has gone up.

Nearly half of Californians age 5 and older speak a language other than English. The most common

is Spanish. Most Spanish speakers in the state say they speak English very well.

That's a big change from 1990. Then, less than a third of people age 5 and older spoke another

language. Also, less than half of Spanish-speakers said they spoke English very well.

Most states question parents about what languages they speak at home. Often, children who speak

another language are tested in English.

Young Children, Hard Test

In California, nearly a quarter of public school students are labeled \English learners." In 2012,

kindergarteners took an English test. The test decides what classes they will take later on. Just

one out of 10 children passed. It made some parents angry. They say that children should not be

tested so young. The test is given on a single day, and parents say it is too di\_cult.

Alison Bailey teaches at the University of California. She studies people who speak more than

one language. She said many states do not really consider that a child might speak two languages

well.

Cheryl Ortega is with United Teachers Los Angeles. She knows that some parents lie because she

has seen surveys that were \_lled out. She said educators should explain the survey to parents.

2

Earlier this year, Tesha Sengupta-Irving signed her son up for kindergarten. At the time, her

parents were visiting. She spoke to them in their native language, Bengali. So she told the school

that Bengali was spoken at home. She didn't think the survey was a big deal.

Her son was tested and labeled an English learner. Sengupta-Irving said it was funny. She had

tried hard to teach him Bengali. Still, her son really spoke only English.

Sengupta-Irving said the survey \is catching too many kids."

Quiz

1. Why did Garcia write in the survey that her family spoke English at home?

(a) She wanted her kids to learn English on their own.

(b) She didn't want her kids to be labeled as English learners.

(c) She was con\_dent that her kids didn't need extra help in English.

(d) She was afraid to admit the truth that she was herself an English learner.

2. Select the paragraph from the section \Changing The Test" that shows the role that people

coming to California have played on the English tests.

3. Which of the following BEST describes the structure of the section \Young Children, Hard

Test'?

(a) explains events in the order they occurred

(b) explains the cause of a problem and explain its e\_ect

(c) shares a big problem and gives the solution to that problem

(d) compares and contrasts

4. Read the following two sentences from the article.

Alison Bailey teaches at the University of California.

She studies people who speak more than one language.

Which sentence BEST describes the relationship between the two sentences?

(a) The \_rst sentence provides a detail and the second one includes its importance.

(b) The \_rst sentence makes a point and the second sentence gives a reason for the same.

(c) The \_rst sentence states a fact and the second one provides additional information.

(d) The \_rst sentence provides a detail while the second sentence provides a reason.