

URQUIDES, MARÍA LUISA LEGARRA (1908–1994)

"Bilingual education is not what I hoped it would be - because we didn't teach the monolingual child, the Anglo child, to speak Spanish."

Urquides is considered by many the "mother of bilingual education." She was born in Tucson, Arizona, and by the time she entered high school, her teachers encouraged her to become a teacher although women of her generation were not expected to pursue higher education. Urquides enrolled at Tempe State Teachers' College financing her education by cleaning the bathrooms in her dormitory and singing Mexican songs at a local restaurant. In 1928 Urquides earned the certificate of teaching. She would go on to earn a B.A. in 1946 and an M.A. ten years later. As a teacher she formulated plans for transitioning her students from Spanish to English language dominance. These strategies would eventually integrate into the bilingual education methodology. In the mid-1950s Urquides joined the faculty at Pueblo High School, and she and her colleagues began to develop what would become one of the first bilingual education programs, creating Spanish classes for the Spanish speaking students. In 1966 Urquides coauthored *The Silent Minority*, a report that served to initiate congressional debates on educating Mexican American children. It introduced the bill in 1967 that funded bilingual education under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and a year later the U.S. Congress passed the Bilingual Education Act. A prominent figure in education, Urquides served on a series of presidential commissions from 1950 until her retirement in 1974. Noted for improving the education of Spanish speaking children, Urquides received an honorary doctorate of law degree from the University of Arizona in 1983.