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# **educational considerations**

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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

This special issue of Educational Considerations focuses on emergent challenges and promising practices in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse [CLD] students in public schools, especially those in ESL classrooms. This segment of school populations is the fastest growing in the United States (NCTAF, 1997). Students of cultural and linguistic diversity bring to the school very differential needs which demand thoughtful and reflective approaches. Indeed, CLD students are: (a) three times more likely to be improperly classified as low achievers, (b) two times more likely to be at least one grade level behind in school, and (c) four times more likely to drop out than their native-English-speaking counterparts (USCRC, 1997). This exploration of the issues which surround these students and English as a Second Language [ESL] begins with a look at the sociocultural context of education for CLD students.

Cathy Escamilla's lead article on the False Dichotomy between ESL and Transitional Bilingual programs reminds us of the sociocultural, sometimes politically charged, context of ESL and Bilingual Education [BLED]. This context tends to be the impetus behind a number of educationally detrimental concerns which she discusses, including: the hegemonic nature of student labels such as LEP, reductionistic approaches to programming for CLD students, and the so-called *early exit* solution to perceived language deficiencies among CLD students. Cathy concludes by detailing the need to better prepare, not just ESL/BLED, but *all* teachers for the differential learning/adjustment needs of CLD students.

Amy Beckett's review of ESL issues which remain unknown and unresolved in standards-based assessment italicizes the inaccurate pictures of school and system success which can result from the exclusion of Language Learning [LL] students from these assessments. She offers discussion of selected accommodations appropriate for LL students in the conduct of such assessments.

The findings of the qualitative study undertaken by Kevin Murry and Socorro Herrera indicate that postgraduate programs in long-term professional development which focus on capacity building for reflective practice can purposively enhance teachers' personal and collective sense of efficacy in practice. This is particularly true where collaboration in meeting the challenges of classroom diversity is encouraged.

Analyses by Otherine Neisler and Alyssa Nota remind us that the many challenges which LL students face in schooling are not just linguistic, but also cultural, including both micro- and macro- cultural adjustments. These challenges impact the difficulties that growing numbers of Hispanic students face in their educational experiences.

The school restructuring piece written by Commins, Miramontes, and Nadeau highlights informed decision making as the key to successful programming for linguistically diverse students. While the article by Gomez and Gomez emphasizes the need for native language support provisions in such programming.

David and Yvonne Freeman's conceptual piece illustrates that effective teachers engage students in the investigation of significant and relevant questions. Such a process is one through which students can also develop emergent literacy skills in both their second and primary languages. The contribution of Cathy Gutierrez-Gomez highlights one way to do this; that is through the telling and retelling of stories.

The appropriate professional development of teachers and other educators for increasing classroom diversity is the focus of the article provided by Socorro Herrera and Robert Fanning. For them, such development should be ongoing, reflective, theory and research driven.

The cutting-edge, qualitative research subsequently discussed by Leila Flores-Dueñas concludes that second language learners, as inquirers about their own literacy, tend to exhibit powerful, new metacognitive capabilities including a capacity for critical thinking about their own reading development. Concomitantly, such inquiry may serve as a vehicle for enhancing teacher-student connections.

In closing this special ESL Issue of Educational Considerations, Della Ruth Perez provides readers with a review of useful and purposive resources extant on the World Wide Web. These resources offer point and click support to educators who are addressing the many challenges of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the public schools.

Issues of student diversity are increasingly relevant to each of us as educators. We wish to extend special thanks to Dr. David Thompson for the opportunity to address them in this Special Issue. The indefatigable contributions of Cristina Fanning, Susan Erichsen, Joe Fanning, Della Perez and Mary Hammel in Journal preparation are also gratefully acknowledged.

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## ERRATA

### Vol. XXVI, Number 1

The correct order of authorship should have been: Campbell, Charles R.; Campbell, Patti C.; and Brady, Michael P. Building-based Decision

# educational considerations

Vol. XXVI, Number 2, Spring 1999

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## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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...The rhetoric of quick fix programs ignores the fact that there is more to being successful in school than simple acquisition of English.

## The False Dichotomy Between ESL and Transitional Bilingual Education Programs: Issues That Challenge All of Us

Kathy Escamilla

*If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time.  
But, if you have come because your liberation  
is bound with mine, then let us work together.*  
(Aboriginal Woman)

### Introduction

Over the past three decades, the number of culturally and linguistically diverse students in U.S. schools has grown at a rapid rate (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Culturally and linguistically diverse students (hereafter referred to as CLD) are those students who speak a language other than English and who bring diverse cultural heritages to their classrooms (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). Many of these students enter school with little or no English proficiency. In urban areas, this population is the fastest growing of all school-aged populations. The population of CLD students in U.S. schools is ethnically and linguistically diverse. In 1995, for example, federally funded Title VII programs served students in 198 different language groups (U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

It is important to note that while the CLD population is diverse, it has heavy concentrations of students speaking one of several languages. For example, 73% of all CLD students speak Spanish as a primary language. Vietnamese speakers are the next most common group, and account for 4% of the population. Hmong, Cantonese, Cambodian, Korean, Laotian and Navajos make up the next most frequently spoken languages, and they account for 2% each of the CLD population. In short, 8 languages account for over 85% of the linguistic diversity in U.S. public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

The numbers listed above raise some important questions. We often hear that native language instruction cannot be done because of the diverse number of native languages represented in the schools. Schools argue that diverse language groups in their districts prevent them from doing native language instruction, purchasing classroom or library books in languages other than English or developing assessment instruments in non-English languages. In fact, over 95% of all of the linguistic diversity in U.S. public schools is accounted for by only 8 languages. Implementation of poor quality programs for CLD students is often justified on the basis of "too much diversity" and "too many languages." This is quite simply an excuse.

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There is little controversy about the growth of the CLD student population in U.S. public schools and the concomitant challenges that this growing diversity poses to teachers and policy makers. However, over the past 30 years, there has been considerable controversy about how to most effectively educate CLD students. Two basic educational programs have evolved. The first are programs commonly known as English as a Second Language programs (ESL). The second are programs commonly called bilingual education programs (Lessow-Hurley, 1990; Kjolseth, 1976). Implementation of each type of program varies greatly from state to state, district to district and school to school. There is even variation of program implementation within schools.

Basically, English as a Second Language programs focus on teaching English to CLD students who have been labeled as limited English proficient (LEP). These programs do not make formal use of a student's native language in instruction. There are many varieties of ESL programs including pull-out ESL, in-class ESL, and content area ESL known as SADIE or sheltered English instruction (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). The goal of ESL programs is to develop English skills and proficiency in students in order to get them into all English classrooms as quickly as possible (Lessow-Hurley, 1990; Peregoy & Boyle, 1993).

Bilingual education programs, on the other hand, are educational programs that utilize a student's native language as a medium of instruction, and, at the same time, teach English as a second language (Lessow-Hurley, 1990). As with ESL, there are many different types of bilingual education programs. They range from those focused on early exit (using the native language for a short period of time, and moving students into all English classes as quickly as possible) to programs that are long term and have goals to develop bilingualism and biliteracy. These are often called developmental or additive bilingual education programs (Lessow-Hurley, 1990; Crawford, 1995). Recently, there has been a renewed interest in the development and implementation of two-way dual language bilingual programs. These programs include CLD students and native English speaking students. The goals of these programs include the development of bilingualism and biliteracy in all students (Christian, Montone, Lindholm, & Carranza, 1997). In spite of the enthusiasm for two-way bilingual programs, however, 95% of all bilingual education programs in the U.S. are early exit transitional models designed to get students into all English classrooms as quickly as possible (August & Hakuta, 1997).

Over the past thirty years, ESL and bilingual education programs have been pitted against each other by politicians, the popular press, academics and teachers and policy makers. The eternal evaluation and research question in the field has been one related to efficacy. Which program is more effective bilingual or ESL? A plethora of studies relating to the bilingual vs. ESL controversy have been conducted and published. Cziko (1992) found that the ERIC computerized database contained 921 bibliographic entries matching the descriptors "bilingual education, ESL and evaluation." This expansive data base includes "mega-evaluations" which examined and compared bilingual and ESL programs in many school districts across several states and geographic regions (Baker & deKanter, 1981; 1983; Collier & Thomas, 1995; Danoff, 1978; Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey & Pasta, 1991; Rossell & Baker, 1996; Willig, 1985; Zappert & Cruz, 1977). It also includes evaluations, which were more focused on single school evaluations and classroom and instructional practices (Escamilla, 1992; Garcia,

1988; Medina & Escamilla, 1992; Tikunoff, 1985). Political issues and attitudes have most likely been the driving forces in the plethora of research and evaluation studies comparing ESL and bilingual programs.

Sadly, one of the unintended results of the constant comparison of ESL and bilingual approaches has been the creation of a false dichotomy between teachers and other educators in bilingual education programs, those in ESL programs, and even those in all English classrooms. A sense of division and competition has been created within a field of educators who should be collaborating and working as teammates. Effective bilingual education programs have always had solid ESL components in their structures, and have had the teaching of English as a major program component. Bilingual educators aspire for their students to become proficient in English and to become bilingual. On the other hand, ESL teachers often lament the fact that they are not able to communicate with their students in their native languages. They too aspire for their students to become proficient in English and to become bilingual as a result of the ESL program.

The focus of comparing bilingual education programs to ESL programs has diverted attention from the very important educational issues that all educators of CLD students face. It has limited honest conversations about program quality, teaching, and instruction for students who are the most numerous, the most under-served and the most disenfranchised of any of our school populations.

Transitional bilingual education and ESL programs have a great deal in common. In fact, the most serious educational issues that are impacting the achievement of all CLD students are issues that both transitional bilingual education programs and ESL programs share. About 98% of the CLD student population in the U.S. is either in an ESL program or in a transitional bilingual program (August & Hakuta, 1997). If our field is to move forward, it is time to refocus our discussions away from the rhetoric around the competition and false dichotomy between bilingual education and ESL programs and toward a focused consideration of educational issues that are negatively impacting teachers and students in both of these programs. This paper will discuss three of these educational issues.

### ***An Inappropriate Paradigm: Language as a Problem***

Ruiz (1988) discusses societal orientations toward language diversity. He suggests that there are three basic orientations toward language diversity. A society's orientation toward language diversity impacts language policy and planning in communities and schools. Language diversity orientations include: 1) language as a problem; 2) language as a right; and 3) language as a resource. The dominant paradigm around language diversity in the U.S. is the orientation language diversity is a problem.

For this discussion, it is important to separate what we say from what we do. Politicians, educators and others in the community openly claim to value linguistic diversity. In fact, schools and communities regularly plan events to "celebrate" diversity. Most of these events are conducted in English only. These same people develop educational programs for language minority students that are, for the most part, rooted in the paradigm that language diversity is a problem. Like other societal problems, the role of the school is to help students overcome their problems. In the case of CLD students, the problem is knowing a language other than English, and lack of proficiency in English. The role of ESL and transitional bilingual programs in this language orientation is to help students overcome their language problems by becoming proficient in English. Both programs are assimilationist in

nature. Their purpose is to move CLD students into the mainstream dominant language and culture (Kjolseth, 1976).

The paradigm that language diversity is a problem permeates political debate, policy discussions, and pedagogical decisions with regard to CLD students. Political examples of this orientation abound. They include: 1) The passage of California's Proposition 227 (Crawford, 1997) which mandates that language minority students be mainstreamed into all English classes after 1 year of structured English immersion instruction. The one year of structured English immersion is meant to allow students time to overcome their "language problems"; 2) Denver's recent creation of an English Language Acquisition Program which replaces the former bilingual program (Denver Public Schools, 1998). The English Language Acquisition program emphasizes that the acquisition of English is the most important goal of school programs for CLD students. According to the district, knowledge of English is a prerequisite for academic success (1998); and 3) The proposed limit of participation in federally funded Title VII bilingual programs to three years (National Association for Bilingual Education, 1999). In this case, three years of instruction is considered sufficient time for students to become proficient in English. In three years, the problem of not knowing English should be eradicated.

Aside from politics, the paradigm that language is a problem permeates the implementation of ESL and transitional bilingual education programs. Consider, for example, identification criteria and student labels. CLD students are identified for ESL or transitional bilingual programs only if they are deemed to be limited English proficient (LEP). The LEP label signals a language problem (the student is not proficient in English). The LEP student enters a language program in order to remediate the perceived problem. A successful program transforms a LEP to a FEP (fluent English proficient) in three years or less. Methods of determining limited English proficiency vary by district and state. In most places, they include oral language as well as reading and writing criteria. In all cases, however, LEP labels signify language problems that the school needs to fix. Student proficiency in their native language and culture is seldom considered in the identification process.

The term limited English proficient (LEP) has often been criticized for its negative connotation and deficit perception (Crawford, 1995; Enright & McCloskey, 1988; Freeman & Freeman, 1998;). Several replacement terms have been suggested. These include:

1. SAE - Students Acquiring English (Tinajero & Ada 1993);
2. PEP - Potentially English Proficient (Hamayan, 1989);
3. REAL - Readers and Writers of English and Another Language (Rigg & Allen, 1989); and
4. ELL - English Language Learners (Freeman & Freeman, 1998; O'Malley & Valdez-Pierce, 1996; Peregoy & Boyle, 1997).

It has been argued that all of the suggested replacement terms are more positive labels than the term LEP. However, as Crawford (1995) points out, although the replacement labels are less offensive than the term LEP, they are, at the same time, less precise in their definition. ELL, SAE, PEP and REAL all convey a single-minded focus on learning English that tends to restrict discussion about students' pedagogical needs and first language and cultural strengths. Crawford argues that the lack of precision with replacement labels is exactly the reason these terms are favored by many English Only advocates. All continue to support the language as a problem paradigm.

It is doubtful that effective educational programs can be created for CLD students in the current climate that views language diversity as a problem. Changing this paradigm will require going beyond the current school rhetoric about “celebrating diversity,” and must involve bilingual and ESL educators working together. Radical changes are needed in the way that CLD students are labeled and discussed in schools and communities. As long as CLD students are defined in a unidimensional way around their perceived problems with English, they will continue to be viewed as problems to be solved instead of resources for schools and society.

### **Program Services: In Search of a Quick Fix**

The notion that language is a problem to be remediated has resulted in a proliferation of quick-fix instructional programs. Quick-fix programs focus on issues related to student needs in the areas of second language acquisition, methods and assessment. They do not, however, situate these issues in social, political and economic contexts (Tollefson, 1995). They view the needs of CLD student as purely linguistic, and as such they are compatible with the language as a problem paradigm.

Quick-fix language programs seldom address issues related to program quality. They are designed to serve and exit students as quickly as possible. ESL and bilingual teachers often express the frustration that they are never asked how well they are doing their job, only how quickly. Program success is measured only minimally by academic progress. A major criterion for success is not academic progress, but how many students are exited out. By and large, both ESL and transitional bilingual programs are created to serve the least number of students for the shortest period of time.

Quick-fix programs fit nicely into the paradigm of language as a problem for they are created as places to remediate the language problems of CLD students. As sites of remediation, these classrooms are viewed as less desirable learning environments than all English classrooms. These programs are based on the following premises:

1. English language development should be the major goal of the instructional program for CLD students. English is all you need for school success.
2. CLD students must learn to “fit into” the dominant culture. Therefore, ESL and transitional bilingual programs should prepare students to succeed in all English classrooms; and
3. All English regular or mainstream classrooms are better learning environments than transitional bilingual or ESL classes. The goal is to mainstream students into all English classrooms.

There are many concerns that need to be raised with regard to quick-fix programs. First, they often underestimate the time it takes to become proficient in English. Best thinking in the field tells us that it takes from 3-5 years to become orally proficient in a second language and from 5-7 years to become academically proficient (Cummins, 1989; Collier & Thomas, 1995). This research has been well known for over 10 years. In spite of this knowledge, schools put great pressure on teachers and students to be exited out of language programs and into all English classes within three years. It is questionable that current quick-fix programs are sufficient, in duration, to enable students to meet even the primary program goal of becoming proficient in English. Recent studies by Fitzgerald (1995) and Cornell

(1995) document that CLD students frequently struggle in English reading and writing in all English classrooms after they have been exited from ESL and transitional bilingual programs.

The rhetoric of the quick fix programs ignores the fact that there is more to being successful in school than simple acquisition of English. Many monolingual English speakers struggle in school. CLD students often come to school with psychological, social and emotional needs as a result of their experiences as immigrants and refugees. Students and their families have many issues to face as they create lives in a new country. Many live in poverty, are homesick, and often feel confused about the expectations of American institutions, such as schools (Valdes, 1998). Bilingual and ESL teachers are often acutely aware of these issues. They state that they are not simply language teachers, they are counselors, cross-cultural mediators and support systems for their students.

There is no question that affective needs impact the school success and the English language development of CLD students in significant ways. Yet, there are few formal structures and even less encouragement for teachers to help students deal with non-language related issues. There are no quick fixes to address the pervasive affective educational issues that face the CLD student population. Honest educators cannot and should not pretend that there are. Early-exit, quick-fix programs often remove important, albeit informal, support systems from CLD students as they place them in English only mainstream classrooms.

Valdes (1998) asserts that the tragedy of the proliferation of quick-fix programs is that they frequently promise what they cannot deliver. They first suggest that academic success is a function of learning English, and that language acquisition is a psycholinguistic phenomenon. This ignores the fact that schools, as institutions, are value laden. Simply learning English will not give poor, culturally diverse students the cultural capital that is valued by schools, and that they need to be successful. Further, learning English will not eliminate or reduce the emotional and psychological issues that face many CLD students.

Bilingual and ESL teachers and educators have a responsibility to do more than preserve the status quo by simply implementing quick fix programs. Kaplan (1997) says that teachers of CLD students must begin to challenge and resist quick-fix programs. He says they can do this by refusing to:

5. Use intellectually impoverished materials;
6. To teach syllabi based on irrelevant assumptions about student needs;
7. To mislead their clients by telling them that English acquisition can solve all their problems.

No other educational program is based on the premise that less is better. Take for example programs for gifted and talented students. These programs never expect students to exit-out. Similarly, programs designed to make students more competent in math and science are not short-term in duration. They do not expect students to master the content area in three years or less. As with gifted and talented education, students do not exit out of math and science education. It is impossible to have productive discussions about best practice for CLD students in the current quick-fix educational climate.

There is little research to support the efficacy of quick fix programs either in ESL or transitional bilingual education. Yet, they are increasingly more common. They are great sources of frustration for both

bilingual and ESL teachers. It is imperative that we work together to engage schools and communities in dialogues about best practice rather than quick fixes.

### **Arrival at the Promised Land:**

#### **The English Only Mainstream Classroom**

Quick-fix programs are problematic for CLD students. However, in these environments CLD students often make progress. In transitional bilingual education and ESL classrooms, CLD students feel comfortable taking risks, they trust their own abilities and persevere when learning is difficult (Nelson-Barber, 1998). Such is not the case when these students are transitioned to all English classrooms.

Teachers and school officials frequently report that they do well with beginning and intermediate level CLD students (often referred to as Levels 1 & 2). However, they begin to notice academic and social problems with more advanced (Level 3) students. In short, there appears to be a gap between knowledge and skills learned in transitional bilingual and ESL classrooms and expectations in all English mainstream classrooms. I would offer two observations on this predicament. First, if we were truly doing well with level 1 & 2 CLD students, then we would not be experiencing problems with level 3 students. Second, quick-fix programs are exiting students prematurely. The gap is a real, and the coordination between bilingual, ESL and all English classrooms merits further discussion.

So severe is the gap between bilingual, ESL and all English classes that the rate of referral for CLD students for special education and other compensatory programs quadruples after being exited from bilingual or ESL classrooms (Saunders, O'Brien, Lennon & McLean 1998). CLD students almost always struggle when they are exited from ESL and bilingual programs and ESL and bilingual teachers are almost always blamed for not preparing CLD students well.

All English mainstream or regular classrooms are espoused as being the best learning environments for all students. Yet, it is in these classrooms where they often struggle and fail (Cornell, 1995). CLD students are regularly rushed into all English classrooms, where it is hoped they will begin to achieve at rates that equal their English only peers. It is also hoped that CLD students will learn to interact successfully in the dominant American culture. Once exited, it is thought that language problems have been solved. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that all English classrooms are effective learning environments for CLD students (Fitzgerald, 1995).

The orientation that language is a problem once again plays out in the process of exiting CLD into all English programs. Once they are reassigned to all English classrooms, the few support systems they had completely disappear. They are expected to adjust, adapt and embrace life in an all English environment. Conversely, English only students and teachers in these classrooms are not expected to accommodate CLD students. The following examples illustrate this situation:

1. Teachers in transitional classrooms often have no special training in working with CLD students (Saunders, O'Brien, Lennon & McLean, 1998);
2. Reading instruction is often unspecified and is many times status quo English instruction (Saunders, O'Brien, Lennon & McLean, 1998);
3. Content area instruction is offered all in English with little or no accommodation for students whose English is still developing (Valdes, 1998);

4. There is no formal mechanism for closing the gap between what ESL and bilingual programs teach and what CLD students must know to be successful in all English classrooms. Mainstream English teachers do not pick up from where ESL and transitional bilingual teachers leave off. They expect students to have native like proficiency in English upon arrival in their classrooms (Escamilla & Garza, 1981).

5. There is no attempt to get white English speaking students ready to interact with CLD students. Teachers often complain that CLD students "stick together," and don't try to make English speaking friends. Seldom do they complain that English speaking students "stick together," and do not try to make friends with CLD students (Rotherman-Borus, Dopkins, Sabate, & Lightfoot, 1996).

6. Teachers of transitioned CLD students complain that CLDs continue to want to use their native language especially in informal school settings such as the cafeteria and playground. They complain that all the Spanish speakers sit together in the lunchroom and talk in Spanish. They seldom complain that all the English speakers sit together in the lunchroom and speak English.

In short, transitioned students are expected to have undergone a total linguistic and cultural metamorphosis prior to their arrival in English only mainstream classrooms. Such transformations are not only unlikely, they are not in the best interests of the CLD student, and certainly cannot be achieved in three years or less! Thus we see that, far from being a promise land, all English classrooms are often places where CLD students begin to fail, become angry and alienated, and quit trying. Why then are we in such a rush to place CLD students there?

The above comments are not meant to imply that mainstream English classroom teachers are uncaring or incompetent. They also have not been systematically included discussions of best practices for CLD students. In many cases, they have also not had any formal preparation in how to teach CLD students.

For English mainstream classrooms to be conducive learning environments for CLD students, the dominant group (students and teachers) has as much responsibility in learning new skills and changing stereotypical perceptions as the minority group does (Rotherman-Borus, Dopkins, Sabate, & Lightfoot, 1996). Current reality, however, places the entire burden for adjustment on the CLD student and none on the mainstream English teacher and students.

So entrenched are we in the notion that language is a problem that when transitioned students do not fare well in English only classrooms, we blame their parents for not valuing education or the students themselves for lacking motivation.

In view of the above, and pending a radical transformation of programs for CLD students, it is questionable that English mainstream classrooms are good environments for CLD students. It is ludicrous to assume or assert that these situations represent best practice for CLD students. In short, the underlying structures of CLD programs are seriously flawed. They are flawed from the theoretical orientation that language is a problem to the quick fix nature of ESL and transitional bilingual programs to the value that English only classrooms are better than ESL and bilingual education programs. The status quo is failing CLD children and frustrating caring and committed educators. It is a tragic problem we all share.

### Closing Thoughts

Where does all of this leave us? Educators do not enjoy hearing stories or reading articles that are negative in tone. This article most assuredly is negative. Bilingual and ESL teachers often tell me that they are doing the “best they can” and that they are powerless in the face of a political and social climate that does not affirm diversity. I respectfully disagree. We are most assuredly working hard, but we are not doing our best. It is comforting to reassure each other that we are trying hard and that we have come a long way over the past 30 years. It is unlikely, however, that feeling good will create more equitable learning environments and a more just society for 8 million CLD students.

It is important for us to support each other as professionals. However, it is incumbent on us as ESL and bilingual teachers to raise the dialogue about educational opportunities for CLD students to a new level. We must not be afraid to challenge the status quo, that language is a problem and that quick-fix programs are best practice. We must not gloss over the stark reality that the more the CLD population grows, the fewer educational opportunities we provide. The rhetoric of the 90’s asks us to provide best practice classrooms for all, and to hold all students to high standards. In this environment, it is utterly hypocritical to pretend that, for CLD students, less is more. Program structures for CLD students are mired in institutional racism, and we must not be afraid to say this.

There is no doubt that the persistent negativity and anti-immigrant paranoia will continue to influence the political and social context for schooling CLD students. Given this reality, educators of CLD students have a responsibility not only to create quality learning environments for our students, but to work to change the larger society that views these students and their families so negatively. Political and social systems do indeed influence individuals. However, individuals can influence and change systems. We must work together as educators of CLD students to transform classrooms and change systems. As the renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”

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...Given the need for inclusion of English language learners in accountability systems designed for school improvement, school reformers face real challenges in successfully measuring students' progress through large-scale assessment systems.

## **Standards-Based Assessment for English Language Learners**

**Amie Beckett**

What is the yardstick by which our students' achievement is measured? At one time, achievement of limited English proficient students was invisible or underestimated in large-scale assessment systems, either because their achievements did not fit the system or because local expectations permitted these students to achieve at levels below their true potential. Students who were not yet proficient in English were routinely exempted from large-scale assessment programs, because these assessments were designed for proficient speakers of English and they provided few, if any, accommodations for non-native speakers. This was not a satisfactory long-term solution for students acquiring English, particularly given the increased emphasis on assessment in school reform and resource allocation. However, to be fair to the students and the educational process, the drive toward large-scale assessments needs to be counterbalanced by an emphasis on opportunities to learn, including ongoing assessment and feedback (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

The decision about how and to what extent to include ESL students in large-scale assessment systems is a challenging one. The state of the art is limited in defining factors critical to assessment of students acquiring English. We do not know the level of proficiency at which second language learners can first be tested in English with accurate results. We do not know the exact role that native language testing plays in large-scale assessment systems. We know little about the impact of different accommodations and the conditions that must be present for them to provide an accurate picture of the students' content knowledge (NCBE, 1997). We are only beginning to measure the inputs that students receive in and out of school, and the importance these play in the development of content knowledge. We do not know the extent to which the first language might interfere with the demonstration of content knowledge in English as a second language at different levels of proficiency and under different conditions.

Given this incomplete picture, it is not surprising that many educators adopt a cautious stance and exempt students from testing, even when the students might be capable of participating successfully. In a study of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Stancavage, Allen, and Godlewski (1996) found that more than 75% of excluded LEP students could have successfully participated in the assessment from which they were exempted. Changes in NAEP requirements now reflect less permissive language in relation to

exemptions, however, and many students who would have previously been exempted from the testing will participate in the future. These requirements reflect a trend toward greater inclusion of LEP students in standards-based accountability systems (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1996).

### **Purposes and Domains of Assessment of English Language Learners**

Shepard (1995) defines an assessment research framework, in which she identifies three major purposes and four proficiency domains for assessment of students acquiring English. The first purpose, assessment for instructional planning within the classroom, is most directly linked with teacher decision-making about students' current functioning levels and the effectiveness of classroom instruction. To provide concrete information relating to the standards, Shepard (1996) emphasizes the need for conceptualizing and developing performance continua relating to the standards. These continua take into account the current English proficiency levels of students, and provide a mechanism for determining where the student is currently functioning in relation to the criteria. The continua also take patterns of second language acquisition into account. Rubrics and other types of formative assessment tools are useful for this purpose. The Southern California Assistance Center (1998) developed ESL standards for reading that reflect performance at different points in the acquisition process. The Managing the Assessment Process (MAP) Project, developed by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in 1998 (Katz et al., 1998), highlights standards for ESL and provides educators tools for aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment using the standards. States have been using these ESL standards to interpret their existing standards through the lens of second language learners.

A second purpose of assessment in Shepard's framework is system-level monitoring and accountability. Large-scale assessments are often used for this purpose. They may be used to compare student achievement with a norm sample (normative assessment), against a criterion measure (criterion-referenced assessment), or in relation to performance expectations for a given task (performance-based assessment). To ensure fairness, validity and reliability of results, multiple measures should be included. Several states have developed performance assessments in addition to normative or criterion-referenced tests, to provide a means for comparability of results using different criterion measures. These measures are group administered, and yield aggregate scores which enable educators to define trends in achievement. They are not appropriate as the sole determiner of high-stakes decisions about program placement and exit for individual students, and their use in such decisions somewhat undermines their use in trend analysis. Teaching to the test becomes more of a problem when system-level instruments are used for high-stakes individual accountability.

Shepard's third purpose of assessment is program placement and exit. Most states have requirements for limited English proficient students to be identified and provided special interventions they determine to be appropriate for second language learners. In instructional settings emphasizing the fluid nature of language learning and acquisition and the interplay between the first and second language, such as two-way bilingual programs, these types of assessments assume less immediate importance than programs with a more limited timeline, such as transitional bilingual programs. For

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limited English proficient students, language proficiency tests are often used as primary measures influencing program and placement decisions.

Corresponding to each of the purposes of assessment are four proficiency domains: Subject matter knowledge, native language and literacy, English language and literacy, and cognitive abilities. All purposes and domains should be included as part of the assessment system. For example, in the proficiency domain English language and literacy, for the purpose of instruction, teachers might use portfolios, rubrics, running records, or measures of writing performance that incorporate knowledge about second language acquisition. For the purpose of system-level monitoring and accountability, a state-adopted, criterion-referenced test of English-language reading might be used. In addition, a state-adopted performance-based writing test might be scored using a standardized rubric incorporating different ESL levels. For the purpose of program placement and exit, an ESL proficiency test could be used.

Assessment tools, whether formal (e.g. standardized tests) or informal (e.g. Informal Reading Inventories), sample the universe of knowledge, skills, and approaches that students need to meet the standards. Effective assessments for students acquiring English tap the most significant and representative elements of the standards-based curriculum, and reflect as authentically as possible the standards on which the assessments are based. They also afford special attention to second language processes and the students' anticipated responses to the tasks they are provided.

### **Standards-Based Accountability Systems**

Increased participation of formerly marginalized groups is characteristic of standards-based school reform. As school districts implement reforms, assessment results, particularly those from large-scale testing, exert greater influence on district needs assessments, resource allocation, district planning and even accreditation in some states. Exemption of ESL students from testing means their needs may not be considered when major decisions are made. From a psychometric perspective, even if only 10%-12% of the students in a district are exempted from district-wide assessments, this presents an inaccurate picture of achievement. At the state or regional level, this distorted picture can affect the validity of state or district comparisons of achievement. Since school reform efforts are often guided by assessment results and intergroup comparisons, exclusion of ESL students from key measures in the assessment system eliminates data necessary to guide the restructuring of schools toward effective instruction inclusive of these students (Shepard et al., 1998). Finally, ESL student exemptions from large-scale assessments remove an important source of data for comparison with classroom achievement. This comparison clarifies the level of English-language proficiency that is really necessary for participation in assessments with native speakers. If large-scale assessment and accountability systems do not penalize schools for the results of ESL students, but disaggregate the scores for analysis, this provides a further incentive to include them in assessments.

Given the need for inclusion of English language learners in accountability systems designed for school improvement, school reformers face real challenges in successfully measuring the students' progress through large-scale assessment systems. Achievement measures designed for fluent English speakers are not likely to yield accurate

data about ESL student achievement in the content areas, unless adjustments are made for the level of English proficiency through accommodations, or alternative measures are used (August and Hakuta, Eds, 1997). For example, Abedi, Lord, and Plummer (1997) found in an experimental study that mathematics assessments relying heavily on complex English language structures and low-frequency vocabulary were significantly less likely than simplified word problems in English to accurately measure ESL students' mathematical understanding. Accommodations enabled the students to demonstrate their content knowledge despite the fact that they did not comprehend complex linguistic structures in English. In general, a good accommodation should eliminate or significantly reduce the language barrier, to enable students to respond more directly to the content, using the most efficient means for the student.

The type of standard to be measured is also important to consider when adjusting assessments for limited English proficient students. School reform efforts encompass several categories of expectations for student learning, including content standards, performance standards, and benchmarks. Content standards refer to what students are expected to learn, and what schools are expected to teach. Performance standards define how students demonstrate their progress toward proficiency in the standard. Benchmarks define the expected proficiencies at a certain point in time (e.g. in Grades 3, 7, and 10). To address these different categories of standards, multiple measures are necessary.

Standards-based reform efforts drive accountability systems which are focused on continuous instructional improvement. Although standards-based accountability can be a powerful tool for instructional improvement for students acquiring English, it can also be highly problematic. Standards developed using only a monolingual English-language framework tend to ignore strengths and needs of English language learners. For example, literacy development in the first language is a better predictor of reading in English as a second language than oral language development in the two languages (Lanauze and Snow, 1989), yet students' first language reading is seldom mentioned in state standards. If it does not appear in the standards, it is not likely to be reflected in the assessment system. A 1996 study by the Council of Chief State School Officers (Lara, 1996) indicated that only six states provided native language assessments aligned with state standards, including reading, and three additional states were developing such measures.

If students acquiring English are to be successful in standards-based instruction, attention to linguistic processes, including second language learning and acquisition is necessary at the level of standards development and interpretation, curriculum design and implementation, instruction, and assessment. These levels are interactive, interrelated, and interdependent, and begin with the development of the standards. If standards are not developed first and assessments drive the standards or curriculum and instruction, ineffective policy decisions or poor long-term achievement are too often the result (Raimi, R.A., and Braden, L.S., 1998). Second language processes and their interaction with the native language also need to be a part of standards development, or an incomplete picture of student achievement is likely to result (August, 1994). Even if standards are based on a monolingual framework only, however, an educator well trained in second language pedagogy can interpret and apply those standards in a way that facilitates the development and

extension of dual language capabilities, by utilizing networks of support outside the classroom and providing materials for instruction in the home language as well as English.

### **Policy Directions for Inclusion of Limited English Proficient Students in Assessments**

The national call for higher standards for all students, prompted by the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act in 1994, moved practice toward inclusion of limited English proficient students in assessment systems and in the direction of productive use of data to improve instruction. Law following that reauthorization required Title I programs to implement standards and accountability procedures at the state level, and also required that limited English proficient students be included in programming and assessments to a much greater degree than before. Limited English proficient populations in Title I since that time have remained relatively stable, at around 17% of the total Title I population (Sinclair, personal communication; Sinclair and Guttman, 1994).

Title I law stipulates that required annual assessments for program evaluation “provide for the inclusion of limited English proficient students who shall be assessed, to the extent practicable in the language and form most likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what students can know and can do, to determine such students’ mastery of skills in subjects other than English (Improving America’s Schools Act, sec. 1111, 1994).” It also provides that testing be designed to measure group achievement for program accountability, rather than a high-stakes test for individual program entry or exit.

In addition to Title I, Title VII bilingual statutes require that grantees evaluate the extent to which achievement gaps are narrowed or eliminated between limited English proficient students and their native English speaking peers. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1995 strengthened its inclusion criteria for limited English-proficient students to include students who have received academic instruction primarily in English for three years; or who are sufficiently proficient to take the English-language test; or who would be capable of taking the test in Spanish, if the test is available. In addition, various accommodations were permissible on the math section of the test (NCES, 1996).

In addition to the federal initiatives, states have responded with a variety of mandates for inclusion of limited English proficient students in standards-based accountability systems, and the use of these data for instructional improvement (Raimi and Braden, 1998; Lara, 1996). In most states, however, students are exempted for several years before they are required to take the test.

### **Accommodations in Assessment Systems**

Once the standards are developed and interpreted inclusive of the needs of students acquiring English, instructional accommodations can enable these students to achieve at the same high levels as their English proficient peers, or the gap in achievement between the two groups can be narrowed significantly. Along with these instructional accommodations, it is also often necessary to make adjustments in assessment procedures, to ensure that content, and not just English language proficiency, can be measured.

Decisions about appropriate accommodations themselves require an assessment. Information about the student’s functioning in the first language, knowledge of the content to be tested, behavior under conditions of testing, and English proficiency level all have a bearing

on the way a student may respond. This information is most accessible through the teacher’s ongoing classroom assessment. Teachers are not able to assess what they cannot see (Igoa, 1995). They need the tools for assessing second language learners, through support and training activities.

Accommodations fall into two major categories: Modifications of the test and modifications of the test procedure. Butler and Stevens (1997) listed a number of possible accommodations for limited English proficient students under each category. Modifications of the test might include assessment in the native language, changes in vocabulary to reflect more high-frequency terms, modification of grammatical complexity, addition of visual supports, such as pictures or objects, use of glossaries in the native language, use of glossaries in English, linguistic modification of test directions, and additional example items. Modifications in procedures might include additional assessment time, breaks during testing, administration in several sessions, oral directions in the native language, small-group administration, separate room administration, use of dictionaries, reading the questions aloud, answers written directly in test booklets, or directions read aloud or explained.

Shepard et al. (1998) found in their study of mathematics performance assessments that many educators have received little guidance in the appropriate use of accommodations. They tend to modify the test administration rather than the test itself. Accommodations are either used with all of the students, or no accommodations are used. Individual needs of students are seldom considered when accommodations are selected. Educators also need to know when an accommodation is effective only for LEP students. If an accommodation results in higher levels of achievement for proficient speakers of English as well as English language learners, then it is not effective in removing a barrier for English language learners alone. More training and discussion about appropriate accommodations are needed, to refine testing practices for limited English proficient students. Discussion to follow highlights selected recommendations.

### **Capacity Building for Meeting the Standards: Using Assessment Results**

1. Large-scale assessments occur only a few times during the year. Despite their influence on policy, they occur too infrequently to provide sufficient information for instructional improvement. Therefore, it is essential to compare results of large-scale assessments to campus-level and classroom assessments. What trends can be noted for instructional improvement toward the attainment of the standards from the various measures? Are certain standards not being met? For example, if students acquiring English consistently demonstrate difficulty writing a topic sentence on classroom as well as large-scale measures, what can be done in writing process instruction and assessment to address this? The students’ native language may employ a different text structure that involves setting the context before stating the topic. It is important to know about the students’ languages and prior experiences, to bridge their knowledge with the goals of the school. Then, it is important to discuss the similarities and differences in text structure directly with the students, providing examples and bridging the two languages. Encourage the students to compare and contrast, view models of the English text structures while appreciating the structures of their native language, observe

storytelling using English text structures, or work with an English-proficient partner on writing topic sentences in English. The modeling and partnerships plus the direct feedback can be very productive, if the student is beginning to be aware of the differences.

2. Classroom, campus-level, and large-scale assessments can also provide the basis for an assessment of additional training and resource needs. After identifying the trends in the data, develop a cohesive plan that targets a few areas at a time. This will in most cases involve prioritizing and identifying short- and long-term goals.

3. Check the accommodations that are permitted and disallowed on the large-scale assessments in your district. Tailor the accommodations to afford each ESL student the best opportunity to demonstrate knowledge in relation to the standards, without providing unfair advantages. Classroom assessments provide a good indication of whether or not the accommodation provided an accurate measure of the students' progress toward meeting the standards.

Finally, McTighe (1996) identified 7 principles of instruction with attention to standards, to use between large-scale assessments.

1. Establish clear performance targets.
2. Strive for authenticity in products and performances.
3. Make criteria and performance standards known.
4. Model excellent performances and products.
5. Teach strategies explicitly.
6. Use ongoing assessments and provide continuous feedback.

When students, educators, and families are focused on standards and can identify goals for attaining them, assessment becomes a reflection of their direction, guiding them to progress. It is important that they be actively involved in self-assessment and peer assessment as well as classroom and large-scale assessments, for optimal growth to occur.

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...The findings of this study indicate that long-term programs in postgraduate professional development can effectively target reflective practice and, in so doing, enhance teachers' personal and collective sense of efficacy in practice with diverse student populations.

## **CLASSIC Impacts: A Qualitative Study of ESL/BLED Programming**

**Kevin Murry and Socorro Herrera**

### **Changing Times and Changing Needs**

In the last five years, educators in the state of Kansas have witnessed radical changes in their classroom environments which they have not been successfully prepared to address. During the period 1994-1997, the State of Kansas has experienced a 76 percent increase in the number of *identified*, English Language Learning [ELL] students; from 6,900 students in 1994/1995 to over 13,000 students in the 1997/1998 school year (Kansas Department of Education, 1999). Estimates of the number of *unidentified* ELL students could add another 30 percent to the identified figure (Murry & Herrera, 1998). The United States [US] Commission on Civil Rights [USCRC], (1997) has reported that Kansas was one of only nine US states which experienced more than a 100 percent increase in the number of ELL students during the period 1990-1995.

The number of languages spoken by students in Kansas schools has increased by a notable 103 percent- from 38 languages spoken in 1994 to 77 languages spoken in 1997 (Murry & Herrera, 1998). Of particular importance, this mostly unanticipated increase encompasses a 79% increase in the number of ELL students who speak Spanish (from 5,173 to 9,253 students). These dramatic changes in the cultural and linguistic diversity of classroom, student populations in Kansas have been the subject of recent, national attention in education [*Teaching Tolerance Magazine* (Harrison, 1998); *NABE News*, (Judd & Kreicker, August, 1997)]. Mary Harrison of *Teaching Tolerance* (1998) reports that although increasing cultural and linguistic diversity has, for many years been an inevitable challenge for Kansas elementary teachers, it is also fast becoming an unavoidable challenge for secondary schools in Kansas as well. This is especially true in fast growing communities like those in southwest Kansas where at least one district's elementary school population is already 68 percent Hispanic. The demographics in schools are so changed that in some districts where ESL pullout programs have served as a stopgap response to increasing diversity, continuing such programs with today's demographics would mean pulling 60 percent of the teacher's class for auxiliary instruction.

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Many of the challenges which Kansas school systems are experiencing as a result of these profound changes in classroom diversity are consistent with those which have been identified at the national level. Specifically, recent analyses by the USCRC (1997) found many school systems are unprepared for the differential learning and instructional needs of ELL students. Consequently, the USCRC found that ELL students are: (a) three times more likely to be classified as low achievers than high achievers, (b) two times more likely to be at least one grade level behind in school, and (c) four times more likely to drop out than their native-English-speaking counterparts [especially Hispanic students who often receive inadequate native language support (USCRC)].

In Kansas, recent and sometimes radical changes in classroom diversity have resulted in a variety of new and complex needs among the State's school districts. Ongoing collaborations between Kansas State University [KSU] and many of these districts, including: (1) formal and informal meetings and sessions with district administrators, coordinators for language-learning programs, teachers, and staff; (2) needs assessment surveys; and (3) site visits to schools within the districts, have identified at last three critical needs shared among educators and policy makers in these changing-need school systems. The first of these is the need to improve academic achievement and success among ELL students. A second need is to increase the number of teachers endorsed for either English as a Second Language [ESL] or Bilingual Education [BLED] in districts across the state. A third critical need is access to flexible, postgraduate programs in professional development for school educators.

In addressing the first of these critical needs, many Kansas districts have attempted to: (1) provide staff development workshops for teachers of ELL students; (2) encourage their educators to pursue their endorsement for ESL/BLED Education; and (3) encourage teachers, as they come into contact with these students in their classrooms, to increase the identification of ELL students in need of targeted services. By and large, these efforts have not kept pace with the level of increasing student diversity in Kansas. Generally speaking, short-term training for educators of ELL students and minor adjustments to instructional delivery are insufficient to purposively impact ELL student achievement (Krashen, 1996; Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1998). Additionally, teachers and administrators who independently undertake perhaps an ESL Methods or an Assessment course in an effort to better understand the needs of ELL students usually do not benefit from sufficient continuity in their studies to meaningfully increase their effectiveness in practice with these students. Furthermore, neither of these efforts has tended to significantly increase the number of ESL/BLED endorsed educators in Kansas nor significantly decrease the numbers of underidentified ELL students in Kansas school systems. Recent research indicates that this critical need is most appropriately addressed through teachers' and administrators' long-term, professional development emphasizing site/school specific dynamics and student populations (Murry & Herrera, 1998).

The second critical need shared among many Kansas districts surrounds the shortage of BLED and ESL endorsed teachers. Some schools/sites in the greatest-need districts in Kansas now have ELL student populations which would justify a Bilingual Education Program, and a few have begun so-called, *grow-your-own* incentives to eventually enable such programs. However, not only have a great number of Kansas districts found it virtually impossible to attract

bilingual educators, they are increasingly in greater need of ESL endorsed educators, given the degree of language diversity in their classrooms (Judd & Kreicker, 1997; Murry, 1998). As many as 10 different languages are represented in some classrooms of high-need districts in Kansas.

These trends are occurring during a time period in which the State of Kansas began the 1997/1998 school year with less than *three percent* of its total teacher population endorsed in either BLED or ESL Education, statewide (Kansas Department of Education, 1999). Although recent and noteworthy efforts by the Kansas State Department of Education have increased the number of endorsed teachers in Kansas, most endorsees remain concentrated in a few western districts and a generalized shortage of ESL and BLED endorsed teachers persists in the majority of districts, statewide. These trends are consistent with a recent analysis at the national level (Mazzarella, 1999) which indicates that less than 20 percent of surveyed teachers, nationwide, consider themselves prepared to address the needs of ELL students. Recent research (Murry, 1998) indicates that this critical need is appropriately addressed through a large scale, program capable of high-impact professional development which, at the same time, maintains high standards of excellence by targeting and verifying educators' achievement of critical competencies necessary for professional practice with ELL students.

The third critical need increasingly shared among Kansas school districts is teachers' lack of access to flexible, postgraduate programs in professional development. Many district educators are geographically isolated from ESL/BLED endorsing institutions. Others, because of increasing demands upon their professional schedules, are unable to attend on-campus classes in professional development. Still others are increasingly in need of long-term programs in professional development which enable a focus on site- and district- specific challenges in professional practice with ELL students. Past needs assessments among high-diversity districts in Kansas have indicated a lack of access to long-term professional development, especially postgraduate programming, which is, (1) flexible enough to address the geographic isolation, resource constraints, sociopolitical limitations, and practice dilemmas of site-based educators; yet, (2) sufficiently integrated to produce continuity in capacity building for complex practice. Recent research indicates that a program of needs-based, distance education provides the capacity to responsively, yet responsibly address this critical need (Murry & Herrera, 1998).

Discussion to follow will briefly summarize the key design and service elements of a program in postgraduate ESL/BLED endorsement which was developed in response to these changing and challenging needs among high-diversity school districts in Kansas. Ongoing, applied research on this program has led to the refinement of a program model which is grounded in the needs of clients, yet, appropriately tempered by the necessity for rigor, theory-into-practice applications, and continuity in participants' ongoing professional development.

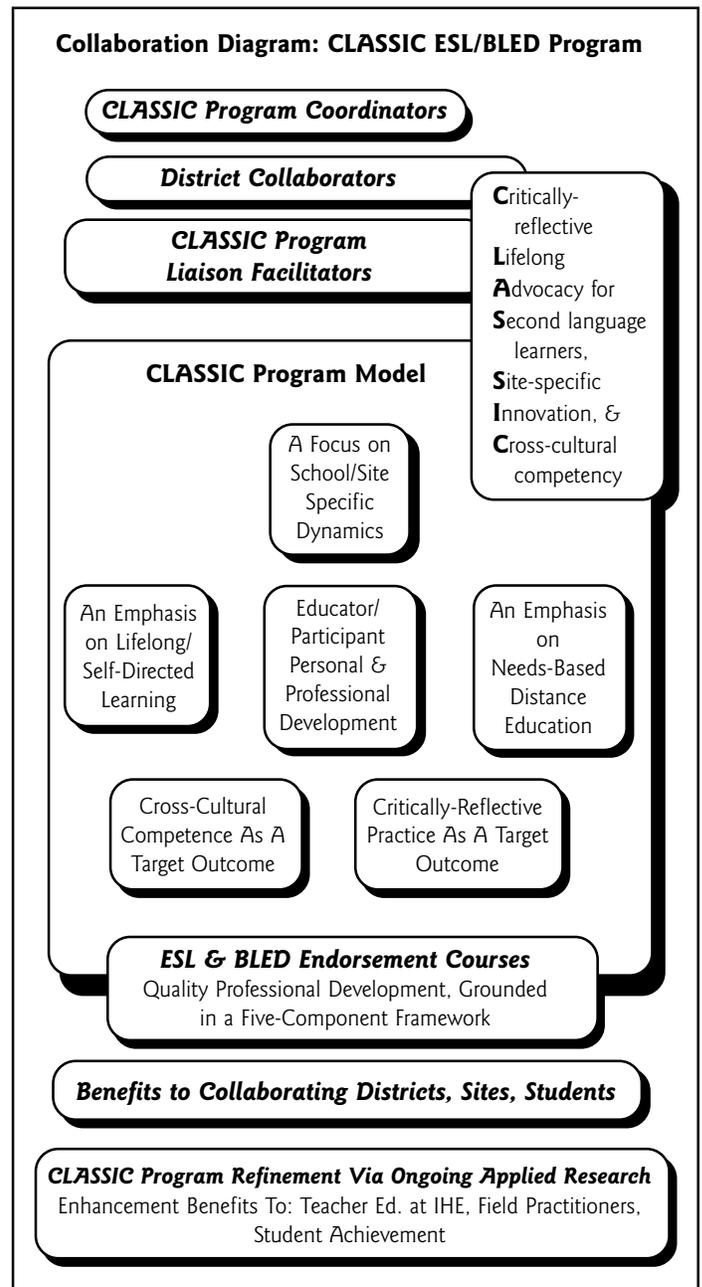
**The CLASSIC Program: New Perspectives, New Approaches**

Elsewhere we have described applied research on, and the incremental development of, an innovative program of ESL/BLED endorsement education, specifically designed to increase the number of and upgrade the qualifications and skills of certified education personnel to meet high standards of professional practice with ELL students in school districts across the State of Kansas (Murry &

Herrera, 1998). The outcome of these efforts in program development is the CLASSIC [Critically reflective, Lifelong Advocacy for Second language learners, Site-specific Innovation, and Cross-cultural competency] Program of ESL/BLED Distance Education at KSU.

The centerpiece of the Program's design from which these strategies and activities are derived is the CLASSIC Program Model which is a participant-centered design consisting of ESL and Bilingual Education endorsement courses, grounded in a five-component framework. Each of these *components* offers participating classroom teachers and administrators approaches and strategies for native language and home culture support as they better accommodate the needs of their ELL students. The model is especially focused on changing: (1) low ELL student achievement, (2) the shortage of ESL and Bilingual Education endorsed teachers in Kansas, and (3) teachers lack of access to flexible, postgraduate programs in professional development.

**Figure 1. CLASSIC Collaboration Diagram**



As illustrated in Figure 1 (CLASSIC Collaboration Diagram), and detailed elsewhere (Murry & Herrera, 1998) the first component of the CLASSIC Program Model, is a *focus on site/school dynamics*. By concentrating on specific, building-level needs, participants are actively involved in appropriately adapting the theory, concepts, and strategies learned in a given endorsement course to their particular student population and school dynamics. The second component ensures participants' access to quality professional development opportunities through *needs-based distance education* (that is the *needs* of teachers and other educators in the districts). Needs-based distance education offers the *reach* and the *flexibility* to provide quality, large-scale, professional development at the same time that high standards and competence in practice with ELL students are targeted as Program goals. The third component of *critically-reflective practice* targets capacity building for reflective practice among educators of ELL students. This reflective practice, which checks the validity of assumptions about students, families, teaching, and learning, enhances teachers' expectations for, and improved academic achievement among, ELL students. The fourth component of *cross-cultural competency* challenges teachers to do more than provide content instruction to their ELL students. Instead, teachers learn that they must *reach* these students in order to understand them and the culture in which they have been socialized. This *reach* involves teachers learning to *feel with* culturally and linguistically different [CLD] students, rather than *feeling for* them. (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Finally, the fifth component of *lifelong/self-directed learning* prompts teachers and other educators to better appreciate that every school's population and dynamics will differ and there is no *one solution* to ELL student education. Instead, teachers must become lifelong, issue- and practice- directed learners who approach professional practice through critical, process thinking and reflection.

The curriculum of the CLASSIC Program is intentionally designed to increase the number of ESL and Bilingual Education endorsed teachers available to provide high-quality education to ELL students. This curriculum prepares teachers to obtain their endorsement in either ESL Education [15 credit hours] or Bilingual Education [21 credit hours] in Kansas.

Continuity and participant support are hallmarks of the CLASSIC Program in ESL/BLED distance education for school professionals. Each semester, this innovative Program in distance education maximizes the various components of the CLASSIC Program Model, in order to deliver participant-centered, content and instruction according to the following sequence:

- The CLASSIC Program Faculty conduct intensive, on site, 3-5 hour, opening/closing sessions involving extended instructor-participant contact and collaborative group formation.
- As groups set their own schedule at their own site, collaborative group learning and hands-on activity completion then take place around a series of eight to ten videos which, along with a course module, and textbooks, provide the primary course content. Course participants also maintain weekly, individual, reflection journals on critical incidents in practice.
- With the guidance of KSU faculty, collaborative groups develop a site-specific course project. Throughout, extended participant-instructor access is maintained/supported, during the initial years of ESL/BLED practice, via feedback loops

including: toll-free telephone lines; ListServe; and ChatLines.

Throughout these course cycles, ongoing, applied, program research improves all Teacher Education at KSU.

Through the sorts of site-specific, critically reflective, professional development which participants in the CLASSIC Program receive, teachers and administrators who participate build the necessary capacities to become the nucleus for site-based, schoolwide, innovation and restructuring to better meet the needs of ELL students and maximize their achievement potential. As others in the school also progress through the program of studies, they add to the infrastructure essential to operationalize these restructuring plans toward institutionalization.

The models for restructuring taught in the courses of this comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning in language acquisition settings are: (1) the *six premise framework for restructuring to improve ELL student achievement* (Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1998), and (2) the *Guiding Principles* (George Washington University [GWU], 1996) of best practice with linguistically diverse learners. The content of the courses which emphasize these frameworks is periodically reviewed and revised based on current research findings in the fields of ESL Education, Bilingual Education, and Multicultural Education (Collier, 1995; Collier & Ovando, 1998; Thomas & Collier, 1998; George Washington University, 1996; Krashen, 1996; Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1998).

Discussion to follow summarizes the methods utilized for an interpretive study of CLASSIC Program impacts on practice with and programming for ELL students in participating schools and districts. This discussion begins with an overview of the study design.

### Methods

This research was undertaken as a qualitative study of the perspectives which participants of the CLASSIC Program articulate when prompted to discuss the impacts of the Program on practice with and programming for ELL students in participating schools and districts. A qualitative design is appropriate when the outcomes of the study will surround descriptions and interpretations arising from discovery, insight, and analysis (Creswell, 1998).

A purposive (Merriam, 1998) sample of 90 self-selected, elementary and secondary teachers who participated in the Program from 1996-1998 was utilized for the study. These practicing teachers were each engaged in professional development for their English as a Second Language [ESL] endorsement via this Program of postgraduate study. Data for the study were collected from teachers' responses to a Program Exit Survey which prompted them to reflect on, and discuss, Program impacts. In-state and out-of-state specialists in Program Development were asked to review the survey questions. Their suggestions were incorporated into the final drafts utilized for data collection.

Coding (Creswell, 1998) was utilized to initiate data analysis. Utilization of the constant comparative method (Strauss, 1987) facilitated immediate and ongoing comparisons of incoming data with information already collected. Data was first coded according to an *etic perspective*, utilizing the CLASSIC Program Model as a substantive framework. As the study proceeded, these initial and etic codes gradually suggested relevant *emic codes, categories, and themes*, which better reflected participant voice and participants' perspectives as insiders.

The trustworthiness criteria, the relevant benchmarks for establishing the truth value of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which were targeted by the design of this study were transferability and credibility. Transferability was established through thick description (a systematic effort to document the nature, context, findings, and interpretations of the research). Credibility was established through *referential adequacy* which involves the archiving of selected data collected from participants; data which are readdressed at a later date, after tentative interpretations of other data have been made, in order to determine if similar analyses lead to similar interpretations.

## Results

Three dominant impacts (themes) were derived from the analyses of data in this qualitative investigation: capacity, collegiality, and efficacy. Each of these impacts/themes reflects perspectives which participating teachers tended to articulate when prompted to discuss the impacts of the CLASSIC Program on practice with and programming for ELL students in participating schools and districts. These three dominant impacts provide a useful framework for the organization of findings arising from this study.

### Capacity

A recurrent theme in teachers' discourse associated with this study was a newfound recognition, not only of the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic complexities of professional practice with ELL students, but also an emergent sense of capacity-building for complexity. For some teachers, a recognition of the complexity of practice with these students was discussed in terms of the many cross-cultural adjustments in understanding necessary for teachers and schools to impact ELL student achievement. For others it was discussed in terms of initially perceived language barriers between teachers/administrators and ELL students and families. For still others, a recognition of these complexities came as a result of new understandings about the many challenges of second language acquisition for ELL students. Such challenges are reflected in the following teacher's remarks:

*The classes have broadened my knowledge of the way ESL [ELL] students acquire a second language. It has provided me with a different set of strategies to help these students. One of the main things I learned was to give ESL students a period of time to be quiet. I remember when I first started to teach these students. I immediately set out to bring the students quickly and completely into the classroom by having them talk and discuss. During this time, I had them teach me their language (which I often butchered, not intentionally) as I taught them mine. Although we often had a few laughs, many students were reluctant to participate. Since learning more about the 'silent time' that many of these kids will go through in learning the new language, I now feel free to allow the ESL students this time to adjust when they need it. As long as I am sensitive to their needs, I know that they will join in when they are ready (S1r-111998).*

This teachers' remarks about this particular aspect of the many language acquisition challenges through which ELL students must progress is indicative of similar realizations about complexity to which

many teachers arrived as a result of Program participation. Nonetheless, she has taken what she has learned about the fact that many second language learners require a 'silent period,' in which they nonverbally assimilate what they are learning about the dynamics of the new language before they are ready for language production, and she has applied that knowledge to new strategies for practice. These actions are indicative of *capacity-building* for complex practice with ELL students.

The responses of other teachers which were associated with this impact on practice and programming were more focused on an increasing sense of capacity with which to address the multiple complexities of practice with ELL students. The following excerpt from a teacher's survey response is but one example:

*The program has impacted not just our school but several area districts in the way we approach ESL policies and curriculum. Teachers in these districts have gained knowledge and understanding about the importance of instruction that is best suited to the very different sorts of needs ESL kids bring to the school. Teachers and districts are now more aware of the need for different strategies, different methods, that can be used to help the ESL student be more successful in school. Many of the assignments we have completed as a group [collaborative group] of teachers have been presented to our administrator and even shared with our Board of Education. I think we are all beginning to see that with some adjustments and fine-tuning we can better meet the needs of these kids (S2r-12598).*

This teacher, like other teachers, has come to recognize that her school and her district, have the *capacity* to confront the challenges and complexities of ELL student education. Although the needs of these students are "different," and may vary, even from school to school, the teachers and the schools' leaders are in the best position to develop the sorts of *site-based modifications* which the CLASSIC model predicts will be necessary to the improvement of ELL student achievement.

### Collegiality

In their discussions of CLASSIC Program impacts on practice and programming for ELL students an overwhelming majority of teachers also focused on the perceived benefits of the Program's collaborative group format for learning, deliberation, and course project development. Many of these course projects were not only collaborative but also intentionally assigned to address site-based issues, dilemmas of practice, or policy needs. For these teachers the benefits of the collaborative group format extended beyond just assignment or project completion. Instead, these teachers found the collaborative group structure the basis for such auxiliary benefits as: (1) an experiential model for what to expect and not to expect from cooperative learning strategies undertaken with students, (2) an opportunity to learn that many of their concerns about their readiness for ESL practice were shared by other teachers as well, and (3) a realization that teachers working together could often achieve outcomes for ELL students and families not possible in their isolated efforts. Each of these findings pointed to the benefits of *collegiality* to participants perceived benefits obtained from the Program structure.

For at least one-third of the surveyed teachers, the personal and professional development achieved as a result of participation in the Program, was, as a result of the collaborative group structure, also staff/professional development for the school's faculty. The teacher comments which follow are illustrative of this perspective:

*The impact [of the Program] on our building has been most visible in the staff development of other staff; to share information and the strong feeling of collaboration among staff. An increased awareness of methods and approaches to teaching ESOL [ESL] students has had a positive effect on all students and all of their teachers. The large ESOL population at our school is now better served through the development of more trained staff. Our district has benefited also from the better prepared teachers and the additional state funds to serve this ESOL population (S5r-112398).*

Collaboration and *collegiality* in this school have impacted staff development in ways that have benefited not only teachers, but ELL student outcomes, as well. At the same time, the district has benefited from not only a more prepared staff and an intensified commitment to improved education for a large percentage of their student population.

For other teachers the *collegiality* promoted by the Program's collaborative group structure enabled the added benefit of new perspectives on old problems and new synergies in solving those problems. These teachers found that the Program structure, which not only facilitated collaborative group learning but also teachers' setting of their own schedule and environment for learning, often prompted a different level of dialog and interaction among colleagues than was otherwise the pattern "in school." The excerpt to follow, taken from a teacher's survey response, is one example of recurrent discourse among teachers who held this perspective:

*For myself, I have found it [the Program] beneficial for the time I have gained in interaction with other faculty I work with. The cooperative [collaborative] group concept is especially beneficial- an opportunity to know our peers in a different aspect, to hear their thoughts, brainstorm, problem-solve. It's wonderful to discuss situations 'at-home' [outside of the school] instead of hearing others talk about their situations & sometimes, that can become very boring to others. I also really like the flexibility of my groups' meeting time and not having to drive miles to attend class. Time is our most valuable resource and the on-site courses save precious time and money for the teachers (S3r-112898).*

This teacher's collaborative group, like many others, choose to meet for learning and project development, outside of the confines of the school building; in this case, at one teacher's home. As her discourse (like that of other teachers) indicates, this enabled a focused brand of collegial dialog and interaction that was not possible "in school." Teachers who held this perspective often reported that conversations about the challenges of ESL Education, which sometimes drifted into complaint, divisiveness, and defeatism, "in-school" would, when undertaken "outside of school," often become more controllable, more

purposeful; because teachers felt more comfortable to challenge such defeatism, "outside of school." The impact of both the *site/school specific* and *needs-based* components of the CLASSIC Model, on the Program outcomes perceived by participating teachers, are evident in this teacher's exemplary discourse. The final passages of her discourse, in particular, highlight the ways in which these Program components empowered new forms of, and often unexpected outcomes from, the sorts of *collegiality* which were fostered among Program participants.

### **Efficacy**

Although somewhat less recurrent in teachers' discourse about CLASSIC Program impacts on practice with and programming for ELL students in participating schools and districts, the theme of efficacy which emerged from data analysis in this study remains one of the most powerful of those analyzed. According to this theme in teachers' discourse, one impact of the Program has been to prompt teachers' personal and collective reflection on practice and programming such that a greater sense of confidence, if not *efficacy*, in practice has been facilitated. For some, this sense of enhanced efficacy has been personal. For others it has been a sense shared and evident at the school, and even the district levels. At the level of teachers' personal growth and classroom practices, this sense of enhanced efficacy with ELL students and families is often grounded in prior reflection on such factors as: the capabilities of ELL students, appropriate strategies for these students, and, in some cases, the teacher's confidence in being able to rationalize approaches to instruction for ELL students. One teacher's reflections are particularly illustrative of these trends in discourse:

*The courses [of the Program] have given me excellent timely information on ESL approaches, methods, strategies, and techniques. The classes have affected my personal teaching style. Especially because of my participation in a collaborative group, I have taken time to examine and evaluate my own cultural awareness. I am more reflective in my practice and have developed a deeper awareness of my students' needs. Although I am accepting of other teachers' situations, I am more aware of our buildings' diversity. My increased awareness of the varied needs and appropriate instructional techniques for ESL children has influenced other teachers in my building. What we have learned and begun to use will eventually impact our district and our community. I know that I am more informed as an educator. I can defend my school practices to those who question me (S1r-12798).*

A Program focus on participant-centered, personal and professional development have, for this teacher, impacted her professional teaching style toward perspectives that are more inclusive, thoughtful, cross-culturally-sensitive, and critically-reflective. Interaction with professional peers, facilitated by Program structure, has prompted reevaluation of cross-cultural competency, self direction, and building-level dynamics. An enhanced sense of *efficacy* as a practitioner is as evident as it is grounded in these reevaluations and critical reflections on self and practice.

For other teachers in the Program this sense of enhanced efficacy, built upon a foundation of reflective practice, extended to the

building and even the district levels. For some schools, collaborative group reflection on misconceptions about language acquisition prompted a stronger schoolwide sense of what was possible with ELL students. The passage which follows is typical of this scenario:

*The KSU, Distance Ed. approach to ESL endorsement has helped me and other teachers in my school to dispel some of the preconceived ideas we had about 2nd language acquisition. This has made many of us more willing to explore new strategies with ELL students and has encouraged me to be more reflective about my practice. I now realize that unless one is encouraged to continually take the time to reflect on what one is doing and thinking, and where one has come, the average individual just doesn't take the time to reflect. A very important aspect for personal and professional growth (S3r-12498).*

Critically reflective practice as a target outcome of the CLASSIC Program model has, for this teacher, impacted not only her own growth as a professional but also the willingness of faculty in her school to explore new approaches and new strategies for their ELL students. Her comments point to the need for programming in professional development for cultural and linguistic diversity which “encourages” repeated and progressive efforts toward a growing capacity for reflective practice as a means to *efficacy* in practice. For other teachers who hold this more global perspective on Program impacts, greater numbers of culturally and linguistically different [CLD] students in the schools also suggest the possibility that increasing numbers of these students are underserved. Many of these teachers were of the view that preparedness for diversity was not just a teacher issue, but a district issue as well. The discourse in the following teacher reflections illustrates this point:

*The program has had a positive effect on the teachers (and districts) who have participated. More than anything else, it has increased awareness of the CLD student's plight. It has encouraged many districts I'm familiar with to reconsider new strategies in dealing effectively with the growing numbers of CLD students enrolling in their schools. On a personal note, the program allowed me to participate in several meetings which addressed deficiencies in our district's CLD [ELL] student identification instrument and in evaluating the district's compliance with OCR [Office of Civil Rights] recommendations. This program is like a pebble dropped in a pool of water— its ripples continue to reach out to the needs of CLD students throughout our area (S2r-112998).*

Cross-cultural sensitivity (a target outcome of the CLASSIC Program Model) to the needs of potentially underserved, CLD students in her geographic region is evident in this teacher's discourse. For her, the changes she has witnessed, in district approaches to the needs of these students, are positive for students, teachers, and districts. Her comments also suggest that participation in site/district specific course projects has enhanced both her and her district's *efficacy* in meeting the differential needs of CLD students.

## Discussion

In this qualitative investigation, a group of practicing teachers from disparate school and district settings of ELL student education demonstrated remarkably recurrent perspectives regarding CLASSIC Program impacts on practice with and programming for ELL students. Each was very much aware of the sociocultural and sociopolitical environments of her/his professional practice and the potential influences on success with ELL students. Yet, their discourse consistently reflects a willingness to purposively confront existing resource, support, and other constraints in order to appropriately adapt and modify programming, instruction, and assessment to better meet the needs of ELL students and their families.

The findings of the study demonstrate that the CLASSIC Program Model for long-term, postgraduate, professional development has the potential to yield favorable and purposeful impacts on teacher, school, and district preparedness for diversity. Each of the five primary components of the Model was variously influential in teachers' discourse concerning these favorable impacts, as were the Program structures (such as the collaborative group structure) which are a product of the Program's emphases on these components.

Participant teachers' discourse in this interpretive investigation conveys a variety of favorable and purposive Program impacts. These CLASSIC Program impacts are reflected in three themes arising from data analyses in this study: (1) an enhanced *capacity* among teachers and their schools to address the complex demands of increasing classroom diversity; (2) emergent potentials among school practitioners for *collegiality* in practice, facilitated through collaboration; and (3) an enhanced sense of personal and collective *efficacy* enabled through reflective practice. The Program's impact on perceived *capacity* among teaching professional's to address the many and complex challenges of diversity was evident, in spite of: teachers' cross-cultural adjustments to ELL students and their families, communication challenges associated with a potential language barrier between teacher and pupil, and the professional challenge of appropriately modifying programming and instruction for differential student needs. Teachers' related discourse suggests that combining content and theory on appropriate practices with site-specific opportunities for theory-into-practice applications holds the potential to supersede the influence of potential constraints on capacity-building associated with in-practice complexity.

The findings of this study also indicate that the collaborative group format for learning, deliberation, and cooperative assignment completion yielded both expected and unexpected benefits for teacher participants; one of which was an emergent potential for *collegiality* among members of participating school staffs. This collaborative group format, a product of the Program Model's emphasis on the component of needs-based, distance education, was consistently referred to as perhaps the most beneficial aspect of programming for professional development.

Among unexpected outcomes of collaborative group formation, the findings of this study which relate to collegiality suggest a number of interesting implications associated with this impact of the Program. First, almost twenty-five years after Lortie's groundbreaking analysis (1975), teachers' opportunities for genuinely collegial planning, programming, and professional development within the egg-carton structure of schools, remain limited. Second, as Rosenholtz (1989) observed almost ten years hence, teachers continue to believe that their own concerns about adequacy for teaching practice, especially

practice in diverse school settings, are not shared by other teachers, even within the same school. Third, "out-of-school" opportunities for collegial sharing may be more effective than "in-school" arrangements in prompting teachers to tackle the tough issues associated with personal and collective adaptations to student diversity. Fourth, teachers' appropriate professional development for the implementation of truly cooperative learning arrangements in the classroom may be best facilitated through experiential models of capacity-building which prompt the teachers also to function in cooperative learning and deliberation groups.

Finally, the findings of this qualitative investigation indicate that critically reflective practice as a target outcome of the CLASSIC Program Model was instrumental in bolstering teachers' personal and collective sense of *efficacy* in professional practice with ELL students and families. In supporting and sustaining teachers' perceived sense of personal efficacy in the classroom, reflection seemed a powerful motivator in the practitioner's willingness to evaluate such factors as: awareness of student needs, cross-cultural competency in practice, and rationales for appropriate practice with ELL students. At the level of cross-cultural competence, these findings are consistent with prior research indicating that reflection on prior socialization and experiences vis-à-vis intercultural interactions will often prompt professional reevaluation of preparedness for cultural and linguistic diversity (Herrera, 1996). At a more global level, teachers' collective reflections on practice, particularly in collaborative group arrangements, seemed to encourage the exploration of new approaches and alternative strategies to increase ELL student achievement, as well reconsiderations and reevaluations of the extent to which CLD students remained underserved by existing district policies and infrastructures.

### Conclusion

This study found three dominant themes in teachers' perspectives on the impacts of the CLASSIC Program in professional practice with and programming for ELL students in participating schools and districts. Although these findings are in many ways consistent with existing literature concerning each of the five components of the CLASSIC Program Model, in other ways they suggest new implications for teachers' appropriate professional development for cultural and linguistic diversity.

At minimum, these findings point to the importance of professional development for diversity which is linked to schoolwide and district-inclusive restructuring efforts to better accommodate the differential resource, learning, and programming needs of CLD and ELL students. Teachers who are genuine in their efforts to better prepare for professional practice with diverse student populations must sense that their efforts are a part of larger site-based or district-driven restructuring efforts if their enhanced capacities are to be translated into meaningful changes in classroom and schoolwide practices.

Additionally, these findings suggest that teachers are open, albeit somewhat reluctant, to collegial planning and programming to improve ELL student achievement. What reluctance they suffer is often a function of school structure, limited opportunities for meaningful collaboration, and the barriers that "in school" culture may impose on potentials for collegiality. On the other hand, such openness to collegiality opens the door for synergistic teacher cooperation in professional planning, programming, instruction, and assessment which is site-focused, self-directed, and cross-culturally competent.

Finally, these findings further indicate that long-term, flexible, programs in postgraduate professional development can effectively target reflective practice as a target outcome, and in so doing, enhance teachers' personal and collective sense of efficacy in practice with diverse student populations. These findings suggest the need for additional research which explores, in a more focused manner, the specific ways in which this emergent capacity for reflective practice influences both a sense of self-efficacy among cross-cultural practitioners and the potential for an enhanced sense of collective efficacy among school faculties.

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...It is imperative that teachers examine their culture-based assumptions and opinions, in order to delineate clear goals for ESL instruction, and to create shared understanding with and among their students.

## Cultural Influences and Interactions in the ESL Classroom

Otherine J. Neisler and Alyssa Nota

*In English my name [Esperanza] means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting... At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver.* {Sandra Cisneros (1989, pp. 10-11), *The House on Mango Street* (emphasis added)}.

There are many students like Esperanza in American schools today. Cisneros' character finds her identity anchored in her Hispanic name, yet is aware of the cultural diversity around her, particularly in school. Regardless of ethnic or linguistic background, students are influenced on a daily basis by cultural factors. Students' ways of life, behaviors, attitudes and expectations are shaped not only by their home culture, but also by other *cultures*, which they encounter in their academic and personal experiences. The main objective of this article is to consider four distinct *cultures* which students encounter in the context of ESL learning.

Our decision to discuss cultural influences and interactions in ESL learning developed from a joining of our individual research interests – language instruction and multicultural education– topics which share common ground, yet are not often considered simultaneously. For this project, we ask: What is the purpose of ESL instruction? We propose that it is the acquisition of English as well as the skills necessary for academic success.

However, we suggest that the goal could be expanded to include the acquisition of skills needed for success in the [United States] U.S. macroculture. "In addition to acquiring knowledge, attitudes and skills to function effectively in home, community and school cultures, students should be competent to function within and across micro-cultures in their society, within the national macroculture, and within the world community" (Banks, 1993, p. 7)

While our discussion here could apply to students of any background, we chose Hispanic students as our focus for many reasons. The principal reason is that Hispanics make up the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States (Snider, 1990, p. 378). Further, our motivation is precipitated by findings like the following: a 1989 study conducted by the Children's Defense Fund, *Latino Youths at a Crossroads*, compared the educational attainment of Latino students and that of other ethnic groups. This study found that Hispanics lag significantly in three areas:

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1) The percentage of Hispanics who fail to receive a high school diploma is almost three times the rate found among whites, and almost twice that of blacks. They also tend to drop out much earlier. In 1988, more than half of Hispanic dropouts between the ages of 16-24 had not even completed the ninth grade, and 31 percent had not completed the seventh grade.

2) Hispanics are more likely than blacks and far more likely than whites to be two or more grades behind in school; the percentage who were that far behind increased by several points between 1981 and 1986. By age 17, one in six Hispanic students is at least two years behind expected grade level, and two in five are one year behind.

3) Only 7 percent of Hispanics who graduated from high school in 1980 had completed a four-year college degree in 1986, compared with 18 percent of black and 21 percent of white graduates (Snider, 1990, p. 378).

Moreover, according to a report released in October, 1998 by the Educational Foundation of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*, dropout rates for Hispanic girls are especially high. For example, in 1995, thirty percent of Hispanic females age 16-24 had dropped out of school and not yet passed a high school equivalency test (Cain, 1999, p. 13).

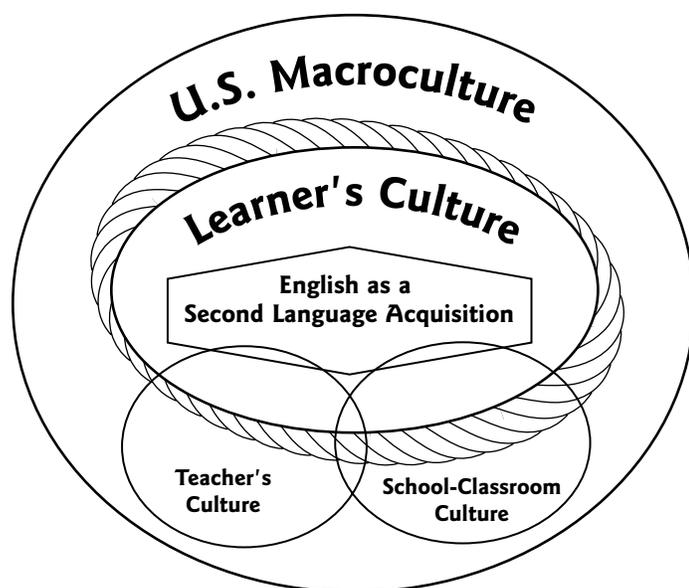
Statistics such as these are evidence of the urgent need to recognize and work to resolve the problems and challenges confronted by our Hispanic students. Certainly students of all backgrounds confront challenges in their educational experiences. However, as the rate of diversity in our society and schools continues to rise, we must take action to assist those students most in need. As the findings of the Children's Defense Fund and the AAUW Educational Foundation indicate, Hispanic students are among those who could benefit most from additional assistance and attention to their learning experiences.

Issues of language learning and multicultural education are predominant in the lives of Hispanic students. Literature relevant to these issues includes categories such as: language variation and use in education (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1992; Heath, 1983, 1986; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Perry & Delpit, 1998); bilingualism and bilingual education (Genesee, 1994; Hakuta, 1986); the teaching of culture, and salient issues such as power and identity, in foreign language and ESL classrooms (Cummins, 1994; Gebhard, 1996; Genesee, 1987, 1994; O'Maggio, 1986; Richard-Amato & Snow, 1992); multicultural education (Banks, 1993, 1994; Banks and McGee, 1993; Brown, 1992; Grant, 1992, 1995; Nostrand, 1991; Sleeter and Grant, 1994). Scheel and Branch (1993) offer interesting insight into the role of conversation and culture in instructional design.

While we may not be able or adequately equipped to meet the needs of every student in U.S. ESL classes, it is helpful to have a general understanding of our students' perspectives. Their values and views of themselves and the world are often deeply embedded in their cultural backgrounds. As teachers and researchers, we must recognize our students' diversity and the interaction of multiple cultural attributes which influence them. For this article, we adopt the following definitions: (1) *ethnic culture* is the knowledge, values, symbols, norms, perspectives, and interpretations that distinguish ethnic groups such as African Americans, Hispanic and Jewish Americans (Banks, 1993); and (2) *culture* more broadly defines the values, norms, beliefs, customs, perspectives and rules of a social organization.

We conclude that there are four distinct cultures [three micro-cultures within one macroculture (Banks, 1993)] which interact and influence students' ESL learning experiences. The relevant micro-cultures include: (1) students' ethnic cultures, (2) teacher's ethnic culture and (3) ESL classroom/school culture. The macroculture is the host culture in which the learning takes place. We suggest that while English language acquisition is a principal goal of the learning experience, it is not a culture; rather, it is the event during which the cultures interact. Moreover, language learning is the catalytic event that precipitates the unique macro/microcultural interactions. The cultural aspects that students bring to the classroom are compounded by the simultaneous interactions of the teacher's culture, the classroom/school culture, and the mainstream U.S. culture (see Figure 1 which is an expansion as well as a specific application of the *Micro-cultures and the National Macroculture* diagram developed by Banks, 1993, p. 11).

**Figure 1**  
**Multicultural Interaction in the ESL Classroom**



### **Students' Ethnic Cultures**

A student's ethnic culture imbues the knowledge and perspectives the student brings from home to the learning environment. The unique system of interpretation develops from the significant influences of parents, family and community, which are inextricably linked with social class. A student's ethnic culture and the cultures which the student encounters in school are often disparate, leaving the student to negotiate his/her place in each setting, similar to Cisneros' character in *The House on Mango Street*.

The influence of Hispanic students' ethnic cultures are significant to their academic progress. Snider (1990) notes that Hispanic students are far more likely than whites or blacks to have undereducated parents, a major factor influencing a child's educational achievement. Forty percent of Hispanic household heads have less than nine years of schooling, compared with only about 10 percent among white and black families. Nevertheless, Cummins (1994) argues that the

academic and linguistic growth of students is significantly increased when parents see themselves, and are seen by school staff, as co-educators of their children. Schools should seek to establish a collaborative relationship with these parents; one that encourages them to participate with the school in promoting the academic progress of their children. The need for parents to be positive influences on the child's learning is essential. This is a particularly urgent consideration where Hispanic parents are concerned.

There is an understandably powerful link between students' ethnic culture and language learning. Heath (1986) emphasized the significant influence family and community have on children's language acquisition. Language learning is embedded in the learner's culture due to the highly personal and idiosyncratic nature of language. Family and community factors which may affect language acquisition include: the parents role in the child's learning, the amount and type of oral and written language use in the home and community, and links between home/community and outside institutions, such as school (McKeon, 1994, p. 18).

Heath (1986) has discussed specific examples regarding recently arrived Mexican-American families. Collaboration between youths and adults was expected in order for children to acquire fundamental skills. For example, it was the shared responsibility of parents and extended family to raise children. It was also common for older children to entertain and help care for younger children, and for children to be consistently in the company of groups of adults. The type of environment Heath described provides an abundant source of linguistic and cultural information available to aid children's learning. Additionally, it is particularly valuable for teachers to keep in mind that ESL students may be primary interpreters for their families and subject to rigid traditions, practices or language usage in their home and community cultures.

### **Teacher's Ethnic Culture**

Another culture which impacts the ESL classroom is that associated with the teacher, who enacts his/her ethnic culture and social class on a daily basis. Like students, the teacher brings to the context values and expectations which may differ from those of others in the classroom or school. Just as interactions with parents, family and community influence a student's perceptions, the same is true of interactions with teachers.

Can the disparity of cultural attributes in the ESL classroom be reconciled, and if so, how? It is a common suggestion in the ESL and multicultural literature for teachers to familiarize themselves with their students' cultures. We agree that such knowledge would enhance the teaching and learning processes. Yet, is it possible for teachers to attain a complete knowledge of their students' cultures, particularly in a multicultural/multilingual ESL classroom? While it may seem an ideal goal, it is certainly not practical. Individuals, born and raised within a single culture, will acquire skills and understanding of that culture throughout their lifetimes. Therefore, teachers cannot be expected to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of their students' various cultures, when it is really unrealistic for their own culture.

It is, therefore, imperative for teachers to examine their culture based assumptions and opinions, to delineate clear goals for ESL instruction, and to strive to create a shared understanding with and among their students. To attain mutual understanding, teachers and students must diverge from their personal cultural frames of reference to acquire and value the knowledge of others in the classroom.

Banks (1993) reminds us that social class is strongly related to academic achievement. Teachers' related assumptions and expectations in this regard could also drastically affect students and their achievement. Persell (1977) notes that teachers' expectations may be influenced by students' behaviors, appearance, and language style (for additional detail on the influence of teachers' expectations on student achievement, see Brophy and Good, 1970 and Rosenthal, 1974). Although a discussion of the issue of power (between students and teachers) is beyond the scope of this article, one can assume the inevitability and gravity of the issue in a classroom context (for a discussion of language use in the classroom, and how language may be used to exercise power, see Fairclough 1989 and Wardhaugh 1992).

### **ESL Classroom/School Culture**

The ESL classroom culture specifically, and the school culture more broadly, frame the experiences of students and teachers. Students must familiarize themselves with the rules, values and structure of the classroom which can vary greatly depending on the instructional methods and organizational goals of the class (i.e. two-way bilingual versus transitional or immersion programs). Elements of the classroom or school culture which may directly influence students include: (1) rules of behavior which may be in conflict with students' home culture norms or previous classroom experiences; (2) level of academic rigor allowing for more or less freedom than students have been afforded in the past; (3) disparity of teacher and student power; (4) extent of and opportunity for individual decision-making; and (5) the stance toward negotiating cultural understanding in the learning environment.

Maintaining high academic standards is an essential element of student achievement. Snider (1990) has noted that Latinos are more likely than African-American students to be attending predominantly minority schools, and that such schools tend to have less-experienced teachers and "watered down" curricula. The goal should be neither to water down the curriculum nor to decelerate learning, but rather to build on the knowledge base students have already acquired in their first language (Neisler & Zollers, 1998).

With these significant factors in mind, it seems important to create a learning environment which values students' cultural diversity, while continuing to challenge and motivate students. Students benefit from having the opportunity to express their knowledge and thus, learn from each other. Within an environment where students share and discuss their diverse cultural experiences, they are able to integrate new knowledge, acquired through English as a second language, with previous knowledge. Not only can students correct misconceptions, but they can also compare conflicting and complementary components of various microcultures and the U.S. macroculture. Conversely, academic and personal growth may be hindered if students feel invalidated by the dominant ethnic group or macroculture, or intimidated by a classroom culture that is unresponsive to cultural conflict.

### **U.S. Macroculture**

Like a silent partner in the learning process, the macroculture in which learning takes place, plays an influential, yet underexamined role. In the traditional sense of ESL instruction, the macroculture is the environment in which the target language is spoken as a first language. For example, for this article, we refer to ESL classes held within the U.S. culture. Socialization into the macroculture is a significant influence, and consequence, of the ESL learning

experience. Students are "socialized into mainstream U.S. culture with its emphasis on justice, liberty, freedom, democracy, competition, power, and money" (Shade and New, 1993, p. 317). Banks (1993) argues that the key component in U.S. culture is the idea of equality; two additional tenets are individualism and individual social mobility. Reflective of the macroculture, U. S. schools are highly individualistic in their learning and teaching styles, evaluation procedures, and norms. Thus, traditionally group oriented students, like Hispanics, may experience problems in the typical and highly individualistic learning environment (Banks, 1993, p. 12).

In this quest for cultural knowledge, it is not plausible for students or teachers to acquire exhaustive knowledge of every microculture or even the U. S. macroculture. Nostrand (1991) states: "An adult understanding of a culture requires only a manageable part of the vast amount there is to know about a whole culture" (p. 140). For example, he states that for most aspects of an individual's life, he/she can use a standard dialect and vocabulary. However, when that person specializes in some geographic or professional milieu, he/she must learn a more specialized dialect or vocabulary. Nostrand further argues that more in depth knowledge of a micro or macroculture is needed only in specialized cases. Therefore, teachers need only know general guidelines for areas of possible cultural conflict.

### **Suggested Classroom Practices**

While it is not our intent to convey stereotypes of any ethnic group, we have compiled a brief checklist of cultural behavior patterns which may affect academic achievement. Although we have focused on academic concerns of Hispanic students, the checklist has broader applications for the general ESL population. The four categories are: physical behavior, conversational behavior, behavior related to gender and class, and classroom behavior.

An individual's cultural values, behavior or perspective cannot be presumed in advance (Scheel and Branch, 1993, p. 15). Rather, the checklist is an aide for developing an understanding of an individual's culture, and a means to open conversation on critical issues of culture within the ESL classroom. We acknowledge and appreciate the diversity within and across groups, and assert the importance of recognizing the abilities and contributions of every student. We recommend that the checklist be expanded and documented through systematic research.

Faced with an increasingly diverse student population, there are steps teachers can take to provide students an equitable and productive learning environment. We suggest that teachers:

- 1) recognize and facilitate their students' challenging transitions between home and school, given that the two environments may conflict and the cultural and linguistic levels, thus confusing students,
- 2) examine their attitudes and personal assumptions about students from different backgrounds, in order to uncover unconscious prejudices,
- 3) represent their own culture and be a primary conveyor of information about the subtleties of U.S. macroculture,
- 4) welcome students' cultural diversity,
- 5) demonstrate how language learning is enhanced through knowledge of culture,
- 6) model a positive attitude; share willingness to participate in and appreciation of collaborative, intercultural, and life-long learning.

Chart I

## Checklist for Identification of Cultural Behavior Patterns Affecting Academic Achievement

| <b>Behavior Category and Questions That Guide Observation and Classroom Discussions</b>   | <b>Student Behaviors</b>  | <b>Related Research Findings</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>1. Physical Behavior</b></p> <p><i>Do students exhibit these physical behaviors?</i></p>  | <p>Students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- avoid eye contact when they speak to you.</li> <li>- stand or sit closer to you than other students.</li> <li>- involve or welcome more touching or physical gesturing when speaking to others.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eye contact avoidance may be a sign of respect rather than dislike, defiance or disinterest (Scarcella, 1992).</li> <li>- When speaking, people acculturated in the U.S. macroculture stand at least one foot farther back than some groups of Latinos (Scarcella, 1992).</li> <li>- The fact that U.S. teachers have less tactile involvement with students than Latino teachers may be confusing to some students (Scarcella, 1992; Gebhard, 1996).</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>2. Conversational</b></p> <p><i>Do students exhibit any of the following characteristics in their conversations?</i></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- engage in "high involvement" conversational/ interaction style that is aggressive albeit respectful.</li> <li>- induce debate with classmates while conciliatory interaction styles seem to pose obstacles to conversation.</li> <li>- hesitate to ask for help or clarification.</li> <li>- give and expect more positive comments from teacher and prefer praise to be given in personal, face-to-face encounters.</li> <li>- react negatively to public criticism.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher and peer attempts to avoid conflict might actually spark it for someone who values conflict, debate, or aggressive conversational style (Tannen, 1990).</li> <li>- Some Latino students may be (1) unaccustomed to asking teachers to clarify, (2) consider it impolite to distract the teacher, and in teacher/student interactions (3) may fear being perceived as aggressive or disrespectful (Condon, 1986). Heath (1986) notes that Mexican American children are often taught not to initiate conversation with elders, only to answer talk that is directed toward them.</li> <li>- Personal attention is a vital element in Latino communication (Damen, 1987).</li> <li>- In Mexican culture, any public action or remark that may be interpreted as a slight to a person's dignity might be regarded as a serious offense (Condon, 1986).</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>3. Behavior Related to</b></p> <p><i>Do any of your students interact differently based on teacher's gender?</i></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- interact more openly with male teachers and administrators, or are more accepting of disciplinary measures from male supervisors.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some researchers argue that the differences in academic achievement between Latinos and other ethnic groups, result from Latino adherence to values that place women in the home, not in the classroom or the workplace, and encourage young men to enter the work force as soon as possible (Pittman &amp; Duany, 1990; Nota, 1998).</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>2. Classroom</b></p> <p><i>How are your students discussing cultural diversity?</i></p> <p><i>What cultural attributes influence each student's learning?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- have acquired more knowledge in their first language than they are able to articulate in English.</li> <li>- do not know how to examine cultural commonalities and differences to arrive at shared understandings of micro and macrocultures.</li> <li>- have different learning styles or knowledge bases.</li> <li>- think about information differently in order to arrive at a decision.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Culture influences each dimension of learning by providing guidelines that help students select strategies for storing and retrieving information, valuing information, managing their time, interacting with their peers, structuring their knowledge base (Shade &amp; New, 1993).</li> <li>- Teachers are often the primary sources of information regarding the macroculture and can model and initiate open discussion about micro and macrocultural differences to enable students' development of strategies for negotiating their multicultural lives (Banks, 1993).</li> </ul>  |

- 7) develop strategies through which students can express their existing knowledge base, in their first language, while helping them translate that knowledge into English and build upon that foundation,
- 8) foster the committed participation of parents, family and community in the school function and academic experiences of students,
- 9) encourage students to discuss cultural attributes with the goal of acquiring intercultural skills,
- 10) help students to understand that they are undergoing multicultural experiences while supporting their home culture and language as they develop new skills needed for success in the U.S. macroculture.

The process of negotiating new multicultural identities allows students to examine and maintain aspects of their own culture as they acquire intercultural skills, and forge the ability to be successful in the U.S. macroculture. Nostrand (1991) reminds us that multicultural education has distinct goals which we must keep in mind if we are to achieve, and promote among our students, intercultural understandings. First, multicultural education should promote openness between cultures. Second, it should build new commitment toward not only tolerance but respect for others and other cultures. Finally, multicultural education should encourage teachers and students to better understand the culture-bound perspectives of others with sensitivity and with a willingness for empathy. As suggested by Figure 1, expanded goals for ESL curriculum design which reflect these multicultural sensitivities might include: (1) developing a more detailed checklist without contributing to negative stereotyping, and (2) developing ESL teacher education which emphasizes multicultural issues and facilitates students' transitions from ESL to mainstream classrooms.

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...A decision-making framework based on a sound understanding of first and second language acquisition and interaction holds the key to successful planning for the academic success of linguistically diverse learners.

## Meeting the Challenge of Linguistic Diversity: A Comprehensive Approach to School Restructuring

Nancy L. Commins, Ofelia B. Miramontes  
and Adel Nadeau

The theme of this special issue attests to the growing awareness that to be truly prepared for the 21st century, educators must be ready and able to address the needs of the increasing numbers of linguistically diverse students. In doing so, they will discover that while the challenges are many, these students bring a new richness to the communities in which they live and have had a positive impact on the schools they attend.

The co-authors of this article share over 30 years of collaboration in the education of language minority students. We have worked individually and together as classroom and resource teachers, staff developers, building and district level administrators, university professors and researchers. In our work it has become clear that a simple "models" approach to school improvement is inadequate to address the variety of linguistic, cultural, educational, and socio-economic backgrounds of students entering schools across the nation. In response we have synthesized the lessons we have learned over the past three decades into a comprehensive process for thinking about and instituting school reform. (For a complete description of these ideas see Miramontes, O.B., Nadeau, A., & Commins, N.L. (1997). *Restructuring Schools for Linguistic Diversity: Linking Decision Making to Effective Programs*. New York: Teachers College Press.)

During our careers we have seen too many practices that undermine student success. Some examples we've observed across the country include the following:

- Classrooms and schools in which second language learners never interact with native English speaking peers and others in which students are never grouped by language proficiency in order to receive appropriate first and second language instruction.
- Expectations that second language learners of English should need no more than a year of any kind of support before they

are thrust into an all-English environment with no support for developing the academic skills they need to succeed.

- Stated beliefs that we should begin with where the child is, but schools rarely having systematic assessment procedures in place to document students' level of performance and progress.
- Goals that state students should achieve bilingualism over five years, but in practice teachers at each grade level are left on their own to determine their curriculum and how or even whether to use the primary language.
- Students who are prepared for writing in one language and asked to do the actual writing in the other.
- Secondary schools that rarely provide primary language instruction to newly arrived students, despite the cognitive benefits that can accrue.
- Lip service given to the importance of parents and community, but little accommodation made to reach out to and involve non-English speaking families who often work long hours so their children can survive.

Regardless of the capacity in which we are involved in education, each of us must take personal responsibility for these continuing practices and move forward to change the status quo. What can unify our efforts is our commitment to improving schools and a common understanding of the elements needed to do so successfully.

Presented below is a broad outline of the essential elements of school reform efforts aimed at improving academic achievement for linguistically diverse populations. They can be applied in any school setting, regardless of configuration or resources— in rural, suburban or urban locales; in schools where formal primary language instruction is easily achievable and in schools that will need to deliver all-English instruction; in an elementary building with a single second language population or in a comprehensive high school with students from 45 different languages and cultures. This approach reflects a decision-making process developed based on sound research and many years of practice in the field, regarding language acquisition, instruction, assessment, and school organization.

### Four Fundamental Components of the Restructuring Process

The four fundamental components of the restructuring process— Vision, Basic Premises for first and second language instruction, Key Areas for Reform, and Decision Making— are each discussed briefly. To help understand the interrelationship of these components of school reform, it may be helpful to think of constructing a building solid enough to endure the test of time. The building needs a framework (vision) built upon a solid foundation (basic premises), with inner load bearing walls (key areas for reform) and a means to hold all the parts together (decision making processes).

#### The Vision

The Vision is the dream for the reform process. It guides the work and is grounded in beliefs and assumptions about language, learning, and bilingualism. The focus of the vision is the achievement of all students and its development should include all stakeholders.

Two assumptions are essential to a vision that embraces linguistic diversity. The first is that the primary language is fundamental to the thinking, learning, and identity of every individual. The other is that bilingualism is a cognitive, social and economic asset to the individual and to the nation. Regardless of a program's ability to foster academic bilingualism, these assumptions hold true.

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## The Basic Premises

The *Basic Premises*, which are derived from the assumptions, are the non-negotiable underpinnings of the restructuring process and provide the basis upon which to build programs. The Basic Premises encompass six general areas: the nature and quality of instruction, progress through programs, parents and community, cross-cultural interaction, and a schoolwide process.

*The nature of instruction* includes both the approach to learning and the primary language foundation. Successful programs for linguistically diverse populations cannot be left up to chance. Students need carefully crafted instruction in which teachers actively mediate information and knowledge. Students need opportunities for hands-on experiences that build upon prior knowledge and provide access to the complexities of the academic curriculum.

One of the most basic decisions that must be made in any school with linguistically diverse populations is whether students will receive instruction in their primary language. If some level of primary language instruction is possible, then it must be decided how best to deliver that instruction so that it contributes to students' underlying cognitive development and eventual academic achievement in English. The numbers of students from various language groups, the availability of qualified teachers and the access to appropriate materials all contribute to decision making regarding instruction in the primary language. Four different categories of programs can be identified, distinguished by the level of primary language support provided. Category I programs have the population, personnel, and materials available to deliver a full primary language foundation for students in both literacy and the content areas. Category II programs are those in which it is only feasible to provide a solid primary language literacy program. Category III programs are those that use the primary language for the reinforcement of the main ideas of the content area curriculum, while literacy development is all in English. Category IV programs are those in which all instruction is provided in English. In every category it is necessary to understand how the Basic Premises apply and to attempt to maximize student achievement given the realities of the particular school or setting.

*Quality of instruction.* While it may be possible for schools to move from one program category to another in a restructuring effort, they do not represent a simple continuum. Merely using the primary language will not automatically result in academic success. In order to make a strong Category I program there needs to be a clear understanding of the role, purpose and settings for primary and second language instruction. At the same time, it is possible to design an effective all-English program, though the acquisition of academic English is likely to be slower and students will most often become subtractive bilinguals— that is they will lose their primary language as they acquire English (Cummins, 1989; Lambert & Tucker, 1972).

The design of the second language program will also be different across program categories because of the varying access students have to conceptual development in their first language. In all program categories specific strategies that address the needs of second language learners must be utilized daily to assure the development of oral language, literacy and concepts in the content areas. In a program where students cannot learn new material through their first language, much closer attention must be paid to the instructional approaches used throughout the curriculum to assure that students can succeed.

*Progress through programs* encompasses both instructional assessment and the manner in which students are moved through

programs. Students' movement from one program to another or their redesignation as fluent in English must be tied to their performance and not simply the length of time they spend in a program. Instructional assessment needs to account for individual performance as well as school and program accountability. Assessment should reflect student progress in all aspects of instruction including language, literacy and content areas and should account for the varying skill levels across students' two languages. Specific criteria must be developed regarding when to transition students from primary language literacy to formal English literacy instruction and when they can handle all English instruction with no additional support.

*Parents and community* are a critical component in the design of programs. To effectively incorporate linguistically diverse populations, schools must be prepared to address issues of differences in ethnicity, schooling, class background, and perceptions of parents' role in their children's education. A comprehensive restructuring process demands that schools move beyond the traditional 'help out in the classroom and join the PTO' paradigm and into a community outreach paradigm. In some districts many strides have been made, but unfortunately in far too many schools the avenues available for parents to participate in their children's education are limited. Changes will result from affirming the value of home languages other than English and by providing parents with concrete ways they can help their children.

Consistent guidelines and clearly defined expectations are needed that fully inform parents who do not speak English about the opportunities available to their children and their rights to receive a sound and equitable education. Above all, personnel at every level in the school district must send a clear and consistent message that regardless of the level of education, income, or knowledge of English, parents can always play a critical role in their children's education by supporting primary language development in the home.

*Cross cultural interaction.* The presence of students from different languages will increase the cultural and, likely, the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the schools they enter. Conscious attention must be paid to the ways in which students are grouped and regrouped and expected to collaborate with one another to assure that differences that might exist do not serve to isolate or marginalize certain groups of students. Respect must be demonstrated through the actions that adults take rather than just the words they utter.

*Schoolwide process.* We can no longer afford the outmoded view that in 45 minutes a day the ESL or Spanish-speaking teachers will take care of all the needs of second language learners. Linguistically diverse children need instruction tailored to their needs throughout the school day. Therefore, the education of language minority students must be viewed as the responsibility of every adult in the building. Strategies appropriate to the needs of second language learners should be used in all classroom settings and not just the designated second language class or room. Even if not every teacher in a school works directly with particular students, they should be aware of the organizational and instructional elements of sound programs, including the criteria that are used to decide when children are ready to transition from one type of service to another. In addition, they must be willing to modify their practice to allow for the kind of flexibility in scheduling, grouping, and instruction that will meet student needs.

In this kind of collaborative schoolwide process teachers may need to redefine for themselves what it means to be a teacher (Schlecty, 1991). In any reform effort, isolation is counterproductive. Teachers

need to be working together across the entire school with a view of themselves as decision-makers (Warren-Little, 1994). In the process of coming to a common understanding of the issues and practices associated with successful programs for linguistically diverse students, these discussions will necessarily touch upon core values. Therefore, they must be conducted in a manner that builds trust and invites openness through dialogue.

### **Key Areas for Reform**

The Key Areas for Reform are the areas that must be targeted in any comprehensive restructuring process. They include teaching and learning, organization, assessment, and processes for decision-making. The area of *teaching and learning* requires a fundamental rethinking of the learning process. *Organizational structures* must be developed that provide for both equity and flexibility. *Assessment* includes an internal process of accountability and student assessment that must exist at the school site. *Decision-making* is what drives the vision. It is not enough to work on one area alone, but efforts towards reform must encompass all of these areas working in concert with one another.

As part of the process of aligning curriculum and standards, it is particularly important to develop appropriate assessments that will measure student progress and produce data needed for accountability. In some districts and states, efforts are already underway to create benchmarks towards standards that reflect the developmental process of second language learners and provide guidelines for the organization of instruction and documentation of their progress. These efforts must be broadened so that in every district it is possible to document the progress students are making and to assist teachers in designing instruction appropriate to students' level of first and second language development.

### **Decision-Making Processes**

While the Decision-Making Processes constitute one of the key areas of reform, we have also designated them as an essential component of the restructuring process in schools with linguistically diverse populations. In order to move beyond the imposition of an externally created model to improve instruction, teachers and administrators need skills and strategies that will allow them to conduct needs analyses, develop appropriate goals, weigh alternatives and decide upon organizational structures that will best utilize their existing resources and personnel.

### **Major Aspects of Decision-Making**

This approach to decision-making is predicated upon the belief that those who are responsible for providing the services within an organization should be part of the decision-making about what they do. It is impossible to sustain reform without a decision-making process that has ongoing action as its operative phrase. Four major aspects of decision making are establishing a vision, strategic planning, leadership and conflict resolution.

**Establishing a vision.** The fact that vision is a key element of school restructuring as well as a specific strategy for decision making highlights its importance. In the visioning process all aspects of the organization are examined. It incorporates pedagogical principles, comprises all practices critical to the reform and demands sufficient time for open and continuous dialogue. Questions include whether the vision is comprehensive; how it addresses the needs of all students; the implications for program design; and the kinds of reorganization necessary for service delivery, staffing and curriculum.

**Strategic Planning.** Effective strategic planning requires that processes be established to conduct a needs assessment, compile data, facts and materials that lay out the existing situation, and generate central questions for reflection and action. Strategies that are essential to long-range planning include brainstorming and consensus building. To be successful also requires that administrators have a firm understanding of group dynamics.

**Leadership.** In order to restructure schools so that they truly meet the needs of linguistically diverse students, there must be a shift in the role of the traditional leader from the top down manager to instructional leader. Only in this way can the vision or dream eventually become a shared responsibility among all members of the organization.

**Conflict Resolution.** Any change process and especially one that involves fundamental values about education will generate conflict. Because conflict is unavoidable, leaders need to be ready with strategies for determining the extent and sources of the conflict, as well as specific steps for mediating disputes. In all cases of conflict resolution the change should focus on students and what organizational strategies, instructional methodologies and staff organization plan will best meet their needs.

### **Implications at the District Level**

While our approach to restructuring is focused mainly on school level efforts, to be truly successful educators must work at many levels within the system and in many interconnected collaborations to build sound programs for linguistically diverse students. Just as schools need to develop a vision and work from a set of premises grounded in research, so do districts need to have a vision and a plan for the success of ALL students, including those from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. At every level, these elements should become part of an ongoing dialogue among administrators, teachers, other staff and community members. In this way the work at individual sites becomes part of a larger effort towards improving education. In the same way that all people in a school site need to see themselves as equally responsible for all students' success, so too must all the key players in a district see that ESL and bilingual programs are part of a total integrated effort to meet all students' needs.

It is critical to be aware of the ways in which good decisions made at the school site can be supported or undermined by district policies. For example, after a period of study and analysis, the faculty of a school decides that the best way to serve the first and second language needs of students is to have a system of continuous progress. However, their district's policy is to measure second language proficiency based solely on standardized test scores. In this case, district policies run counter to sound principles of assessment. In order to best serve linguistically diverse students, it will be necessary to influence decision-making at the district level so that it results in new policies that will support their teaching and learning in the schools.

Across the country, districts are working to align curriculum with state and local standards and to respond to various statewide initiatives related to literacy. Political decisions are usually made by people far away from the classroom. As policies and practices are developed at the local level, the needs of linguistically diverse students must be brought to the center of the discussion and not addressed as an afterthought. For example, the fact that many students in bilingual programs receive their initial literacy instruction

in Spanish cannot be peripheral to the development and administration of literacy assessments at the state and district level.

Time can be allotted in existing discussions or regular meetings among principals and other administrators to discuss educational practice and how it relates to the needs of the students being served. Unless people are specifically talking about the key areas of reform—teaching and learning, assessment, organization, decision-making—any changes made will only be superficial tinkering and student achievement will not substantially improve over time. One step that can be taken when forming district committees and task forces related to any area of curriculum development, is to assure that teachers with expertise in first and second language acquisition are invited to participate and encouraged to take leadership roles.

In addition to existing venues for discussion, it may also be necessary to create special forums for administrators to come together to deal with challenges unique to particular kinds of programs. For example, in Colorado's Boulder Valley School District in addition to regular meetings of all elementary principals, the principals in schools with bilingual programs and the principals of schools with ESL programs meet regularly to dialogue with central office administrators. These meetings are forums for principals to express concerns, ask questions and seek solutions together to the challenges unique to their schools. In this way, they have begun to establish a common knowledge base about first and second language acquisition, identify areas of strength, and prioritize needed improvements in program delivery.

One of the major forums for implementing a comprehensive school reform process is Title I school-wide programs. The Title I schoolwide planning process is a perfect opportunity to put the needs of linguistically diverse students squarely in the middle of efforts towards school reform. Unfortunately, too many schools who go through a year of schoolwide planning come up with goals and strategies that addresses the literacy development of native English speakers and either ignore the instruction of second language learners or include it as an addendum to the plan. In a truly schoolwide effort the needs assessments will include the performance of linguistically diverse students in both their languages and the planning process will center on all dimensions of academic success for all the students in the school. Only then will goals and strategies emerge that are consistent with what we know are sound educational practice for second language learners.

### **Conclusion**

Increasing linguistic diversity is a reality. Lessons learned from schools who have already experienced these demographic changes have shown us that with a comprehensive approach, reform efforts can be successful (Lucas, Henze & Donato, 1990; McLeod, 1996). In any reform effort the change process must remain focused on students and learning and not simply on the governance structure. Change must be aimed at improvement— not just a reorganization of personnel within existing structures. The kinds of changes that are needed will be systematic and pervasive, affecting all members of the organization. A decision-making framework based on a sound understanding of first and second language acquisition and interaction holds the key to successful planning for the academic success of linguistically diverse learners.

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...A Two-Way Bilingual Model incorporates a strong positive academic and language enrichment environment for all students.

## **Supporting Dual CALP Development Among Second Language Learners: The Two-Way Model Revisited**

**Richard Gomez, Jr. and Leo Gomez**

The most common bilingual education programs, early and late exit transitional bilingual models, are consistently undermined by external factors. These factors range from student difficulties with, and poor performance on, standardized tests in English, to community and educator misconceptions about the urgency for language minority children to be fully immersed within an all English environment as soon as possible. As described by Ventrone and Benavides (1998), English-only proponents perceive English as the primary method of assimilation and native language loss as a consequence of English acquisition. Martinez and Moore-O'Brien (1993) suggest inherent contradictions that limit the effectiveness of transitional bilingual programs. They conclude that non-English speaking children rarely receive enough instruction in their primary language to fully develop it. Short-changed in their native language (L1) development, children do not have the opportunity to achieve higher academic proficiency in their L1 for appropriate transfer and success in the English, (L2) curriculum. This situation often results in low levels of proficiency in both L1 and L2. A Transitional Bilingual Model is a subtractive model focusing upon English acquisition, at the expense of the child's in L1 (and contradicts research on the L2 development process).

A Two-Way Bilingual Enrichment Model incorporates a strong and positive academic and language enrichment environment for all students involved. Two-Way Bilingual Programs create additive environments. These programs build upon what students bring to the classroom, viewing them, their parents, and the community at large as resources in achieving literacy in two languages. This emphasis on the student's schema often results in an appropriately lowered affective filter (stress and anxiety) for the language learner, critical in achieving optimal results in second language acquisition.

### **The Case Against Transitional Programs**

Cummins (1981) and Baker (1996) argue that Transitional Bilingual Programs are inherently flawed due to the way in which they disable language minority children in the educational process. Baker (1996), in his discussion of the rationale for the implementation of Transitional Bilingual Programs, presents it as a matter of perceived

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priorities. He suggests that often educators inappropriately urge for English acquisition so that Spanish speaking children do not fall behind their English-speaking peers. If matters are as Baker suggests, then these transitional programs underscore a false premise of equality of opportunity for language minority children. This errant application of equality is based not on equal curriculums (curriculums in all English classrooms are not identical to their respective bilingual counterparts) but rather a misperceived equality based on proficiency in English.

Transitional Programs are considered weak in that often, their end result is a person who is not fully bilingual and biliterate. The student's academic success is measured primarily through achievement in English. Consequently, teachers feel increased pressure to deliver virtually all instruction in English. The L2 is perceived as in need of replacement as soon as possible. This situation/perception conveys the message to students, teachers, school staff, and administrators that the L2 and English clearly do not enjoy equal status (Skutnabb-Kangas, Baker; 1981, 1996).

By definition, Transitional Programs fail to allow sufficient time for students to acquire the level of academic language proficiency (CALP) necessary for successful learning in the second language (L2). How could they? More often than not, CALP development in the native language (L1) is not yet complete; further impeding the learning process (Skutnabb-Kangas, Baker; 1981, 1996). Transitional Programs teach academic concepts to second language learning (ELL) students in their L1 for a limited time only, often exiting students after a maximum of two years (Gersten, Woodward, 1994). This is far short of the minimum 5-7 years which research demonstrates it takes to acquire CALP. (Collier, 1995)

The Transitional Model is typically subtractive and deficit. It is subtractive bilingualism in that children are forced to set aside or subtract out their native language and assimilate to the more prestigious majority language. Subtractive bilingualism states Lambert (1987) is recognized and correlates with low levels of second language acquisition, academic underachievement, and psychosocial disorders. It is also a deficit model in that it operates from a perspective that ELL students are lacking in a skill, and thus in need of remediation.

### **The Case in Favor of Two-Way Programs**

Recognizing that literacy strength in L1 provides a strong basis for literacy development in L2, Two-Way Bilingual Programs emphasize maintenance of the student's L1 CALP development. (This attention to L1 development is not just a utilitarian way to more effectively acquire English.) By giving the L1 equal status with English, it is valued, validated, and plays an essential role in daily living within the school environment. Such an environment is empowering, addressing issues of social justice as well as test scores (Baker, 1996). Another important aspect of these programs is that they support L1 and L2 CALP development for a period of 5-7 years, the time required for students to develop CALP and reach a threshold of language ability in both their native and second language. Two-Way Programs allow students to begin to benefit from bilingual education and reach high levels of cognition (Zion-Brauer, 1997). The Two-Way Model remains true to research in second language acquisition (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 1996), ensuring that students gain CALP and learning strategies in L1 before transfer to L2 is expected of them. This emphasis on simultaneous development in both languages can be

seen in Lindholm's (1992) criteria for effective Two-Way Bilingual Programs. Such programs should: a) promote development of high levels of academic proficiency in two languages for all students, b) assist students in achieving academic success in both languages as determined by conventional measurements, and c) address the acquisition of high levels of cross-cultural understanding and psychosocial competence by all students involved. Thus, the potential for the cognitive benefits associated with two-way bilingualism are considerable.

Two-Way Bilingual Models rely on additive bilingualism as a form of enrichment where children are given the opportunity to add one or more second languages while fully developing their own primary language. Lambert (1987) argues that true bilingualism allows students to not only greatly profit from the language learning experience, but to also gain cognitively, socially, educationally, and even economically. Additive bilingualism, therefore, is associated with high levels of proficiency in the two languages, positive self-esteem and positive cross-cultural attitudes.

According to Baker (1996), Zion-Brauer (1997), and other researchers, key characteristics of the structure and strategies within a successfully implemented Two-Way Bilingual Program are:

- Strong support by administration with a long-term commitment (4-6 year minimum).
- Fully integrated schooling, with language minority and majority students learning each other's languages.
- Consistent separation of languages for instruction.
- Highly qualified staff whose positive perceptions lead to high expectations for student achievement.
- Equal status of the two languages.
- Balance of language groups, the ratio should never slip below 2/3 majority language (English) to 1/3 minority language students.
- Sufficient use of the minority language (at least 50%).
- Instructional approaches involving: (1) whole language, (2) natural language acquisition through all content areas, (3) cooperative learning, (4) interactive and discovery learning, (5) cognitive complexity of all lessons while maintaining comprehensible input.
- Opportunities for speech production.
- Close school-to-home collaboration where parents are seen as a valuable resource.
- Empowerment as an objective of instruction.

### **Designing a Two-Way Bilingual Program**

Effective Two-Way Bilingual Programs are, to a great degree, custom designed to fit the needs and resources of a school district and community. Still, general characteristics shared by effective Two-Way Bilingual Programs have been summarized by the National Clearinghouse of Bilingual Education (1999):

- *Length of Program.* Research data indicate that students require a minimum of 4-6 years, and may require 7-10 years to attain CALP in both L1 and L2.
- *Staffing.* Staffing must allow for the provision of instruction in two languages. Influential factors include the availability of qualified teachers, the degree of separation of languages for instruction, and other specific programmatic goals. Thus, Developmental Bilingual Education (DBE)

program staffing patterns can range from self-contained classrooms to team-teaching arrangements.

In self-contained classrooms, a bilingual teacher, with or without the assistance of a bilingual aide, plans and delivers instruction in two languages for one classroom of students. In team-teaching, two teachers, at least one of whom is bilingual, work together to provide individual and small group instruction, according to language and subject matter. In this arrangement, one of the team-teachers may be a bilingual resource teacher.

- *Language of Instruction.* The proportion of instructional time spent in each language may vary from program to program. Some programs begin with instruction being equally divided between English and the minority language. In other programs, English may only be used for 10 percent of instruction at the early grades and be gradually increased to 50 percent by the later grades (typically by the fourth grade). Research suggests that sustained periods of monolingual instruction may be more effective in promoting dual language development. Common methods for separating languages include:

- division by time, where instruction in either language can occur during half-day, alternate day, or alternate week intervals;
- content-specific division, where the language of instruction varies by subject matter, and where a subject may be taught in one language in one year and in the other language the following year; and
- team teaching division, where each teacher consistently provides instruction in one language.

- *Instructional Setting.* Two-Way Bilingual Education Programs may be implemented in a variety of instructional settings. In whole class settings, all students in a particular school are enrolled in the program. Implementation usually begins in stages, starting with the earlier grades. In the first year, for example, the program may include only kindergarten students, with an additional grade being included each year. In strand settings, the program takes place in one classroom for each grade level. In magnet school settings, one school draws students from throughout the district to participate in the program. Admission may be selective or open.

- *Materials Selection.* Three categories of materials are needed for two-way language development programs:

- language arts materials for native speakers of both English and the second language of instruction;
- ESL and second language materials for non-native speakers; and
- content area instruction materials in both English and the second language (Willets and Christian, 1990).

Discussion to follow provides an overview of one design in an effective two-way bilingual program. This design appropriately reflects recent research on effective language learning instruction for SLL students, as well as, the recommendations of the NCBE.

**The Rio-Grande Valley Two-Way Partial Immersion Curriculum Model**

The Rio-Grande Valley Two-Way Partial Immersion Curriculum Model is the Two-Way Bilingual Model currently utilized in the northern half of the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas (Table 1). It is successfully operating in 12 campuses across 5 school districts. Discussion to follow explains this model according to the cells of Table 1.

- *Grade Level:* Here are two groupings of grade levels. The first group is comprised of PK, K; and first grade and the second group is made up of second through fifth grades. This grade group distinction will be elaborated upon in discussion of the last category, L1/L2 conceptual refinement.
- *Heterogeneous Instructional Grouping:* Each classroom is composed of 50% native English speaking and 50% native

**Table 1**  
**Rio-Grande Valley Two-Way Partial Immersion Curriculum Model**

| <b>Grade Level</b> | <b>Heterogenous Instructional Grouping</b>  | <b>Separation of Languages for Content-Area Instruction</b>   | <b>Computer Focus</b>  | <b>Instructional Staff</b>  | <b>L1/L2 Conceptual Refinement</b>  |
|--------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| PK                 | 50% English Speakers<br>50% Spanish Speakers<br>[Except Language Arts]<br><i>Content-Area &amp; Learning Center Instruction in Bilingual Pairs/Groups</i> | Language Arts in Students' <u>Primary Language</u><br>Mathematics (English)<br>Social Studies/Science (Spanish)<br>P.E., Reading & Music (equally in English/Spanish)<br><i>Learning Center Activities available in English and Spanish</i> | Initial Computer Literacy (English/Spanish)  | Bilingual Certified and ESL Certified<br><br>Teacher-Aide (recommended) | Clarification and Application for: English Speakers<br>SSL: SS or Science<br><br>Spanish Speakers<br>ESL: Mathematics |
| K                  | 50% English Speakers<br>50% Spanish Speakers<br>[Except Language Arts]<br><i>Content-Area &amp; Learning Center Instruction in Bilingual Pairs/Groups</i> | Language Arts in Students' <u>Primary Language</u><br>Mathematics (English)<br>Social Studies/Science (Spanish)<br>P.E., Reading & Music (equally in English/Spanish)<br><i>Learning Center Activities available in English and Spanish</i> | Support of Linguistic & Cognitive Development via Respective Language of Instruction | Bilingual Certified and ESL Certified<br><br>Teacher-Aide (recommended) | Clarification and Application for: English Speakers<br>SSL: SS or Science<br><br>Spanish Speakers<br>ESL: Mathematics |
| 1st                | 50% English Speakers<br>50% Spanish Speakers<br><br><i>Content-Area &amp; Learning Center Instruction in Bilingual Pairs/Groups</i>                       | Language Arts/Mathematics (English)<br>Language Arts/Social Studies/Science (Spanish)<br>P.E./Reading/Music (equally in English/Spanish)<br><i>Learning Center Activities available in English and Spanish</i>                              | Support of Linguistic & Cognitive Development via Respective Language of Instruction | Bilingual Certified and ESL Certified<br><br>Teacher-Aide (recommended) | Clarification and Application for: English Speakers<br>SSL: SS or Science<br><br>Spanish Speakers<br>ESL: Mathematics |
| 2nd                | 50% English Speakers<br>50% Spanish Speakers<br><br><i>Content-Area &amp; Resource Center Activity in Bilingual Pairs/Groups</i>                          | Language Arts/Mathematics (English)<br>Language Arts/Social Studies/Science (Spanish)<br>P.E./Reading/Music (equally in English/Spanish)<br><i>Resource Center Activities available in English and Spanish</i>                              | Support of Cognitive Development & Specialized Vocabulary for Enrichment             | Bilingual Certified and ESL Certified                                   | Specialized Terminology & Vocabulary Enrichment in<br><br>English: SS & Science<br>Spanish: Mathematics               |
| 3rd                | 50% English Speakers<br>50% Spanish Speakers<br><br><i>Content-Area &amp; Resource Center Activity in Bilingual Pairs/Groups</i>                          | Language Arts/Mathematics (English)<br>Language Arts/Social Studies/Science (Spanish)<br>P.E./Reading/Music (equally in English/Spanish)<br><i>Resource Center Activities available in English and Spanish</i>                              | Support of Cognitive Development & Specialized Vocabulary for Enrichment             | Bilingual Certified and ESL Certified                                   | Specialized Terminology & Vocabulary Enrichment in<br><br>English: SS & Science<br>Spanish: Mathematics               |
| 4th                | 50% English Speakers<br>50% Spanish Speakers<br><br><i>Content-Area &amp; Resource Center Activity in Bilingual Pairs/Groups</i>                          | Language Arts/Mathematics (English)<br>Language Arts/Social Studies/Science (Spanish)<br>P.E./Reading/Music (equally in English/Spanish)<br><i>Resource Center Activities available in English and Spanish</i>                              | Support of Cognitive Development & Specialized Vocabulary for Enrichment             | Bilingual Certified and ESL Certified                                   | Specialized Terminology & Vocabulary Enrichment in<br><br>English: SS & Science<br>Spanish: Mathematics               |
| 5th                | 50% English Speakers<br>50% Spanish Speakers<br><br><i>Content-Area &amp; Resource Center Activity in Bilingual Pairs/Groups</i>                          | Language Arts/Mathematics (English)<br>Language Arts/Social Studies/Science (Spanish)<br>P.E./Reading/Music (equally in English/Spanish)<br><i>Resource Center Activities available in English and Spanish</i>                              | Support of Cognitive Development & Specialized Vocabulary for Enrichment             | Bilingual Certified and ESL Certified                                   | Specialized Terminology & Vocabulary Enrichment in<br><br>English: SS & Science<br>Spanish: Mathematics               |

Spanish speaking students for every subject taught, except Language Arts (LA) for PK and K. For these two grade levels and for LA only, students are separated by language, and each language group is instructed in their native language. Teachers and parents felt it was very important to establish the strongest possible foothold in language arts, therefore they opted for instruction in the students' primary language for PK and K grade levels. At all other times, monolingual English speaking students are partnered with monolingual Spanish speaking students throughout the school day in classrooms composed of half native English speaking students with half native Spanish speaking students.

- *Separation of Languages for Content Area Instruction:* Content areas for each grade level taught in the language is stipulated in the model (i.e. Kinder mathematics in English). Learning centers are filled with activities for all subjects in both English and Spanish.

Subjects such as physical education, reading, and music, are conducted in what was coined as the "Language of the Day". The language of the day alternates between Spanish and English every other day. All school activities and subjects not specifically designated for a certain language of instruction, alternate between both languages. The language utilized to make morning announcements, English or minority language, clue teachers as to the "Language of the Day" for these subjects. This stressing of the equal value assigned to both languages furthers the commitment by all faculty and students to the Two-Way Program at their campus.

- *Computer Focus:* In Kindergarten, computer instruction is provided in both English and Spanish to ensure basic understanding and to avoid adding anxiety that new technology is prone to induce.

For grades K and First, computer instruction is conducted in the language mode that represents the subject being reinforced. For example, kindergarten social studies and science (both taught in Spanish) have corresponding computer enrichment programs for those subjects in Spanish.

For grades 2 through 5, computer focus furthers cognitive development and provides exposure to specialized subject vocabulary in the language not associated with that subject's classroom instruction. For example, fourth grade mathematics, taught in English in the classroom, is enriched in Spanish, during the computer time. Students by second grade master enough of their L2 to enable them to benefit from this enriched vocabulary presentation.

- *Instructional Staff:* In all cases, teachers are either bilingual certified (and teach all Spanish assignments) or ESL certified. It is recognized and understood by all parties involved in the Rio Grande Valley Two-Way Partial Immersion Program, that in addition to the model, teacher attitudes, training, confidence, philosophies, and empowerment, are crucial to the program's success. Thus, all teachers volunteering in the program are either already certified or immediately begin university class work towards certification with financial support provided by their respective school districts.

- *L1/L2 Conceptual Refinement:* For all grades Pre K through 5th, students are again separated by language at the end of the day (usually 15-20 minutes) for purposes of clarification and enrichment.

Students in Pre K through 1st grades are involved in activities that help clarify and/ or apply skills and concepts learned earlier that day. The clarification and/or application is conducted in the students' native language for subjects taught that day in their second or target language. Thus, native English speakers get clarification/enrichment during this time for social studies and science in English; while native Spanish speakers receive clarification/enrichment for mathematics in Spanish. Students in the initial stages of second language development have plenty of opportunities during this time to render concrete the day's instructional concepts that have been originally presented in their target language.

In grades 2 through 5, a concerted effort is made to provide students activities, and specialized vocabulary not covered in original classroom instruction in their target language. Program personnel, through on-going, formative assessments of the program, have added this feature to the model. It was felt that given the increased cognitive demands associated with these grade levels, students should be exposed to specialized vocabulary in their native language in subjects originally taught in their target language.

### Conclusion

As discussed, Transitional Models of bilingual education, by their very definition, deny access to equitable educational opportunities ELL students. These models too often rush ELL students into mainstream, all English, classrooms while not preparing them for the demanding cognitive rigor that will accompany them. A student lacking strong native language cognitive development (CALP in L1), may be left in a no-man's land; unable to fully develop CALP in L1 or L2.

The most purposive way to prepare ELL children is through a Two-Way Bilingual Model. This model holds great promise in nurturing the linguistic, academic, cultural, social, political and moral aspects of the whole child. Children exit such programs with a solid cognitive base in L1 and in turn, in their L2 as well. These students are better prepared to function in an increasingly technological world, with empathy for others and a strong sense of identity. Given their potential and success in these areas, it is not surprising then that more and more Two-Way Bilingual Education Programs are being implemented across the country: success breeds demand. As bilingual educators, we steadfastly maintain that the Two-Way Model reflects our best hope yet for preparing life-long learners who are capable of becoming productive citizens in an increasingly global society.

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...Even when teachers are not able to provide instruction in all their students' primary languages, they can find ways to support those languages and can also involve students in activities to explore the cultures of all students in the classroom.

## Effective Practices for English Language Learners

David Freeman and Yvonne Freeman

Effective teachers of English language learners follow sound principles as they develop curriculum. In this article we would like to share a checklist we have developed which reflects principles for ESL teaching based on current research in first and second language acquisition and on best teaching practices (Freeman and Freeman, 1998). Our hope is that readers will use this checklist as they plan curriculum. We then expand on the first item of the Checklist to provide a more extended example of effective teaching for English language learners.

### Checklist for Effective Practice

The Checklist for Effective Practice consists of a series of questions. If teachers can answer "yes" to the questions, they are probably taking into consideration key factors that will improve the chance of school success for all their students and particularly for their second language students. Below we list the eight questions from the checklist and briefly comment on each.

#### 1. Is curriculum organized around "big" questions?

Collier (1995) points out that school success depends on students developing cognitive, academic, and language proficiency. These three areas are interrelated. Cognitive development results from solving problems in or out of school. Academic development involves problem solving in school related areas. Students need enough language proficiency and the appropriate skills to engage in these problem-solving activities and achieve academically.

When teachers organize curriculum around significant questions, they involve students in solving meaningful problems. For example, students might investigate questions such as "How are we alike and how are we different?" or "How does where we live influence how we live?" As students explore these relevant questions, they develop higher levels of cognitive, academic, and language proficiency.

#### 2. Are students involved in authentic reading and writing experiences?

As students explore important questions, they naturally turn to both fiction and nonfiction texts as sources for information. For example, a book like *Who Belongs Here?* (Knight, 1993) provides students with both a fictional story of an immigrant boy who feels rejected by classmates at school and fascinating historical facts concerning many immigrants groups who have come to the United States. Bilingual

learners would relate to both the story and the social studies information and could use both sources of information in exploring the "big" question in the book's title.

For English language learners, predictable whole stories, novels, plays, and poems as well as complete pieces of nonfiction are more comprehensible than simplified texts or excerpts because the context is richer. Once students have researched their question, they write to present their understandings to classmates or to a wider audience. Engagement with authentic literacy activities of these kinds promotes literacy as well as cognitive, academic, and language development.

#### 3. Is there an attempt to draw on student background knowledge and interests? Are students given choices?

Smith (1983) has explained that we do not learn if we are confused or bored. When school topics do not relate to students' lives, they may find themselves either confused or bored. Since much of the standard school curriculum is geared to the life experiences of mainstream students, English language learners may find making connections between what they are studying and what they already know difficult. Further, when students can't understand the language of instruction, they may become frustrated.

On the other hand, when students receive comprehensible input (Krashen 1982) and when they can link school subjects with their life experiences, they learn. The best way to make input comprehensible is through use of a lesson preview and review in the first language. Further, teachers who provide students with choices in the questions they investigate, create greater possibilities of students' connecting their experiences outside school with their studies in school. This approach allows all students to build on the knowledge and concepts they bring to school.

#### 4. Is the content meaningful? Does it serve a purpose for the learners?

Too often instruction for English learners is organized around a set of decontextualized skills. The goal of these exercises is to have students learn rules and practice language until it is automatic. However, these activities do not involve learners in real problem solving nor are they pleasurable. Skill building does not foster literacy or promote cognitive, academic, or language development. Such instruction is not meaningful to second language students, nor does it serve their immediate purposes.

In contrast, when students engage with significant questions that they have helped to pose, they realize that knowledge from different curricular areas - language arts, social studies, science, math, and the arts is essential for solving their problems. At that point, academic content is meaningful because it serves a purpose for students.

#### 5. Do students have opportunities to work collaboratively?

Holt (1993) has shown clearly the benefits of collaboration for language minority students. These benefits are both cognitive and affective. Smith (1983) points out that language acquisition is a social activity. Students develop language in authentic social contexts as they help each other make sense of content and concepts. In the process of collaborating while reading and discussing authentic literature, writing responses and authoring their own books, and investigating interesting questions and reporting their findings, students develop the academic language they need to expand their knowledge of academic content areas.

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6. Do students read and write as well as speak and listen during their learning experiences?

Second language learners acquire language through all four modes. They should be encouraged to read and write as well as speak and listen from the beginning of their experiences with English. Research has shown that many second language learners may read or write before they speak and that comprehension is often enriched by literacy experiences (Freeman and Freeman 1998; Hudelson 1984). Development of literacy is crucial for academic success, and teachers shouldn't delay reading and writing for second language students.

7. Are students' primary languages and cultures valued, supported, and developed?

Students who fully develop their primary language acquire a second language more quickly. In addition, both academic concepts and knowledge of literacy are most easily learned in the primary language. Cummins (1981) has shown that a common proficiency underlies languages. Because of this common underlying proficiency, knowledge developed in the primary language transfers to a second language. Further, bilingualism enriches the individual and the community. Even when teachers are not able to provide instruction in all their students' primary languages, they can find ways to support those languages and can also involve students in activities to explore the cultures of all the students in the classroom (Freeman and Freeman 1994).

8. Are students involved in activities that build their self-esteem and provide them with opportunities to succeed?

When teachers have faith in their students and the students themselves believe they can learn, these high expectations lead to academic success (Collier 1995; Goodman 1991).

The questions we present here in the checklist are intended as a guide for assessing classroom practice. We believe that when teachers can answer "yes" to most of these questions as they reflect on lessons or units, they are providing effective instruction for all their students, including their English language learners. In the following section we provide a specific example of teaching that follows the first item on the Checklist: "Is curriculum organized around "big" questions?"

### **America Theme**

A number of writers have argued that students of all ages need to be engaged in the investigation of important issues. Clark (1988) for example, points out that curriculum should involve students "in some of the significant issues of life" and therefore encourages teachers to center their curriculum on "questions worth arguing about" (p. 29). He suggests questions for different grade levels such as "How am I a member of many families?" (K1); "What are the patterns that make communities work?" (2-3); "How do humans and culture evolve and change?" (4-5); and "How does one live responsibly as a member of the global village?" (6-8).

Sizer (1990) draws on this same idea by suggesting that organizing around "Essential Questions" leads to "engaging and effective curricula." In U.S. history, for example, teachers might begin with broad questions such as "Who is American?" "Who should stay?" "Who should stay out?" "Whose country is it anyway?" Teachers at all grade levels could involve students in answering these questions. Often, reading a piece of quality literature is a good way to begin.

To launch a discussion of "Who is American?" a teacher might begin by reading to the class *America, My Land, Your Land, Our Land* (Nikola-Lisa, 1997). This innovative book consists of a series of illustrations that evoke the inherent contrasts in America. These include "farm land, wood land," "young land, old land" "fast land, slow land," and "rich land, poor land" among others. Each two-page spread is illustrated by a different artist, and the artists use different techniques and media to create their particular contrasting pair. The artists are notable in that all of them are from linguistic or ethnic minority groups within the United States. *America* is an excellent book to use in an ESL class for students of any grade level. The text is limited, and the illustrations bring out contrasts worth talking about. In fact, on the cover of the book under the large title, "America" is a picture of the United States, and several teachers we have worked with have raised an important big question "Why do people from the United States call themselves Americans?" "What about people from Canada, Mexico, and Central or South America?"

Another book teachers could use to develop the question, "Who is American?" is *Who Belongs Here? An American Story* (Knight, 1993). *Who Belongs Here?* is the story of a Cambodian refugee, Nary, who comes from a refugee camp in Thailand to live with relatives in the United States. Nary thinks the U.S. is a wonderful place until he goes to school. There classmates harass him, telling him to "get on the boat and go back home." Fortunately, Nary's teacher is sensitive to his problems. With Nary, she plans a lesson to help all the students begin to understand how hard it is to be a refugee in a country where you don't speak the language. During social studies, some students pretend to be refugees. They have to convince non-English-speaking guards that they are seeking asylum and that they need food. This lesson helps sensitize other students to the plight of refugees like Nary.

Knight's book poses some big questions. She asks, "What if everyone who now lives in the U.S. but whose ancestors came from another country was forced to return to his or her homeland? What if everyone who lives in the U.S. was told to leave? Who would be left?"

*Who Belongs Here?* is a unique book, as well, because it contains both fiction and non-fiction. The top section of each page carries the story of Nary coming to the United States and adjusting to America. The bottom section, printed in italics, contains relevant historical information. For example, on one page, at the top, the story tells how Nary admires Dith Pran, who has traveled throughout the United States to tell people about the terrible events that took place in the killing fields of Cambodia. The bottom of that same page tells how Dolores Huerta has traveled around the U.S. giving talks about the plight of farm laborers. The combination of fiction and non-fiction in this book makes it ideal for a language arts-social studies block class. This juxtaposition of actual historical events and people with the fictional narrative emphasizes the relevance of Knight's big question, "Who belongs here?"

The big question, "Who belongs here?" is also raised in Luis Rodríguez' (1997) poignant story *América is her Name*. This somewhat longer piece of children's literature would be appropriate for older students who are more proficient readers. It is also available in Spanish, *La llaman América*. The Spanish version could be used as a preview and review for the English text.

Rodríguez writes of a young Mixteca girl named América living in a violent Chicago barrio. Her father has been laid off from his factory work and her uncle, who lives with them, is always drinking. América dreams of her life in rural Oaxaca as she sits silently in the back of her ESL class. She has overheard her teacher saying to another teacher that América is illegal. She thinks to herself, "How can a girl called América not belong in America?"

Then one day, Mr. Aponte, a Puerto Rican poet visits her class. He asks in Spanish if anyone can recite a poem, and América volunteers. This girl, who is silent in an English-only setting speaks out clearly when encouraged to use her first language, and her classmates applaud. Mr. Aponte then has the children begin to write poems in both Spanish and English. Despite initial resistance from her family, and particularly from her father, who doesn't see how poetry will help to pay their bills, América continues to write and her efforts help unite her family.

Many English language learners can identify with the girl in this story. She faces many of the problems other immigrants face as they leave one world for another. In *América is her Name* Rodríguez shows how one child uses her writing to cope with the many difficulties she and her family face.

A fourth book that raises big questions around the America theme is *Grandfather's Journey* (Say, 1993). The narrator is a young boy who tells how his grandfather left his native Japan to come to America. The grandfather travels all over this vast country before settling in San Francisco. He returns to Japan to marry his childhood sweetheart and then brings her back to live in San Francisco. They have a daughter. When she is nearly grown, the grandfather starts thinking about his old friends and the rivers and mountains of Japan. He takes his family back to Japan. His daughter marries and has a son of her own, the narrator. The family plans to return to California, but the war breaks out and the grandfather never can return. When the narrator grows up, he is able to travel the U.S. as his grandfather did. He also falls in love with California and lives there, marries, and has a daughter of his own. But he misses his old friends and the mountains and rivers of Japan. As he thinks about his life, he comments, "The funny thing is, the moment I am in one country, I am homesick for the other."

*Grandfather's Journey*, which is also available in Spanish (Say, 1997) raises a number of important questions. The central question, and one that many second language students would find relevant is "Can bilingual, bicultural people ever be completely happy as they try to live between worlds?" While there are clear benefits of being bilingual and bicultural, there are also difficulties, and it is important for students to talk, read, and write about questions such as this one.

Organizing curriculum around big questions allows teachers to engage students in significant content study no matter what the students' language proficiency or academic background might be. With a broad questions such as "Who is American?" a teacher can use a range of reading materials and can allow students to respond in various ways. Students with more limited English proficiency could illustrate and label a contrast similar to those in the *America* book. Several students could combine their work to create their own book. Further, they could use the pages as a basis for oral presentations to classmates.

More proficient students might research their own family history to find out whether any of their family members, like the characters in *Grandfather's Journey*, have traveled between cultures. They could conduct interviews and write up the results as biography, or they

could use details from their family histories to create a fictional account, as Alan Say, author of *Grandfather's Journey*, did.

Some students might enjoy listening to the works of famous poets, learning to recite poetry, and then writing their own poems as the main character does in *América is her Name*. Often students with more limited English proficiency find it easier to move into English writing with short poems rather than stories or reports. They can illustrate their poems and read them to classmates and family members.

Other students might want to combine the story of a refugee coming to America with historical data on early immigrants and on the activities of immigrant groups in the United States to create a book, following the pattern that Knight develops in *Who Belongs Here?* This would provide students with a good opportunity to combine language arts with social studies.

### Conclusion

Effective teachers engage students in investigating big questions, questions that matter to the students and to the society they are a part of. As students attempt to find answers to big questions, they can develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing proficiencies in both English and in their primary language. In this process they will develop cognitive, linguistic, and academic skills and abilities in the language or languages that they use.

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...Among the powerful oral language practices that contribute to the acquisition of pre-reading skills is the telling and retelling of stories.

## Family Storytelling: Involving Caregivers in Promoting Successful Early Language and Literacy Development

Catherine Gutierrez-Gomez

There is increasing evidence that reinforces the belief that having strong oral experiences prior to entering school is one of the predictors for later success in literacy learning (Perez, 1998; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Routman, 1991). Children that come from homes where families have nurtured the development of oral language acquire pre-reading knowledge and skills, such as story comprehension and understanding story structure (Routman, 1991; Morrow, 1985, 1993), have a conceptual knowledge of the sound and meaning of language and have more extensive vocabularies (Heath, 1985). Among the powerful oral language practices that contribute to the acquisition of these pre-reading skills is the telling and retelling of stories.

Stories entertain and, therefore, engage and motivate learners. Instructionally, they are useful to teach a lesson, as well as to recount a historical event, as practice for the art of public speaking, to prompt memories of special people, times and place. It appears, however, that because of our changing world, we are getting further and further away from these practices. There is not much time for sharing stories of the day's events because we live in such a fast-paced, high-tech, commercialized world, where we are constantly on the run. Nevertheless, educators need to promote family storytelling as a mechanism for building strong oral experiences that will lead to successful early literacy development.

Although families may find it difficult to plan for stories at the beginning, instituting a regular family storytelling time can have valuable educational benefits for all family members; not the least of which is spending quality time together. Finding a time when everyone is available will probably be the greatest challenge given today's busy schedules at work and school. Possibly, with a little extra planning and effort, the family can enjoy a meal together and start a tradition of sharing dinnertime stories. People like to hear stories and many people like to tell stories. Stories can be drawn from real life experiences, the pattern of traditional stories, or they can be original creations. There are endless possibilities. Planning may run more smoothly if all family members are included in the planning.

It is probably wise to reach a consensus on a few ground rules to help set the stage for storytelling. For example, each family member

can take a turn, but no one should be pressured to tell or share a story. One recommended rule is, practice courtesy and kindness when listening to someone else's story. Story topics can be whatever the storyteller decides, though brainstorming story titles or themes can be fun in itself and provide some new or creative ideas.

Adults can set the example for young children by beginning with a story about an actual childhood experience from their past. Such stories are appealing to children who seem to find genuine humor in imagining adults as children. Include stories that children will relate to, for example, children enjoy listening to other people's scary experiences or embarrassing situations. They also like to listen to real or make-believe tales of bravery and adventure-filled accounts with endless twists. Including a variety of stories will encourage children to explore a diversity of story possibilities.

Storytellers offer some suggestions that will enhance the storytelling experience for both the narrator and those listening (Collins & Cooper, 1997). First, practice using animation and voice inflections to capture the audience's attention. It may seem a little awkward at the beginning, but with each storytelling event, the storyteller gains confidence and becomes increasingly comfortable with the storytelling experience. Sometimes adding a prop will help ease the storyteller's anxiety, this can be as simple as using a hat, a mask or costume jewelry or as involved as the storyteller chooses. With some stories, adding a particular type of background music will provide an added touch. For example, just the right sounding organ music could enhance a scary tale. Finally, stay focused on the benefits to be gained from the family storytelling experience and explore different ideas that will keep everyone interested and motivated.

### **Storytelling as a Tool in Teaching English as a Second Language**

In many cultures all around the world storytelling has been used as a means for preserving cultural beliefs and values, practicing oratory skills, and as an educational tool for young and old alike. When storytelling is incorporated into modern classrooms the expected outcomes generally focus on promoting student skills in listening, reading and comprehension. For students learning English as a second language the emphasis should be on listening and comprehension as students acquire English proficiency. Storytelling can be a valuable tool for teaching English to second language learners. This is particularly the case when the storytelling approach is structured to address students' unique needs.

Storytelling as an educational tool with all students, especially ESL students, can be quite successful if the technique is used to develop the students' skills for listening comprehension. According to Morley (1999) in the second language field, aural comprehension as a skill in its own right was not, until recently, considered significant to instruction. Furthermore, Morley acknowledges that proficiency in listening comprehension, for second language learners, is crucial toward acquiring competency in the second language. A range of auditory in-school and out-of-school activities are recommended to emphasize listening, "stretch" time suggesting that more focused time needs to be devoted to developing listening comprehension skills (Morley, 1999). In addition to other types of activities, a variety of story forms, including read-along and sing-along stories are recommended. Traditional stories or family stories are also considered appropriate.

Family storytelling events have profound educational benefits for all children and are especially suited to supporting the home language

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while promoting proficiency in the second language. Additionally, it seems only natural that if family storytelling events occur in the home, that the language of preference would be the home language. However, it is a widely held misconception that continued development of proficiency in the home language as children begin school, necessitates that formal schooling and/or reading instruction also take place in the home language. (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; Snow & Tabors, 1993). Although formal schooling will often be set in a second language, failure to also support the child's evolving literacy in the home language can place the student at risk of reading difficulties throughout a child's educational experience. (Perez 1998; Routman, 1991, Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

Strong family involvement is needed to support the child's ongoing literacy in the home language and help the child with transitions to storytelling. Involving the caretakers of the child's home environment is a particularly powerful way to support the child's ongoing improvements in both first and second language proficiency. The following story starters are suggested to help families get started in incorporating family storytelling events:

1. When I was \_\_\_ years old, I loved to play \_\_\_ ...
2. When I was little, I loved to eat \_\_\_ , but one day...
3. One of the most embarrassing things that ever happened to me was...
4. My first crush happened when...
5. The best dream I can remember was...
6. The scariest time in my life was...
7. My favorite family holiday celebration was when...
8. A fortuneteller told me that ten years from now I am going to...
9. In my last life I think I must have been a \_\_\_ , because...
10. In my next life I hope to come back as a \_\_\_ , then I will...
11. The best story my grandmother/grandfather told me was about...
12. When I was little I thought babies came from \_\_\_ , then one day...
13. One of the most wonderful trips I ever took was...
14. One of the most interesting characters I have ever met...
15. I may or may not believe in ghosts, but one time...
16. This is the story about when \_\_\_ came to America...
17. This is the story about how your grandparents met...
18. This is the story about how your parents met...
19. This is what happened on the day \_\_\_ was born...
20. This is the story about when you were born...

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...To be effective in a climate of increasing diversity and practice complexity, professional development should be ongoing, dynamic, theory/research driven, based in reflective practice, and relevant to practitioner needs.

## Preparing Today's Teachers for Tomorrow's Children

Socorro Herrera and Robert Fanning

Today's social reality requires that educators throughout the United States face the challenges of teaching and preparing culturally and linguistically diverse students in the classroom. School districts which were never before required to address the many nuances of diversity, from school systems in Western states like Utah, to those in Midwestern states like Kansas, to Appalachian districts in states like Kentucky, often find themselves unprepared for these new challenges. Educators in these and similar systems now find that the increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse [CLD] students in the classrooms are an actuality which they must address, and address quickly. Such diversity among districts is an emergent social reality which, according to ten or more years of demographic analyses and projections, will not pass in the foreseeable future (NCES, 1999).

It is imperative that school leaders take immediate and proactive steps to begin the process of better preparing teachers, site-based administrators, and school staff to work successfully with these transforming student populations. Due to changes in staffing patterns at a local processing plant, at least one school district of less than 1000 students in Kansas went from zero language learning students in May of 1997 to 55 second language learners in August of the same year (Kansas Department of Education, 1999). Such contingencies are fast becoming less the exception than the norm.

In his fourth annual State of American Education Address, United States [US] Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley (1997), expressed concern about the adequate preparation of teachers for increasing classroom diversity:

The entire context of American Education is changing. We need teachers skilled in using computers as a powerful tool and many more teachers well versed in teaching English as a Second Language. Our teachers need to be prepared to teach all of America's children— the gifted and the talented, our many new immigrants, the college bound achiever and the disabled child who is learning so much more because he or she is now included [italized emphasis added].

Paradoxically, however, as the number of students with diverse learning needs has increased, the number of teachers properly prepared to

address the differential learning needs of CLD students has remained quite limited.

Dr. Riley, in his sixth address to the U.S. House of Representatives (1999), has also indicated that the population of CLD students is the fastest growing in the nation. His evidence comes from annual increases in numbers reported by state educational agencies for the fifty states. These data attest to the fact that the numbers of CLD students have increased 67 percent between the 1990-91 and 1996-97 school years.

This significant shift in CLD student numbers and the diversities they represent makes it arduous for schools to provide appropriate programs and services for all students. Further compounding the problem, is the increasingly disconcerting reality that while almost 30 percent of the U.S. student population is comprised of CLD students; yet, less than 13 percent of our teachers come from the same ethnic and linguistic groups (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 1997a). Additionally, Secretary Riley has cited significant barriers to fostering an adequate pool of such teachers, including: (1) a generalized failure to recruit sufficient numbers of CLD students into the teaching profession and retain them to practice, and (2) the failure of institutions of higher education to properly prepare teachers for the diverse cultural and linguistic realities of today's classroom.

Setting high expectations for educators necessary to meet the differential, educational needs of all American children, President Clinton wishes to hold schools accountable for ensuring that CLD students can speak and read English after three consecutive years in our schools. Whereas, it is schools and school systems which must demonstrate the insight necessary to appropriately continue language transition support for students until they are proficient in English and content-area classrooms where English is the medium of instruction.

The National Commission on Teaching (NCTAF, 1997b) estimates that increased student enrollment and teachers' retirements are creating a situation, wherein, two million new teachers will be required in America's schools in the next decade. The following relevant statistics are taken from the NCTAF, *Fact Sheet: On Teaching in America*:

- Seventy-five percent of urban school districts admit hiring teachers without proper qualifications. About one fourth of newly hired teachers lack the proper qualifications for the job.
- More than 12 percent of all newly hired teachers have no training at all. Fifteen percent enter the classroom not having met state standards for professional practice.
- Fifty-six percent of secondary physical science teachers and 27 percent of mathematics teachers do not have backgrounds in those fields.
- Two out of every five adults providing students with bilingual education are not teachers, but *teacher aides* (NCTAF, 1997b, pp. 2-5).

Responding to the NCTAF report and others like it, President Clinton has called on our society to ensure that a talented, dedicated, and well prepared teacher provide instruction in every American classroom. To meet this call, U.S. school districts must dramatically change the way in which they recruit, professionally develop, and functionally support teachers as lifelong learners and as professionals. It is indeed alarming that 22 percent of all new teachers leave the profession within

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the first three years, often from lack of support, and sometimes, from a *sink or swim approach* to the first years of teaching practice (NCTAF, 1997a). If we are to achieve broad educational goals, such as those in which we espouse that *all* students will meet or exceed rigorous state standards, local districts must insist on equally high standards for teacher support and long-term, professional development. Moreover, these local districts must abide by, not just the standards, but the policies, infrastructures, and commitments necessary to the attainment of those standards which are espoused.

Federally funded programs are *not* the *answer* to the needs of CLD students and their teachers, but they are often a pragmatic beginning for genuine commitments among school systems to appropriate preparedness for diversity. Such federal programs variously target the particular needs of CLD students, especially those who are migrant or who come from low-income families. Tragically, however, some of these programs perpetuate a perception that funding should be focused on remediation efforts in the schools. As classrooms across the country become increasingly diverse on a daily basis, teachers, administrators, and staff must become more inclusive in their practices. Each of these professionals must acquire the knowledge base, practice skills, and competencies essential to genuine outcome impacts for these students. Just as student backgrounds and needs are changing, so must instruction, content, leadership, professional development, and policy.

For example, in the State of Kansas, the State Board of Education has determined that each school and district will: (1) implement and practice principles and procedures of effective schools; (2) work collaboratively with its community to create a learning community; (3) demonstrate effective staff development; and (4) create opportunities in academic and applied situations which foster a high level of mastery of essential skills of practice, effective communications skills, complex thinking in academic and applied situations, and the characteristics necessary work effectively in both independent and group situations. These are potentially powerful standards for coping with rapidly changing classroom diversity. However, the realization of that potential is likely to be a function of district capability in appropriately developing and supporting school and district educators to achieve such standards *in practice*.

Incorporating the needs of all students into the learning environment which is created in today's classrooms is admittedly a daunting task. School officials often complain that newly graduated teachers come unprepared for the reality of diverse classrooms. From classroom management, to instructional methodologies, to appropriate competence for cultural and linguistic diversity in practice, few teachers possess the knowledge to be successful with today's students (Mazarella, 1999). Changing this situation will, for the majority, of teachers who will practice in the new century, necessitate genuine commitments among local districts to improved, long-term, professional development.

Professional development programs can provide meaningful assistance to teachers but frequently offer only hints or lists of techniques of limited applicability. Much of what is offered as professional development is flawed for a number of reasons, including: (1) it fails to meet teachers' needs; (2) it is short-term, infrequent, and sometimes mandated by administrators who often do not participate themselves, and (3) it provides few opportunities for practice, feedback, and follow-up (Green & del Bosque, 1994; Ostermann & Kottkamp, 1993; Routman, 1996).

To be effective in a climate of increasing diversity and practice complexity, professional development should be ongoing, dynamic, theory/research driven, based in reflective practice, and interesting/relevant to practitioner needs (Ostermann & Kottkamp, 1993; Routman, 1996). As well articulated by Fullan and Miles: "The ultimate goal of professional development activities is changing the culture of learning for both adults and students so that engagement and betterment is a way of life in schools" (1991, p. 41).

Effective professional development activities engage teachers and other educators in at least a two-part learning process. At one level, educators need to see themselves as involved learners who are discovering how *all* students learn. On a related plane, educators need to reflect on the ways in which they can create and nurture optimal learning environments which enhance academic achievement for *all* students. Goldenberg & Gallimore (1997) have written: "We must say good-bye to quick fix workshops and say hello to staff development that provides intellectual stimulation and opportunities to develop new knowledge and skill" (p. 71). Increasingly, today's professional development must also target and develop educators' capacities for critical thinking about the complexities of practice and reflection on the many assumptions that are inherent in cross-cultural practice with CLD students; assumptions which are not necessarily valid, nor likely to increase student achievement.

A fundamental lesson learned in the past two decades or more of school reform efforts is that much more time is required for professional development than is presently allocated. In fact, *time* has emerged as the key issue of most school reform analyses appearing in the last decade (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1997). Currently, teachers' and administrators' professional development often focuses on a multiplicity of separate components, including: implementation to target educational standards, guidelines for working with diverse populations, changing forms and purposes of student assessment, enhancing professional collaboration on goals, and critically revising existing curriculums. Inevitably, districts must begin to prioritize professional development as a critical budgetary item. Twenty-first century education will demand that educators receive enhanced opportunities to critically examine, reflect on, develop, and collaboratively master, new perspectives on, and approaches to, diverse student populations (Corcoran, 1995).

Shanker has noted that employees of the Saturn automobile company spend five percent (92 hours/year) of their work time in learning (1993). Shanker has written:

"Imagine what a training program like this would do for people trying to restructure their schools. Or, to put it another way, imagine trying to change things as basic as the culture of the school with a couple of days of in-service training a year and some hours stolen from class preparation periods. If it takes 600 courses (the Saturn training group offers nearly 600 different courses and 92 hours a year per employee to make a better automobile), it will take that and more to make better schools. If we are not willing to commit ourselves to that kind of effort, we are not going to get what we want (1993, p. 11).

Shanker's comments demonstrably point to the importance of *time* commitments where both effectiveness and change are concerned. His remarks also suggest something of the complexity involved in school restructuring efforts.

Although professional development will serve as a vital linchpin in the changes needed to better prepare staff and schools for complex diversity, a comprehensive system of interventions and support structures is also essential where high standards of student achievement are the appropriate goal of restructuring efforts. For CLD students, the design of a seamless intervention system that is broad enough to include all students but sufficiently specific to address individual needs is critical.

To this end, Bridges (1993), in his examination of the *character of organizations*, has argued that a systems thinking approach allows us to focus on what are the key variables in such an intervention system, while also recognizing the dynamic complexity among them. For Bridges, examining such a system over time enables us to see patterns more clearly and better understand how to change them toward increased efficacy. For example, a systems perspective enables us to recognize the pitfalls of existing, often fragmented, interventions for CLD students; a recognition that can break the cycle of dependence while strengthening classroom instruction for these and other students. Already many of our schools have begun to identify relevant variables that break this cycle and foster improved school/classroom services for *all* students. Such variables include, but are not limited to the degree of collaboration/collegiality fostered by educators' professional development and the potential of peer-to-peer learning that is cooperative and experiential. Thus, co-teaching and multi-aging programs are increasingly popular practices offering another glimpse of how systems thinking can empower and coordinate effective change. To improve instruction, some schools offer integrated classes co-taught by special educators, bilingual personnel, support staff and classroom teachers. Co-teaching and multi-aging allow educators to create learning environments which are synergistic and appropriately address the developmental levels and differential needs of *all* students. Such practices can prove especially effective with CLD students whose favored learning styles are not necessarily congruent with those targeted by traditional instruction.

In the face of complex student diversity, school districts cannot effectively achieve the goals of reform initiatives through implementation practices that retain a dependence on detached, parallel instructional supports grounded in pull-out services, remedial curriculums, and a deficit (to be overcome) perspective on second language learning. Through a broader systems perspective, it is possible to design more appropriate interventions which integrate, collaborate, and maximize resources in improving learning outcomes for all students.

Given the increasing complexity of classrooms, and especially school environments, a site-based determination of appropriate resource allocations often holds the greatest promise for both improved instructional effectiveness and enhanced student achievement. A site-based approach to student diversity, especially language diversity among students, typically demands significant redefinitions of roles, responsibilities, and duties for administrative, instructional, and support personnel. Under this developing system, schools are expected to determine what resources at what levels are appropriate and necessary to meet the needs of all students within the school. To be effective, this process must unfold in such a manner as to assure appropriate educational protections for all. Necessarily, high levels of collaboration, reflection, critical thinking, and collegiality are essential to effectiveness. Schools must be open to creative and unique ways of meeting the needs of all students; many of which have been detailed by Miramontes, Commins, and Nadeau (1998); especially, where the

needs of large numbers of CLD students must be addressed by the process. As they reiterate, however, openness to creativity and flexibility is lost upon a site which fails to collaborate both inside and outside the school, including collaboration with parents and the school's community.

### Conclusion

Effectively meeting the challenge of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity among classroom student populations is a complex but manageable task. A variety of relevant concerns must be addressed and assessed at the local level. At minimum, and perhaps most important, is an assessment of the degree to which local educators are appropriately prepared to maximize academic achievement among CLD students; an increasingly significant variable in school effectiveness. Is their professional development consistent with what we know about appropriate preparedness for complex practice? Has adequate time and follow-up been devoted to this concern? Do the professional development models/approaches utilized foster ongoing collaboration, reflectivity, critical thinking, and collegiality?

We must also be concerned with the extent to which sites within the district need to be restructured for diversity? Is an adequate support structure available to professionally developed, school educators? On what basis are resources allocated and is it effective for this site and its student population? Does school infrastructure and leadership empower collaboration, accountability, and collegiality? Have site-based management models been considered to enhance specificity?

Finally, are the educational services provided to CLD students appropriate to their differential student backgrounds and learning needs? Is content relevant and authentic? Is instruction targeted to differential learning needs? Are innovative approaches such as multi-aging, cooperative learning, and experiential models enabled?

We maintain that effectiveness and professionalism are necessarily a function of context. On the one hand, we have offered some relevant questions to consider when assessing the context of local education. On the other hand, in closing, we would like to offer some fundamental assumptions to keep in mind when considering the more interactive context of educational efforts at the classroom, school, and/or district levels:

- We have a responsibility to educate *all* students and assist them in meeting the benchmarks of our local and state outcome measures.
- The educational planning process for all students must reflect the diversity of student populations and recognize the need for planning which addresses site-specific differences among such populations.
- In evaluating, redefining, and refining current service delivery, alternatives considered should be based not on labels and deficit perceptions regarding students, but on identified teaching and learning needs.
- Ongoing research and theory building will, from time to time, suggest alternative interventions (such as cooperative learning, team teaching, and multi-aging) as more or less effective with certain student populations. Open-mindedness and perspective-taking are critical to the appropriate consideration and evaluation of such alternatives.
- The primary purpose of a particular student's evaluation must not be eligibility for service or classification for

labeling. Instead, the appropriate purpose must be to determine the student's educational strengths and needs, while critically evaluating possible interventions which maximize the potential for student achievement. Information collected for this purpose must be holistic, culturally-sensitive, and constructive in order to purposively assist teachers, administrators, parents, support personnel, and applicable community service agencies in setting appropriate educational goals for the student. Such goals must reflect high expectations. Where CLD students are concerned, such information should account for the student's proficiency in his/her native language as a basis for second language development patterns and expectations.

- Long-term, site-specific, reflective, and collaborative professional development for school leaders, teachers, and support personnel is essential to success in the school's efforts to meet the many challenges of complex diversity. Often appropriate professional development is well grounded in site-specific determinations of need.
- Site-based management holds the potential for focused and targeted success in addressing the differential needs of fast changing student populations. Such models maximize resource allocation, foster collaboration, encourage creativity, and empower collegiality.

For many years a prevailing model for the education of CLD students has been to *dumb-down* the curriculum, subdivide and *remediate* skill inadequacies, and compensate for perceived *deficiencies* in culture and language. Through time, cross-cultural interaction, and research, we have learned that there is, instead, much that these students already bring to the school. Yes it is different, it may sometimes seem foreign, it is often much harder to surface and understand. Yet, these students do bring rich experiential and cultural backgrounds to the learning setting, about which others may learn and benefit. These students often bring another language, through which they are able, if asked, to articulate what is often a considerable knowledge and skills base which may be utilized as a basis for planning instruction. Indeed, instead of *dumbing down* for these students, we might just be very surprised to learn the benefits of new understandings and new approaches which *build up* to, enhanced student motivation and confidence, elaboration upon the student's existing knowledge and language base, appropriate and focused instruction, authentic and alternative assessments, and the many unrealized student outcomes which are possible with empathy.

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...Providing second language learners with an opportunity to act as inquirers in the creation of a knowledge base about literacy learning can influence them to become critical thinkers about their own reading development.

## Plática as Critical Instruction: Talking with Bilingual Students About Their Reading

Leila Flores-Dueñas

*"Vamos a platicar"... Plática to most Spanish-speakers is talk, but not just any talk, it's talk about sharing inner truths, life's challenges and achievements, and more importantly, to "catch-up" with someone you deeply care about. This special type of talk is common among close friends and family members of Latina(os) communities. Throughout my teaching experiences, and life in general, I have utilized this discursive form of interaction to gain more personal meaning from conversations with those I share my life with.*

Throughout the time that I taught in elementary schools, I observed how countless bilingual learners were exited from language programs into all-English speaking classrooms as early as the 2nd grade. Once these students were exited or "transitioned" into the regular classroom, I noticed that they received little (if any) language support or cultural understanding to help them "connect" with what they were reading or what was being communicated in the classroom, with their prior experience. What would become of these students? What became of my own students? Did they eventually contribute to the number of Hispanics that made up the 60-65% dropout rate in our *barrio's* middle school where they would be going? The names and faces of the many *Mexicano* children I worked with as an elementary teacher often fade in and out of my mind, "Rosana, José, Laura, Andrés, Marta, Violeta" leaving me with wondering about whether they "made it" or not. With these students in mind, I have focused the current study on the personal stories or narratives that Mexican American bilingual learners can contribute to our understanding about their experiences with reading in English. It is my hope that by listening to their voices, educators can learn how to better serve these children.

### Listening to Student Voices

One way to improve school policies and practices that can affect the educational experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse students is by listening to student voices (Nieto, 1994). It is within the qualitative paradigm that we, as researchers and as educators, can underscore the significance of providing a space for the voice of individuals who would otherwise be ignored or whose social condition could be seriously misunderstood (McElroy-Johnson, 1993).

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Rather than continuing with the common practice of viewing students as the "beneficiaries of change," educators can learn from students when they become actors or "participants" in the change process of structural reform or instructional practice (Fullan, 1991, p. 170). To listen to these voices, however, researchers must see value in what these students can communicate about their experiences.

If we, as educators, can detach ourselves from the limited way that we have been taught to see our children (often as objects to be seen and not heard), and if we can begin to allow students to go beyond *safe* school talk, we can, perhaps, begin to provide opportunities for students to construct and/or reconstruct the way they see themselves as learners. Seeking such opportunities can also provide an avenue for using language and self-expression as a means of building on the literacy realities of our many culturally and linguistically diverse students. Drawing on the interplay between language, self-expression, and the construction of reality, Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) eloquently states:

Language derives its importance precisely from the fact that it is both learned and used in association with other people. There is a dialectic relationship between language and reality (both internal and external reality): each influences the other. Language plays an important part in shaping reality, since it provides us with categories for conceptualizing it. But reality in its turn also molds language, so that it corresponds to the need to express what people want to express. Language is in itself a world mediating between the individual and external circumstances (p.2).

Having the opportunity to actively construct how they experience language and literacy learning, culturally and linguistically diverse students can, not only, inform instructional practice, but they can also personally benefit from their own insight about themselves and their literacy development (SooHoo, 1993). The current research study assumed that the participants' voices were primary (in terms of explaining their experiences) and that their narratives about their lives were valid. It also assumed that the participants' contributions could help to extend a knowledge base that is concerned with helping language minority students in reading development. In order to inform future practice in the area of reading and to break down the image of students as merely beneficiaries of educational change, I worked to listen to and highlight what these students had to say about their personal experiences with reading texts in English.

In this study, I use the term "voice" as a theoretical construct to account for the students' contributions to this research endeavor. Drawing on McElroy-Johnson's (1993) ideas about the topic, I use the notion of *voice* as...

...a strong sense of identity within the individual, an ability to express personal point of view, and a sense of personal well being that allows a student to respond to and become engaged with the material being studied... Voice, in this sense is having a place within the academic setting... Voice is identity, a sense of self, a sense of relationship to others, and a sense of purpose. Voice is power- power to express ideas and convictions, power to direct and shape an individual life towards a productive and positive fulfillment for self, family, community, nation, and the world. (p. 85-86).

### Plática in Small Literature Group Discussions

One way to provide students with a space for talking about their literacy learning is by holding small literature group discussions that allow for *plática* or honest talk to take place. Accomplishing this kind of talk is not easy for it goes beyond Spiegel's (1996) child-centered classroom community, where the teacher plays the role of facilitator to ensure that the group's members can build on each other's interpretations of the text. *Plática* also goes beyond Eeds and Wells (1989) view of the teacher that acts as a collaborating participant who is responsible for finding *teachable moments*. A collaborator who must also establish an open atmosphere that encourages all students to participate in the discussion. While I agree that these strategies are helpful to all students, I would argue that they do little for those students who come to each small literature group discussion with three perceived strikes against them. For second language learners of color, these strikes are notable: (1) their cultural and linguistic heritage is rarely valued in the books they read, (2) they do not have the middle-class European American world view that is required to answer questions after a typical story *correctly*, and (3) they often experience gaps in their learning due to lack of access to cultural knowledge or vocabulary. What I am suggesting here is that working with Mexican American bilingual students, requires much more from teachers than the mere formation of small groups. Rather, it obligates teachers to deconstruct the various deficits that society lays upon these children. In other words, discussions must be extended to include *plática* about issues of power, culture, and language as they surface in literature reading.

### Trust and Small Literature Group Discussions with Bilingual Students

In teacher-led, small-group discussions with Mexican American second language learners, the role of the teacher or facilitator must be carefully considered. Critical to the success of these reader response groups is trust: "teacher trust of student, student trust of teacher, student trust of students, and student trust of self" (Spiegel, 1996, p.333). While Spiegel uses the idea of trust as a focus of planning for small literature group discussions, I take this idea one step further by applying the notion of trust in small-group literature discussions to working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. While I have found Spiegel's (1996) work on trust in reader response groups to be helpful in providing information about how to go about planning for such literature groups (i.e. whether to practice or not, use prompts or not, use authentic teacher questions, choices in literature selection, and topics for discussion), the idea of trust can be extended to include the importance of social, cultural, and linguistic knowledge on the part of the teacher about her or his second language learners. Within this idea of trust in response to literature and literacy learning groups is an understanding of power (Alton-Lee, Nuthall, & Patrick, 1993), which can affect the roles that individuals take on in these groups. Also important to the idea of trust is an understanding of the importance of tapping *students' funds of knowledge* (Moll, 1992).

Understanding trust and power relationships is important since the classroom is often not a neutral ground for all students. In other words, some students have more power in classroom interactions than others. Alton-Lee et al., (1993) explain that this difference in power can be seen as a reflection of the interactions that take place

between people or groups in our larger society. Therefore, it follows that some students, like language minority students, have less power than others in the classroom (i.e. fluent English speakers from the dominant cultural group) and are less likely to participate in discussions about literature. Learning environments are possible wherein language minority students trust that the power they hold is not questioned, as in the book club discussions described in the Goatley, Brock, Raphael study (1994) of diverse students. Where such environments are nurtured, culturally and linguistically diverse children like Mei (a Vietnamese immigrant student in Goatley's study) are empowered to take on the role of leader, even though they often may not in regular classroom discussions.

As mentioned, Mei is a case in point of how small-group literature discussions can encourage language minority students to participate in discourse about texts. However, this is not always the case for the many second language learners who may be reluctant to participate in literature discussions or who rarely have the opportunities to participate in small literature group discussions. This may have to do with linguistic or cultural limitations, or it may have to do with lack of trust (with peers, teacher, and/or trust of self) about of how to communicate concerning literature. This lack of participation could be tied to classroom dynamics or to the students' perceptions of what is acceptable discourse in school discussions. For example, if the teacher and/or students do not value the child's experiences or *funds of knowledge* (bodies of knowledge that are directly tied to their family lives), then it is likely that the student will not share her/his personal experiences when talking about texts (Moll, 1994). The current study focused on the role that *plática* (talk) played in small group discussions with bilingual students as they talked about their literacy learning in all-English classrooms.

### Origin of the Study

This research project was part of a larger study that examined how Mexicano second language learners responded to reading various kinds of literature (Flores-Dueñas, 1997). For the purposes of this analysis, I will focus on the following general research question:

What can be learned through *plática* with bilingual students about their reading experiences in all-English classrooms?

### Methods

I utilized qualitative research methods (e.g., Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) to collect the data for this study. The 5th-grade students who participated in the study, attended a low socio-economic school in a large Texas city that was composed of 85% Mexican American students. This study took place over a nineteen week period and was part of a larger study that examined bilingual students' responses to Mexican American literature and their classroom curriculum (Flores-Dueñas, 1997). The data collected during this study included the use of participant observations (Becker & Geer, 1972; Patton, 1990), focus group interviews (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1956), reading think-alouds (Ericsson & Simon, 1980; Olson, Duffy, & Mack, 1984), and in-depth interviews with the students' parents and teachers.

The primary sources of data consisted of eight audiotaped and transcribed focus group interviews. During each of these sessions, the students: (1) read one carefully selected story that was written by either a Mexican American or non-Mexican American author; (2) retold the story in writing; and (3) participated in an in-depth focus

group interview about the events and characteristics of the text, their understanding of the story, and their reading processes as they read the texts. The transcriptions of these sessions were analyzed to identify salient themes that emerged across the discussions and retellings.

Four students, 'Sonia, Alfredo, Rosalinda, and José' (the students' and the teacher's names are pseudonyms) were selected to participate in the study. Two of the students attended 'Mrs. Gallagher's' classroom, and the other two children attended 'Mrs. Villanueva's' classroom. These students were exited out of bilingual programs because they had passed the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in the 3rd or 4th-grade and because they were approved by the Language Proficiency Acquisition Committee (LPAC) to exit bilingual programs and to begin completing all academic work in English. The LPAC is a special committee made up of the student's teachers, parents, and counselors, who come together to make recommendations about the student's language proficiency and placement in bilingual, ESL, and all-English classroom settings.

In reviewing each students' informal interviews, I was able to find some salient themes which helped me to form a somewhat homogeneous focus group of students. The pre-selection interviews with the four students revealed the following common sentiments toward reading English which indicate homogeneity:

- The students explained that they liked to read; however, they did not read for enjoyment.
- They did not have many books or reading materials in their homes.
- They were not *read to* as young children.
- They intimated that they did not consider themselves to be good readers.
- They expressed interest in learning more about their reading development.
- They confirmed the desire to become better readers in English.

### Findings

In analyzing the data collected with the four children, several themes emerged that help to explain the role that *plática* might play in small group discussions about these students' literacy learning. In the following section, I will focus on two main themes that resulted from the analysis: 1) mirroring classroom practices; and 2) deconstructing and reconstructing literacy learning.

### Mirroring Classroom Practices

During nearly all of the small group meetings about their reading development, the students revealed that their thoughts about reading were intimately tied to the ways that their classes were conducted. For example, in the following discussion, the students attempted to explain to me their thoughts on what they felt was reading. It is evident in this interaction that their interpretations were directly related to the kinds of procedures that took place in their classrooms on a daily basis.

L - (Leila), S - (Sonia), A - (Alfredo), R - (Rosalinda), J - (José)

- L: What is reading anyway?  
 S: You read off a paper.  
 A: When you sound out words.  
 L: Sounding out words, what else is reading?  
 S: When you read stuff.

- A: When you get a book.  
 R: You sound out the words.  
 L: Sound out the words, where? In your head?  
 S: Your mouth.  
 R: Out loud.  
 A: And you have to hear with your ears.

Throughout the data collection period, I observed that indeed the students spent most of their reading instruction periods listening to students or the teacher "sound-out" paragraphs in testing materials, worksheets, and other texts. In addition, this focus on saying words may have also been influenced by the focus of listening to words read-aloud on audiotapes of chapter books or classroom texts. Furthermore, this notion of "sounding-out" or saying words was also reiterated when they had to perform how to "sound-out" words that caused difficulty for them.

This phenomena of reading aloud also took other forms as well. For example, to José, reading aloud meant that he could "show-off" his talent as a "good pronouncer." Again, the focus is on performance of decoding, not reading for meaning. This focus on words extended into the students' perceived need to read-aloud. The following interaction illustrates this dependence on reading aloud, which I attribute to the continual practice of having to perform or "prove" that they can read to the teacher for over five years of their school careers.

- L: OK, all right. Now, I'm gonna give you something to read. We have to do this because it's really hard you all keep telling me stuff about the words, "It's the words" But I want you to think 'What about the words?'  
 A: I want to read out loud.  
 R: Yes Miss, let's read out loud.  
 A: On Thursday you said that we could read out loud on Tuesday.  
 L: I did? Are you making that up?  
 All: No!  
 S: You said maybe next time.  
 L: Why is it better out loud? ( No answer)  
 L: Is it always?  
 R: No.  
 L: When is it better out loud?  
 S: When it's a long story.  
 A: When there's not a lot of people in the class, like just six.  
 S: Yeah, 'cause then it has to go around the room too many times and you keep waiting for your turn.  
 L: What happens when other people are reading in class? What happens to you? You pay attention?  
 R: M-hm (yes).  
 L: You pay attention when other people are reading?  
 All: Yes.  
 L: Always?  
 All: No!  
 J: Sometimes I lose my place.  
 A: You don't pay attention at the words.

While the interaction above illustrates the importance the students place on decoding words, it also demonstrates the role that *plática* can take in the deconstruction of practices that are rarely examined in classroom settings.

Another example of how classroom interactions were mirrored in these students' narratives concerned reading for pleasure. For example, when I asked the students to read the story *The House on Mango Street* (Cisneros, 1984), so that we could talk about it, Alfredo quickly asked me if they needed to write "the main idea, and P1, P2, P3, on each paragraph." Surprised, I answered, "No, we're doing this for fun! Why would you want to write those things?" His response consisted of "because aren't we going to answer some questions when we finish, and so we'll remember the paragraphs?" This practice of numbering the paragraphs in texts as P1, P2, P3, etc., was what the teachers and students called using "reading strategies" to answer practice test questions for the upcoming TAAS test. This strategy of teaching children to "answer the questions" was yet another recurrent pattern in the data analysis. Again, in interpreting the classroom reading practices that the students mirrored in their narratives, we see that what the students believed about reading was not centered on meaningful interactions with texts.

### Deconstructing and Reconstructing Literacy Learning

In this section, I focus on the role of deconstructing various issues about classroom reading practices that arose in the *pláticas*. In the prior section, I illustrated how excessive classroom use of reading aloud, as related to second language learners, eventually produced decoders and performers rather than children who read for meaning. In response to this limiting form of teaching, I am suggesting that educators must begin to listen to what the children are saying about these practices and others. For example, in earlier discussions, José agreed with the other students that reading aloud is better than reading silently. However, after discussing (deconstructing) and testing the two methods of reading, José reconstructs his thoughts about reading aloud to say:

I... no, I think silently is better now. Because I can like... when I'm reading out loud and I take too long to go back they tell me to keep going, keep going and all that. It's like I didn't have time to go back and look at the words and think about it, like with the class.

On another occasion, the issue of reading silently came up again following the students' reading of the story *El Sapo* by David Rice (1994). Out of this *plática* arose the notion that reading silently can provide a space for students to visualize what they are thinking about the story:

L: Tell me what you were doing in your mind while you're reading the story silently.  
 R: I was imagining the pictures in my head.  
 L: Were you?  
 A: I started imagining when the frog pumped up then that they shoot it.  
 L: ¡Ay que feo! (How awful!) Gross! What else did you imagine while you were reading the story?  
 J: I thought like...  
 S: It was always wet.  
 A: That's what they called "charcos."  
 S: I saw like it was always wet there.  
 L: Okay, you imagined it being damp, wet.  
 A: I saw a car and the mud went all over.

Through *plática*, we can provide students with an opportunity to be natural inquirers. After considerable discussion and investigating, the children were able to reconstruct their own thoughts about reading aloud. In this sense, the children had the opportunity to participate in what Au (1993) calls *taking ownership* of what they know about their literacy learning.

Another subject that the group deconstructed through *plática* was the role of literature in their understanding of texts. Within this subject, I was interested in helping the students to deconstruct their recurring statements about not being "good readers" by examining where the problem lay—within themselves, within the texts, or both. In a broader sense, this question was addressed in the larger research project, which focused on the role that Mexican American literature played in the reading responses of these children (See Flores-Dueñas, 1997).

For the purposes of this article, however, I continue to narrow the focus to the role of *plática* as a means to critically analyze how the students are able to deconstruct and reconstruct the role of literature in their reading development. Through *plática*, we examined the role of literature by asking the students to list the kinds of literature that they read in their classroom. In response to the question, they named books such as *The Indian in the Cupboard* (Banks, 1980), *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (Cleary, 1983), R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series, Ann Martin's *Babysitter's Club*, Beverly Cleary series books, and *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (O'Dell, 1982). Moreover, in my own observations of their classroom books, I noticed that the shelves were mostly limited to stories about middle-class, European American families. During one of our *pláticas*, about literature, I asked, "Do you ever read books about people - like in your family?" Sonia's quick insightful response was "they don't have no books about people like us.... we are never in the books we read."

In another exchange, the students read *Tito, Age 14* (Bode, 1989), an autobiographical story written by a young Mexican immigrant boy who contemplates his new and rather harsh life in the United States. Tito lives in a neighborhood that he considers to be diseased by drugs and violence—not unlike the area of the city where Sonia, Alfredo, Rosalinda, and José lived during the time of this study. When the students responded to *Tito* for the first time, they excitedly told about how drugs, alcohol, smoking, and violence were part of their respective *barrios* and their individual lives. By the second day of talking about this text, however, the focus of the *plática* had changed, it was now more somber and insightful.

L: After reading the story "Tito, Age 14," I want to ask you now... yesterday you said you really liked the story, right?  
 A: Yes.  
 L: You would read stories like this?  
 R: Yes.  
 L: Yes or no.  
 All: Yes.  
 L: Okay, now, do you think that stories that you are interested in reading should be that, should be about drug dealers all the time or some of the time or never or what?  
 All: Some of the time.  
 L: What should other stories be about then?  
 S: Education.  
 A: Good stuff... Like a boy that goes through all the grades and graduates.

- L: Okay, so about school. And who would that boy be?  
 S: Him (pointing to José).  
 A: Someone who cares about school.  
 J: Mexican.

During my analysis of this data, the students' responses were perplexing to me— perhaps they had revealed too much to the group on the first day, or perhaps by the second day, they felt a sadness about where they lived and the various hardships that they had endured on the streets of their neighborhoods. Although it is unclear why they responded so differently between the two days, what is clear is that when they had the opportunity to think critically about the kinds of reading practices that they are subject to on a daily basis, they are able to contribute to their own (and others) thinking.

By the end of the research project, the students were now making more critical contributions to our discussions. Although it was not a simple task to teach them to think freely and critically about issues related to their literacy learning, it was possible. For example, in the following *plática*, the individual students now held different views of what it meant to read. The discussion below took place after I asked, "Tell me what you have learned, individually, from this whole research process that you have gone through with me:"

- S: I guess reading can be fun sometimes.  
 R: That books can be interesting sometimes even though you don't always understand everything. I feel better about reading. Because at first I thought I could read nothing.  
 L: When did you think that?  
 R: When I had to come to this research.  
 L: Okay, so what makes you feel like you are a better reader?  
 S: 'cause when you finish you know...  
 J: ...what the story is about.  
 L: It depends on what you read, doesn't it?  
 R: Yes.  
 L: It needs to be what? What kinds of stuff do you need to read then?  
 J: I need to read like bilingual books.  
 S: Books we're interested in.  
 A: Books you understand.  
 L: But also do what, what do they sound like?  
 A: They sound like you are interested in them.  
 J: I learned how to read more better.  
 S: Because it's better for you. It made me like wanna read more at home.  
 A: If you read at home, when you go to "Judd" (middle school), then you'll know how to read better.  
 L: Okay, what else?  
 J: I learned how to read more better because before I came here I didn't wanna read at home.  
 L: Okay, and now?  
 J: Now I do sometimes.  
 L: What have you read now, since we started the research?  
 J: I read *Sports Illustrated* and Football books.  
 L: Those are things you're interested in so you need to get more of those, don't you?  
 R: I learned being in this research it's better for me because since we started this I didn't like to read or nothing but you started to give us stories to read and I became more interested in reading books.

- L: Which ones?  
 R: Any kind, well in Spanish or in English books.  
 L: Okay. Sonia, what did you learned in this research process?  
 S: I think I've improved by reading more, I used not to read a lot and now I read more than what I used to read.  
 L: Let me ask you what makes a good reader now.  
 S: A person who's a good reader is a person who pays attention to what they're reading and knows what they're reading.  
 A: And understands what they're reading.

In the text above, it is evident that the students have made some adjustments as to how they think about reading. In fact, one year after the data collection was completed for this study, I was able to locate and interview Sonia, Rosalinda, and José (Alfredo had moved to another state). During these interviews, I learned that both Sonia and Rosalinda had read over 20 novels in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Sonia stated the reason she "was into reading now was because you (Leila) had made us read so much and talk so much about it!" When I finally got Rosalinda on the telephone, she greeted me by saying, "Hi Ms. Flores I'm doing good in reading now... it's because I found out I could read. Remember when you told me that I could pronounce words correctly? Since then, I've just been reading and reading." On the other hand, José was not so excited to talk about the books he had read, he simply stated that "they don't let you go to the library over there (referring to his middle school)."

### Conclusions

In this article, I have attempted to illustrate that much can be learned about the literacy learning struggles of second language learners through the medium of *plática*, or intimate talk between the students and the teacher. One could loosely interpret the term *plática* as having a *heart-to-heart* talk with the children about a specific topic, and in this case, about the children's literacy learning. Additionally, I use the term *plática* to describe a form of talk that provides an opportunity for unrestricted discussion about personal truths for the participants. This distinctive form of talk is common among families of Mexican heritage, and perhaps other cultural groups. However, it is my intention to share this "cultural strategy" with all educators who educate bilingual children. Moreover, having *plática* implies that there must be a mutual respect between the participants so that all parties will not be constrained by power or social issues. Therefore, this type of strategy requires that bilingual students be respected and valued for what they can contribute to the field of education.

Historically, valuing what bilingual students have to say about their personal experiences with literature and literacy learning in the U.S. classroom, has not been at the forefront of American educational practice or research. This study, therefore, strives to redefine the ways that culturally and linguistically diverse students are viewed in present-day educational arenas. Furthermore, this investigation assumes that students who are placed in positions of having to constantly negotiate their literacy and personal identities between home, school, community, and larger society, can serve as excellent informants for research. Finally, providing these students with an opportunity to act as inquirers in the creation of a knowledge base about literacy learning can influence them to become critical thinkers about their own reading development.

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...Powerful resources are available to educators via the Internet; resources which are useful to professional development and capable of enriching the services which are provided to second language learners.

## Maximizing Technology in the Appropriate Instruction of Second Language Learners: A Web Review

Della Ruth Perez

In today's global society, educators can use technology to equalize the distance that exists across cultures within and outside schools. The goal of technological use should be to prepare children to participate intelligently in a globally diverse society. Jim Cummins (1995) argues that educators should take advantage of accessible and culturally appropriate educational and communications technology. In doing so, educators can promote academic development across a broad spectrum of content and skill areas, including literacy skills development, critical thinking, and creative problem solving in such vital domains as science and social studies, citizenship and global education, and second language learning. Computers and the Internet are the tools to achieve these goals.

According to Linda Roberts, the Director of the Office of Educational Technology, "computers are the new basic of American education and the Internet is the blackboard of the future" (United States Department of Education [USDE], 1996, p. 5). No longer can we sit back in the classroom and avoid the impact of technology on the future success of our students. According to a recent article, titled *Using Technology to Overcome the Challenges of Diversity*, technology can help create learning environments that feature integrated and thematic curriculum, collaborative learning and an emphasis on language acquisition and literacy (Tipton, Bennett, & Bennett, 1997).

We are living in a society in which classrooms across the United States are becoming more and more diverse. Twenty years ago, this trend was most common in urban school districts such as Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. However, the diversity that once only existed among urban populations now exists in rural populations as well. Among the key challenges that rural educator's face in light of the new demands of increased diversity are: geographic isolation, capacity building, and professional development (Murry & Herrera, 1998).

Through proper use of the Internet, we will be able to bridge the distances that currently exist between rural educators and second language learners. The Internet can eliminate rural educator's geographic isolation by allowing them to access and communicate with any site around the world. Furthermore, the Internet will allow educators to increase capacity building through site-specific adaptations based on particular students' needs. In this article I will

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demonstrate that powerful resources are available to educators via the Internet; resources which are useful to professional development and capable of enriching the services which are provided to second language learners.

The purpose of this Web review is to provide teachers and administrators with a small sample of the many worldwide Web sites available to educators to meet the challenges of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity. Traditional models of pedagogy which tend to approach culturally and linguistically diverse students as 'disadvantaged' or 'culturally deprived' are no longer appropriate to today's classroom diversity. Rather, teachers should approach the education of all students from a transformative pedagogy which uses collaborative, critical inquiry to relate curriculum content to students' individual and collective experiences (Cummins & Sayers, 1995).

Consequently, any genuine effort to restructure education and create a transformative pedagogy that will meet the needs of second language learners should begin with the teachers and support their ongoing efforts toward culturally appropriate education. Information concerning Web sites that can help teachers promote a transformative pedagogy begins with integrated and thematic curriculum units for second language learners. The invaluable assistance of Dianne Glass, Judy Miller, Maria Collins, Frayna Scrinopskie, Theresa Steinlage, Jeanette Nobo, and Jayne James of the Kansas State Department of Education in locating and describing the following useful Web sites is gratefully acknowledged:

- *Adult Education ESL Teachers Guide*: This site helps teachers set up an ESL program and develop better ESL lesson plans. There are sections for beginning and intermediate ESL lessons with teacher training modules. Also included is a section on teaching non-literate adults. <<http://www.humanities.byu.edu/ELC/teacher/TeacherGuideMain>>.
- *ESL Web Guide*: 2,028 links that provide information on topics of interest to ESL teachers. <<http://www.eslcafe.come/search>>.
- *Lesson Plans on the Web*: Useful links for Bilingual and ESL activities and lesson plans are available through this site. They include thematic units for ESL instruction, lessons, and connections for submitting lessons. This site also provides links to other lesson plans in specific curricular areas. <<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/classroom/lessons.html>>.
- *Multi-disciplinary Lessons in the Winnipeg School Division No.1*: The lessons at this site include those in ESL as well as lessons for many specific content areas. <<http://www.wsd1.org/lessonplans/Multidislessons.html>>.
- *One Child, Two Languages*: This resource is especially useful for early childhood educators and those interested in young children learning a second language. <<http://www.onechild.com>>.
- *TEAMS Distance Learning for K-12 Educators*: A service of the Los Angeles County Office of Education that includes education resources for diverse learners. Classroom projects, conferences and events are listed. Resources for math, science, social science, language arts, art are provided. Lesson plans; K-12 school home pages, libraries, professional development ideas, parent resources, Internet search tools and Internet support are provided as well. <<http://teams.lacoe.edu/>>.

- *TESL/TEFL/ESOL/ESL/EFL/ESOL Links*: This site, The Internet ESL Journal, provides links to numerous topics, content areas, quizzes, journals, teaching techniques and tips, lesson plans, and online textbooks that are appropriate for ESL students. There are links for students and links for teachers.  
<<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/iteslj/links/TESL/>>

Once teachers have informed themselves about the integrated and thematic curriculum units available to educate second language learners, they may wish to begin the process of locating new and innovative ways to affirm the cultures of the students within their classrooms. If a student's diversity is not affirmed, the relationship across the boundaries of race and class is often strained (Cummins & Sayer, 1995). Web sites for specific activities and lesson plans that recognize the need to affirm diverse cultures and languages through cooperative learning activities and lesson plans for second language learners include:

- *Addison Wesley Longman Resource Bank*: From this site one can access information on worksheets and activities relevant to ESL teaching, as well as, teacher tips.  
<<http://www.awl-elt.com/resources/index.html>>
- *ESL and EFL Games, Songs, Lessons and Resources*: Sample lessons, games and songs for ESL and EFL teachers are available through this site.  
<<http://www.eslgames.com/>>
- *Interesting Things for ESL Students*: A collection of sites that is inclusive for many learner levels. Examples of common American slang, quizzes with pictures and more are also provided.  
<<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/itesls/>>
- *Teachers' Guide to Planet English*: Planet English contains a variety of lessons on grammar and idioms, quizzes, activities, and other resources to assist students with their language skills. Also included are a message center and a chat room.  
<<http://www.lightlink.com/bodp/wedt/>>

From the first day of school, many second language learners are immersed in context and instruction which often prompts them to reject their culture-based identity and native language learning. A genuine effort at educational empathy should not marginalize students according to the language they speak (Cummins & Sayer, 1995). Diversity, in all forms should be seen as a resource. Web sites that validate and place an emphasis on native-language-supported, second language acquisition include:

- *Bilingual Books for Kids*: This site includes a wonderful selection of Bilingual books that introduce bilingual skills, increase language and learning abilities, and positively heighten awareness of many cultures.  
<<http://www.bilingualbooks.com/>>
- *Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)*: This site includes links and information on bilingual education, dialects, immersion programs, K-12 ESL, language testing, and much more.  
<<http://www.cal.org>>
- *Multicultural Book Review Homepage*: This page presents a list of multicultural literature for K-12 educators.  
<<http://www.isomedia.com/homes/jmele/homepage.html>>

- *National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE)*: This site provides bi-weekly news bulletins, databases on ESL, success stories, technical assistance, an online library, lesson plans and language links.  
<<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu>>

- *Paso Partners*: This division of Southwest Educational Development Laboratory has created a two-volume curriculum and resources guide designed to help K-3 teachers increase achievement of Hispanic children whose first language is not English.  
<<http://www.sedl.org/scimath/pasopartners/pphome.html>>

Finally, a transformative pedagogy should extend beyond traditional, standardized, assessments. A transformative pedagogy enables students to be viewed from many different perspectives because it is authentically grounded in the lives of the students. Consequently, alternative forms of assessment should be utilized in order to break down the traditional barriers of marginalization based upon language and culture. Some Web sites that specifically address alternative assessment issues include:

- *For all students: Limited English Proficient students and Goals 2000*: This web page recommends the development of performance based assessments that are appropriate for second language learners and are in line with Goals 2000 objectives.  
<<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/focus/focus10.htm>>
- *Standard Bearer: Next steps in assessment from the ESL Standards and Assessment Project*: This document is known as the MAP and provides an overview and conceptual framework for standards-based assessment of ESOL students. It is part of an overall project set forth by TESOL to develop and assist teachers and educators in using the ESL standards as effectively as possible.  
<<http://www.tesol.edu/assoc/k12standards/articles/SSLart9808-01.html>>
- *What happens between assessments?*: This web site provides teachers with useful information on seven principles for performance-based instruction, which will improve the quality of assessment for second language learners.  
<<http://www.ascd.org/pubs/el/dec96/mctighe.html>>

The USDE (1996), in conjunction with educators and technology experts from around the country, has developed a national technology plan titled *America's Students Ready for the 21st Century*. This plan was developed to meet Goal 5 of Goals 2000, which is part of a set of goals to increase the academic success of all students. Goal five states that the United States will be first in Math and Science by the year 2000. According to Gordon Ambach, of the Council of Chief State School Officers, technology must play a crucial role in achieving Goal 5 (Bruder, Buchsbaum, Hill, & Orlando, 1992). Consequently, the USDE plan builds a foundation grounded in four subgoals designed to strengthen the role of technology in education. These subgoals are:

1. All teachers in the nation will have the training and support they need to help students learn using computers and the information superhighway.
2. All teachers and students will have modern multimedia computers in their classrooms.
3. Every classroom will be connected to the information superhighway.

4. Effective software and on-line learning resources will be an integral part of every school's curriculum.

For more information on the United States Department of Education's long-range plan for technology in education, contact Linda Roberts, Director, Office of Educational Technology, United States Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202, (202) 401-1444, E-mail: linda\_roberts@ed.gov.

Intercultural inquiry via the Internet can serve as a means of challenging traditional forms of disempowerment that marginalize students and communities (Cummins & Sayer, 1995). Recognizing the importance of challenging these issues, the federal government has developed many Web sites that fund programs to empower second language students across the United States:

- *United States Department of Education*: This site provides users with information on funding opportunities, research and statistics, news and events, programs and services, and publications and products.

<<http://www.ed.gov/>>.

- *Federal Resources for Educational Excellence*: This site includes hundreds of Internet-based education resources supported by agencies across the United States Federal government easier to find.

<<http://www.ed.gov/free/>>.

- *Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA)*: This site offers users information on OBEMLA, news, funding opportunities, staff information, and technical assistance.

<<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OBEMLA/index.html>>.

- *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)*: TESOL's mission is to develop the expertise of its members and others involved in teaching English to speakers of other languages to help them foster effective communication in diverse settings while respecting the individual's language rights.

<<http://www.tesol.edu/index2.html>>.

As we approach the next millennium, we must prepare our students to compete in a globally diverse society. Technology can bridge the gap between and among cultures across the United States and the world. Additionally, technology is a powerful tool for facilitating intercultural learning and collaborative inquiry (Cummins & Sayer, 1995). As one teacher states, "When I started teaching, I used to have to get kids ready to go to Ohio, because that was far away then. Now I take 13-year-olds to Japan. That shows you where the world is going" (Rasmussen, 1998, p. 7). As we embark on a new journey into the 21st century, let us all remember just how far technology can take our students. Not only across the globe, but across the lines of cultural and linguistic diversity into a new world of equity and an appreciation of differences.

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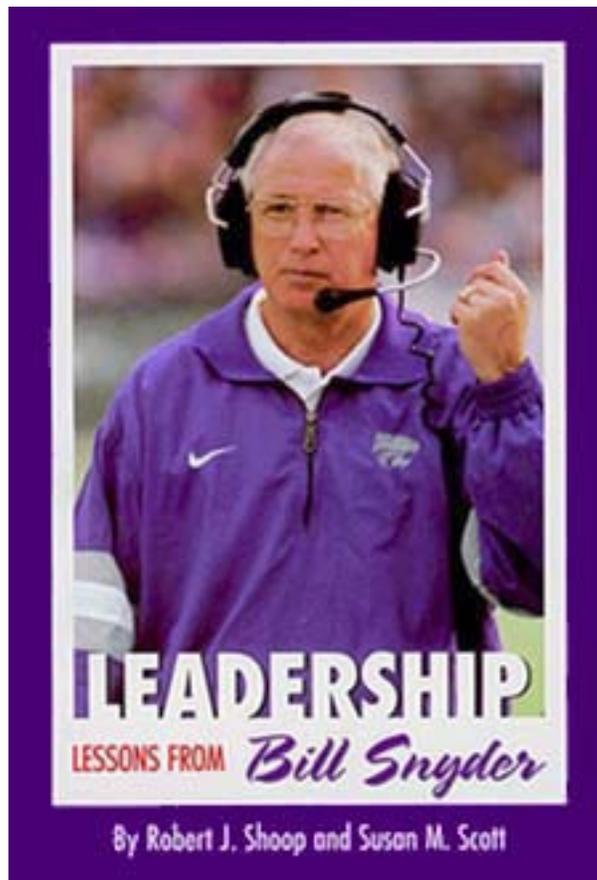
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