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True American: Language, Identity, And The Education Of Immigrant Children



Synopsis

How can schools meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of newcomers? Do bilingual programs help children transition into American life, or do they keep them in a linguistic ghetto? Are immigrants who maintain their native language uninterested in being American, or are they committed to changing what it means to be American? In this ambitious book, Rosemary Salomone uses the heated debate over how best to educate immigrant children as a way to explore what national identity means in an age of globalization, transnationalism, and dual citizenship. She demolishes popular myths—that bilingualism impedes academic success, that English is under threat in contemporary America, that immigrants are reluctant to learn English, or that the ancestors of today's assimilated Americans had all to gain and nothing to lose in abandoning their family language. She lucidly reveals the little-known legislative history of bilingual education, its dizzying range of meanings in different schools, districts, and states, and the difficulty in proving or disproving whether it works—or defining it as a legal right. In eye-opening comparisons, Salomone suggests that the simultaneous spread of English and the push toward multilingualism in western Europe offer economic and political advantages from which the U.S. could learn. She argues eloquently that multilingualism can and should be part of a meaningful education and responsible national citizenship in a globalized world.

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Customer Reviews

True American is an impressive synthesis of cultural and legal history, social science research, and

literary understanding that look at immigration and the politics of language, language education, and debates about multiculturalism. It uses anecdotes and stories, as well as research, to offer a lively account of the deep issues behind the headlines (Martha Minow, Jeremiah Smith, Jr. Professor of Law and Dean, Harvard Law School) American attitudes toward languages other than English are full of contradictions as we absorb non-English speakers into our stubbornly-monolingual society. We claim that the foreign-born don't learn English, when the loss of the native language is a more widespread problem. Legal scholar Rosemary C. Salomone is among our most astute and thoughtful education observers. In *True American*, she proves to be an exceptional listener as well. (Michael Olivas, William B. Bates Distinguished Chair of Law, University of Houston Law Center) *True American* provides an insightful and engaging analysis of debates over language policy in schools that are at the heart of concerns about immigration. Salomone shows that views about immigrant schooling and language in the past are too often romanticized myths. Looking at the present, she sheds light on the complex ways that language policies and educational practices are linked to notions of identity. (Nancy Foner, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Hunter College and The Graduate Center, City University of New York) *True American* should be required reading for those involved in educating the children of immigrants. How can we make sure that they learn English, and still maintain parents' support for their schooling? A further complication is the demand in the world economy for multilingual Americans. Salomone offers wise responses to all these concerns. (Kenneth Karst, David G. Price and Dallas P. Price Professor of Law Emeritus, University of California, Los Angeles) *True American* by Rosemary Salomone is a valuable contribution to this growing field of research. In it, the author skillfully weaves a narrative of U.S. legislative history affecting language education into a solid rebuttal of the numerous myths about bilingualism on which the relevant laws and bills have been premised...Anti-immigrationists brandishing the mythical "problem" of bilingualism continue to fuel vitriolic debates, while reactionary legislation reasserts the prominence of English in education and public life. This, Salomone concludes, is to the detriment of U.S. authorities that have hitherto ignored heritage-language speakers as a potential solution to problems in national security, international trade and the U.S.'s geopolitical standing. (Darren Paffey Times Higher Education 2010-08-05) *True American* provides teachers of immigrant students with a vision of an American identity and education that includes language, civic engagement, and a common historical memory. (L. Lockard Choice 2010-11-01)

Rosemary C. Salomone is Kenneth Wang Professor of Law at St. John's University and author of *Same, Different, Equal: Rethinking Single-Sex Schooling*.

It's in very good condition when it arrived. I really like it. It is exactly as the picture shows and meets my expectations perfectly.

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