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LETTER

From the Editor



Dear CABE Community,

Welcome to the Spring 2026 edition of *Multilingual Educator!* This year’s conference theme—“**CABE Strong: United for Equity & Empowered by Our Cultures and Multiplicity of Languages**”—reminds us that none of our efforts stand alone and asks us to draw strength from the languages, histories, and cultural knowledge of our students, families, and communities.

The articles, *testimonios*, research, and creative work in this edition highlight how educators, families, and communities are shaping equitable and culturally sustaining learning environments. Some authors explore how language and culture help students see themselves as capable, valued, and deeply connected to their communities. Others offer strategies for strengthening biliteracy, honoring identity, and building systems where multilingual learners thrive.

I am especially excited about the article by Dr. Julie Goldman featuring the WRITE Institute as it celebrates its 35th anniversary. From 1995 to 2015, I had the honor of collaborating with dedicated colleagues in the San Dieguito Union High School District and later at the San Diego County Office of Education to support and guide WRITE’s curriculum development and professional learning statewide. WRITE’s success and longevity are a testament to its positive impact on student achievement and teacher efficacy in the teaching of writing.

Though the challenges facing our schools continue to grow, one constant remains: the resilience and dedication of those who champion multilingualism and educational equity. This edition reflects that resilience, elevating classroom innovations, family partnerships, policy insights, and student perspectives that emphasize why our work matters.

To be *CABE Strong* is to stand together—across classrooms, districts, and communities—to ensure that every child learns in environments that celebrate their languages, cultures, and stories. As you read these pages, I hope you find ideas that inspire, stories that resonate, and renewed encouragement for the essential work you do each day.

With appreciation,

Laurie Miles
Laurie Miles
 Editor, *Multilingual Educator*
 CABE Communications Manager



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LETTER

From the CEO



Dear CABE Multilingual Educator Readers,

Welcome to the 2026 edition of the *Multilingual Educator*! This year, with a Spring edition and a Fall edition, we gather with renewed purpose and collective strength under our powerful conference theme: “**CABE Strong: United for Equity & Empowered by Our Cultures and Multiplicity of Languages.**” At a time when educational challenges continue to evolve, our unity, our cultural richness, and our shared commitment to multilingual learners shine brighter than ever.

For more than five decades, CABE has stood as a beacon for equity, biliteracy, and educational justice. This year’s theme reminds us that our greatest power emerges when we come together—educators, families, students, researchers, community partners, and advocates—grounded in the belief that every language is an asset and every culture a source of strength. Our multiplicity of languages is not merely something we teach; it is a collective identity that empowers us, guides our pedagogy, and fuels our advocacy.

In this year’s *Multilingual Educator*, you will discover an inspiring collection of articles, stories, research, art, and poetry that illuminate what it means to be “CABE Strong.” These contributions reflect courageous leadership, innovative classroom practices, student brilliance, and community-driven models that lift up multilingual learners. You will encounter voices that call us to action, narratives that celebrate cultural pride, and reflections that push us toward deeper understanding and more just educational systems.

As you explore these pages, I hope you feel the momentum of this moment—a moment shaped by collective resilience, multilingual excellence, and unwavering belief in the potential of every student. Let this Spring and upcoming Fall issues energize your work, affirm your purpose, and remind you that together, united for equity and empowered by our cultures and languages, we are unstoppable.

Thank you for your steadfast dedication to CABE’s mission and to the students and families we serve. May this year’s magazine issues inspire you to continue building a future where all children thrive as multilingual, multicultural leaders.

With gratitude and solidarity,

Chief Executive Officer
 California Association for Bilingual Education



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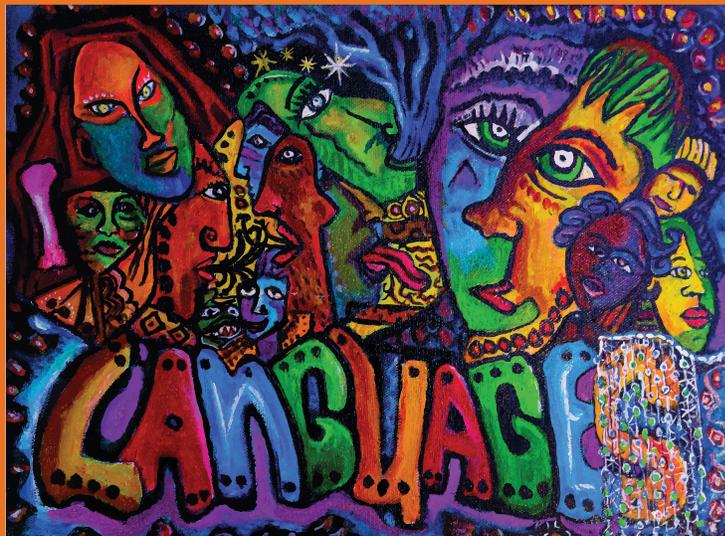
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CABE 2026 Artist



CHRISTIAN FALTIS, PH.D.
Artist, Author, Professor, Researcher



The CABE 2026 artwork was created by Dr. Christian Faltis for the cover of the book, *Multilingual Perspectives on Translanguaging*, edited by Jeff MacSwan and published by Multilingual Matters in 2022. Dr. Faltis explains the intention and meaning of the artwork below:

As many viewers have noticed on my artwork about translanguaging, I painted a beaded curtain over the S on LANGUAGES. The people in the artwork represent dynamic speakers of multiple named languages. The idea here is that named languages are typically envisioned as separate, monoglossic entities, but from a heteroglossic, dynamic bilingual perspective, each individual may use two named languages in communication with other bilinguals who share their languaging practices. Accordingly, their bilingualism is one language. It is the dominant monolingual discourse that conveys languages are separate, and that using one's bilingual repertoire without separating the two languages supports impure and imperfect language use, which to me is unjust and simply wrong.

Christian Faltis is currently Professor of Bilingual Education at Texas A&M International University. He was the Dolly and David Fiddymont Chair in Teacher Education, Director of Teacher Education, and Professor of Language, Literacy and Culture at the University of California, Davis (2008-2016) and Chair and Professor of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education and Human Ecology at Ohio State

University from 2016-2020. He also taught in the College of Education at Arizona State University for 18 years.

Early in his academic career, Christian was a year-long Fulbright Scholar at the Autonomous National University of Honduras, living in Tegucigalpa. He also taught a year at the University of Guadalajara in 2014-15. In 2001, he was the recipient of an AERA Distinguished Scholar Award. He was named an AERA Fellow in 2016. In 2018, he was given the Bilingual Education Research SIG Lifetime Achievement Award. He has been Editor of *TESOL Journal* and *Teacher Education Quarterly*, and he currently serves as *Editor of the Bilingual Review/Revista Bilingüe*. Christian holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in Curriculum & Teacher Education with an emphasis in Bilingual Cross-Cultural Education from Stanford University. He also earned a M.A. in Mexican American Studies.

Over the past 40 years, Christian has published more than 100 articles and book chapters, and he has more than 25 books on language diversity and bilingual education. Christian studied art in Mexico and has created the book cover artwork for 15 published books.

To learn more about the life and work of Dr. Faltis, read the [CABE 2026 Artist Spotlight article in the January issue of the CABE Corner monthly newsletter](#).



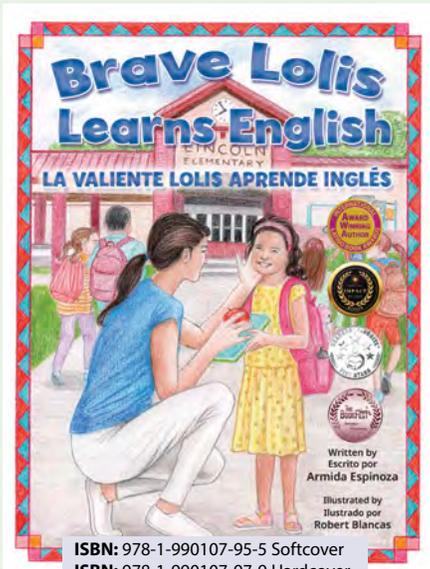
MEET AUTHOR ARMIDA ESPINOZA

Presenting “Leveraging Age-appropriate Resiliency While Fostering a Positive Mind” and located at the Empowering Latino Futures booth.

A retired educator and two-time International Latino Book and Bookfest Award winner, Armida shares her struggles and experiences as a second-language learner. Armida aims to inspire children to overcome academic and emotional challenges and discover their inner strength.

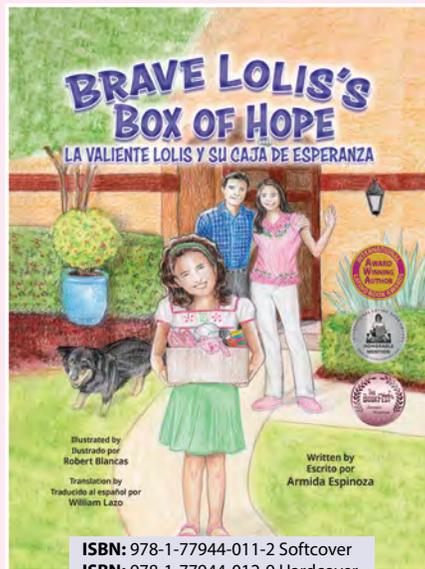
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- Juan Felipe Herrera, Author

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- Hector Ramos (Teacher), Edwin Miguel (Student), Age 7



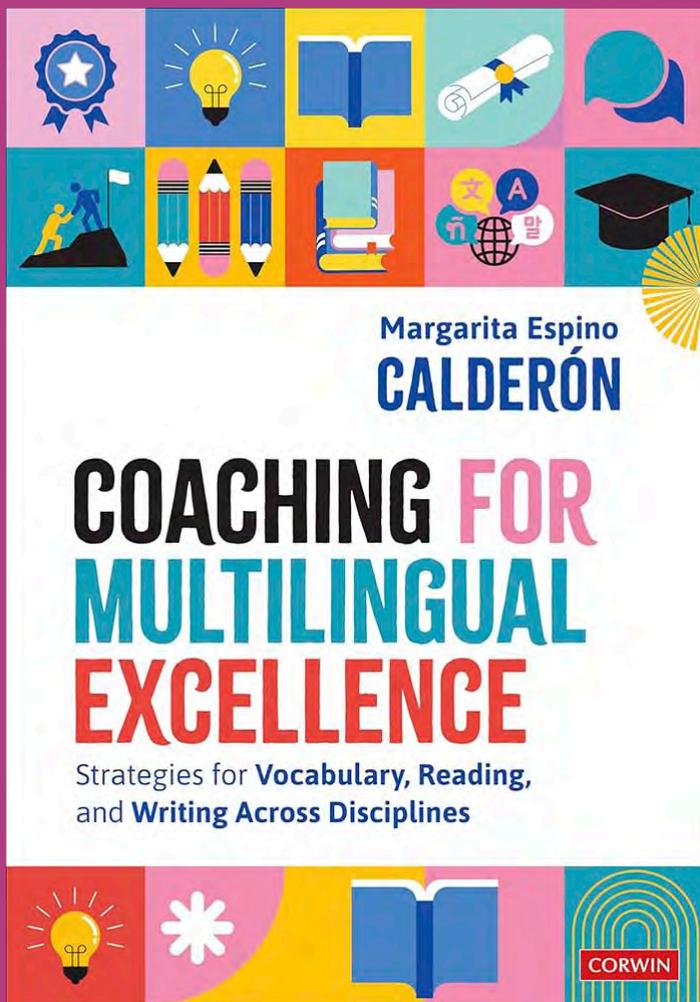
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COACHING FOR MULTILINGUAL EXCELLENCE



Margarita Calderón, Ph.D.
John Hopkins University

All good things start in California! An experimental control empirical study of coaching in multilingual classrooms took place in Riverside and San Bernardino schools in the early 1980s. It has been replicated and implemented in hundreds of schools since then.

After attending a five-day institute on second language acquisition focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, 20 participating teachers were randomly assigned to experimental and control cohorts. The experimental cohort received coaching for an entire year, while the control cohort implemented the new instructional strategies without coaching. At the end of the year, the teachers' implementation observation protocols, teacher surveys, and interviews with their administrators were compared. Their multilingual student data on the California state assessment and exit criteria were analyzed and compared between experimental and control students (Calderón, 1984a).

As you might predict, the experimental teacher and student groups outperformed the control groups. This confirmed what Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers had forecasted when they first met with this group to discuss the importance of coaching as a follow-up to a quality professional development program (Joyce & Showers, 1982). There was no doubt about the content quality of the professional development because the presenters and trainers included Jim Cummins, Steve Krashen, Russel Stauffer, Bárbara Flores, and others who came to present at the Multidistrict Trainer of Trainers Institutes (MTTIs). The MTTIs were replicated in the next two years at the Los Angeles County Office of Education and in most northern and southern California county offices of education (Calderón, 1984b; Calderón & Spiegel-Coleman, 1985; Marsh & Calderón, 1989). The participants themselves translated the theory and principles presented by theorists into instructional strategies, drawing on the experience of those with more instructional expertise. Thus, an instructional

framework was established to complement California's theoretical framework for English language learners that emerged from the MTTIs.

Other empirical longitudinal studies, funded by the US Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), as well as the Carnegie Corporation of New York, focused on testing effective strategies for teaching vocabulary, verbal discourse, reading comprehension, and writing in core content subjects. We also investigated complementary techniques, such as social-emotional learning competencies, cooperative learning, and classroom context, as well as, at a macro level, leadership development to support implementation (Calderón, 2007-2025). This is the model used today.

What did we learn from the empirical evidence-based studies?

We learned that:

- Coaching ensures consistent quality implementation, resulting in better outcomes for teachers and multilingual learners (MLs).
- Even with the best professional development program, implementation and intended results may remain minimal, nonexistent, or fail to translate into student gains if coaching is not part of the program.
- Every teacher, regardless of expertise, benefits from coaching.

Fast forward forty years

Instructional coaching continues to be proven as the most valuable systems intervention for developing teacher efficacy. Yet, it remains the most overlooked tool in professional development, as Knight (2022, 2025), Joyce & Showers (2022), and many others find.

We agree with Jim Knight. Since 2007, we have been collaborating with school districts nationwide and internationally, achieving a success rate of approximately 35% in identifying those who commit to follow-up coaching. Despite extensive explanations about the benefits of coaching, the typical requests for professional development are:

- A one-day session on teaching vocabulary.
- A one-day session on teaching reading and writing.
- A keynote or one-day workshop on integrating language, literacy, and core content.

Some of the reasons for not adopting coaching are:

- There is no budget from the district or the state for coaching.
- Teachers do not want to be observed and evaluated.
- Our coach is not an expert on English learner (EL) instruction.
- Our limited funds are for teachers to attend conferences and learn a variety of instructional approaches to choose from.
- Too many barriers prevent focus, consistency, and curriculum coherence.

Enlightened schools proactively plan by inviting us to assist with schedules, budgets, and implementation logistics. It may take a semester to secure the funding and commitment. One district-planned coaching requested that we train and coach all teachers in 19 schools over a two-year period. We were delighted, and as we completed planning, COVID required a pivot from in-person to virtual coaching. After a semester, we found it just as effective as in-person coaching.

Impact of current trends

Although workshops, conferences, webinars, and on-site professional development focusing on instructional practices for multilingual learners are available nationwide throughout the year, new knowledge often fails to translate into student growth. When teachers return to their classrooms, they face numerous challenges, including the pacing of required curricula, assessment schedules, cultural fluency, and unforeseen policy and curriculum changes, all of which impose excessive stress on teachers as they attempt to implement changes independently.

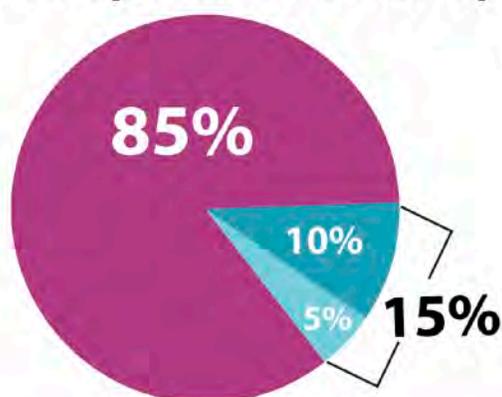
The barriers in the educational system are one reason we now request that school and district leaders also attend the comprehensive institutes and a session on teacher support systems.

The issue of transfer from professional learning

'Learning and implementing' is an inseparable commitment. Teachers learning new strategies, such as integrating language and literacy into core content instruction, face many challenges. Joyce and Showers (1982, 2002) found that only 10 to 15 percent of teachers **actually implement** the workshops' content without follow-up from coaches.

Why Do All Teachers Need Coaching?

Fewer than 10-15% of teachers actually implement new ideas from traditional professional development workshops.



Attended the workshop:



Implemented what they learned:



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Figure 1. Why do all teachers need coaching?

The studies in experimental-control schools showed that significant learning and effective application occur when **theory, research, modeling strategies, and discussion of implementation are integrated into professional development workshops**. Teachers appreciate practicing in teams during the workshops and in Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs). After this comprehensive approach to workshops, most participants feel ready to implement the innovations and are open to feedback from competent coaches.

How can coaches and school leaders assist teachers with MLs?

Multilingual coaching focuses on student engagement and learning. Coaches assist teachers in developing their efficacy in integrating language and literacy teaching strategies into content lessons while promoting multilingual well-being. We suggest that coaches and other leaders develop instructional playbooks to ensure coherence in shared strategies. (See figure 4.) In ML schools, instructional playbooks typically consist of:

- Knowing MLs and dispelling myths.
- A list of 15–20 high-impact evidence-based

strategies (vocabulary, academic language, discourse, foundational reading skills, specific reading comprehension strategies, text-based writing, and social-emotional learning).

- One-page research summaries of each strategy.
- Checklists, observation tools, and feedback protocols.

After instructional workshops, the leadership and coaches construct their own playbook tools. Thus, the leadership has a process, a communication tool, and a commitment to enact what research indicates regarding effective strategy implementation. The coaching protocol for ML excellence can be integrated into existing, widely-used coaching methods in schools.

National survey on what teachers and coaches want to know about coaching

We set out to ask coaches nationwide to participate in a survey in August 2023 (Calderón & Associates, 2025b). Three questions from the survey stand out, with responses combined from coaches who collected the data.

QUESTION #1: “What do the teachers you coach ask most often?”

- PreK-5th general education teachers with MLs ask for guidance on teaching academic language, reading comprehension, and writing to MLs at different levels of English proficiency.
- Math, science, social studies, language arts, STEM, and special subjects teachers in grades 6th through 12th want coaching specific to ML learning, peer collaboration, and confidence-

building.

- Teachers in dual language programs seek to understand what is effective in their classrooms and what further steps they can take to empower students to embrace their identities, talents, and multilingualism.
- Administrators and coaches want to know how to observe and give feedback to help teachers and students accelerate MLs’ excellence.

A Pocket Guide with some specific questions regarding the adaptation for multilingual learners:

Vocabulary and Verbal Discourse

Foundational Reading and Reading Comprehension

Content-based Writing

- What does the research say about teaching vocabulary to MLs?
- Why is preteaching vocabulary critically important for MLs?
- Which words should teachers select to preteach?
- How do we teach a word/phrase?
- How do we coach vocabulary teaching strategies? Are there sentence stems or talking points for coaching this?
- How do we observe MLs and know if they are learning vocabulary?
- How do we coach student conversations?
- What is the role of native language instruction and translanguaging?

- What does the research say about teaching reading (phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) to MLs?
- How do teachers embed language development into phonics?
- Why do reading strategies, such as partner reading with verbal summarization, work for all students?
- Do these reading strategies work in all subject areas?
- How do we coach the teaching of reading?
- Are there sentence stems or discussion starters for coaches to use?
- How do we observe MLs, and what type of data do we collect to know if they are becoming proficient readers?
- How do we collect data for coaching on student interaction during reading activities?

- What does the research say about writing for MLs?
- What writing strategies tap cultural appreciation as well as creativity, originality, and talents?
- How do we coach peer interactions during writing?
- What social-emotional competencies can we look for during peer writing?
- How do we affirm the initial use of translanguaging, and when to use one language specifically?
- How do we coach writing instruction and give feedback on assessing student writing?
- Is there a coaching protocol for writing?
- Are there sentence stems or discussion points for coaching on writing?

The book “Coaching for Multilingual Excellence,” published by Corwin, was written to elaborate on the responses to these questions.

Goals of EL/ML Coaching

Increase instructional effectiveness of each teacher in a school to result in EL/ML's mastery of language, literacy, social emotional skills, and core content.



Develop better relationships with students and colleagues.

Move the school from the goal of compliance with federal regulations to the goal of excellent learning for everyone.

Embrace and model an assets-based approach with diverse students.



Help educators and families become more self-directed, resourceful, reflective, and mindful of personal growth.

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Figure 2. What do coaches want to learn?

QUESTION #2: "What areas do you need to explore further to better support your teachers working with MLs?"

The responses are aggregated into a bubble graphic. (See Figure 3.) The size of the bubbles represents the coaches' responses; the larger the bubbles, the greater the need expressed by the coaches.

All teachers, particularly those in grades 6 through 12, want professional development that includes these topics.

QUESTION #3: "What do you need to feel that you are making an impact on teachers and students?"

Their responses centered around three themes:

1. I wish I had a better understanding of the diversity in ML backgrounds, home languages, and levels of English proficiency.
2. My principal and I would like to learn more about my role as an instructional coach. What do other multilingual and multicultural coaches do? What roles do they suggest?
3. What tools can I use to gather better data on teacher and student performance in vocabulary, reading, and writing instruction integrated into content areas?

Theme 1. Coaches Want to Know About the Diversity of Multilingual Students

Understanding and knowing the students in the school comes before setting goals. This is followed by reviewing the standards and considering the teachers' coaching requests. Coaches need to help teachers learn the differences. The playbook should include a concise description of the students' characteristics since they possess diverse language and literacy skills, background knowledge, educational experiences, and expertise in various subjects.

Theme 2. What Is My Role as a Multilingual Coach? Determine the purpose of coaching at your school.

Some schools require coaching for compliance; others allow teachers to select their own coaching goals and topics. Some schools seek to enhance instruction by integrating a whole-school approach that encompasses vocabulary, reading, discourse, writing, and students' overall well-being.

Define your coaching role. When a school is ready to adopt ML coaching, it is essential to clearly define and document the role of the multilingual coach from the very beginning. *A lack of well-defined roles and responsibilities for coaches can pose a significant*

Coaches want this Knowledge & Skills



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Figure 3. The role of the multilingual coach

challenge, often diverting time and attention from supporting instructional change by requiring coaches to shift from classroom-related work to handling administrative tasks or substitute teaching.

Here are several options to consider for establishing an effective and efficient role. (See Figure 3.) The following roles are currently enacted in multilingual-oriented schools.

Theme 3. What tools can I use to assess implementation, teacher performance, student progress, and self-improvement?

The professional development workshops, book studies, and coaching should focus on the language and literacy strategies that have been studied and proven effective in classrooms with multilingual learners (August & Shanahan, 2006, 2008; Carnegie panel on ML literacy, 2007; Calderón, 2007, 2016, 2025; Gottlieb, 2021).

An effective multilingual coach:

- Respects the teacher’s input and acts as a collaborative learning partner.
- Shares unbiased feedback from observation tools on lesson delivery and how students engage.

- Demonstrates how teachers progress from novice to proficiency and efficacy in ML teaching.
- Clearly shows the stages of transfer with data:
 - (1) from professional development
 - (2) to an active teaching repertoire
 - (3) to ML’s impact on learning and well-being.
- Facilitates reflection on data.
- Helps to identify goals each time (“If there is no goal, it’s just a nice conversation,” John Campbell).

A comprehensive instructional and coaching sequence is the vital part of the playbook.

Professional learning begins with vocabulary as the foundation for comprehending a text and self-expression. Next, the focus should shift to reading the text, followed by writing based on the content and conventions of a text. Social-emotional competencies, skills, and norms can be taught during each component.

Where’s the data? The coach is the keeper of the data.

How can we determine if the coaching program is effective? Is the innovation being implemented with

the desired frequency, quality, and adaptation to MLs' proficiency levels? By how many teachers? How are MLs progressing? Is the program sustaining language and literacy across disciplines?

The teacher and coach review quarterly:

1. Coaching observation tools and the text(s) students use.
2. Implementation checklists for coaches and administrators.
3. Status of implementation of instructional strategies from the EL/EB/ML playbook.
4. Student progress from the multimodal assessments.

Every middle and high school teacher needs coaching.

Due to the static NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) scores, the trend in school districts has been to improve the foundations of reading and math in grades K-5. While most state guidelines still need to embrace reading for MLs, attention in the early grades might help prevent sending long-term English learners

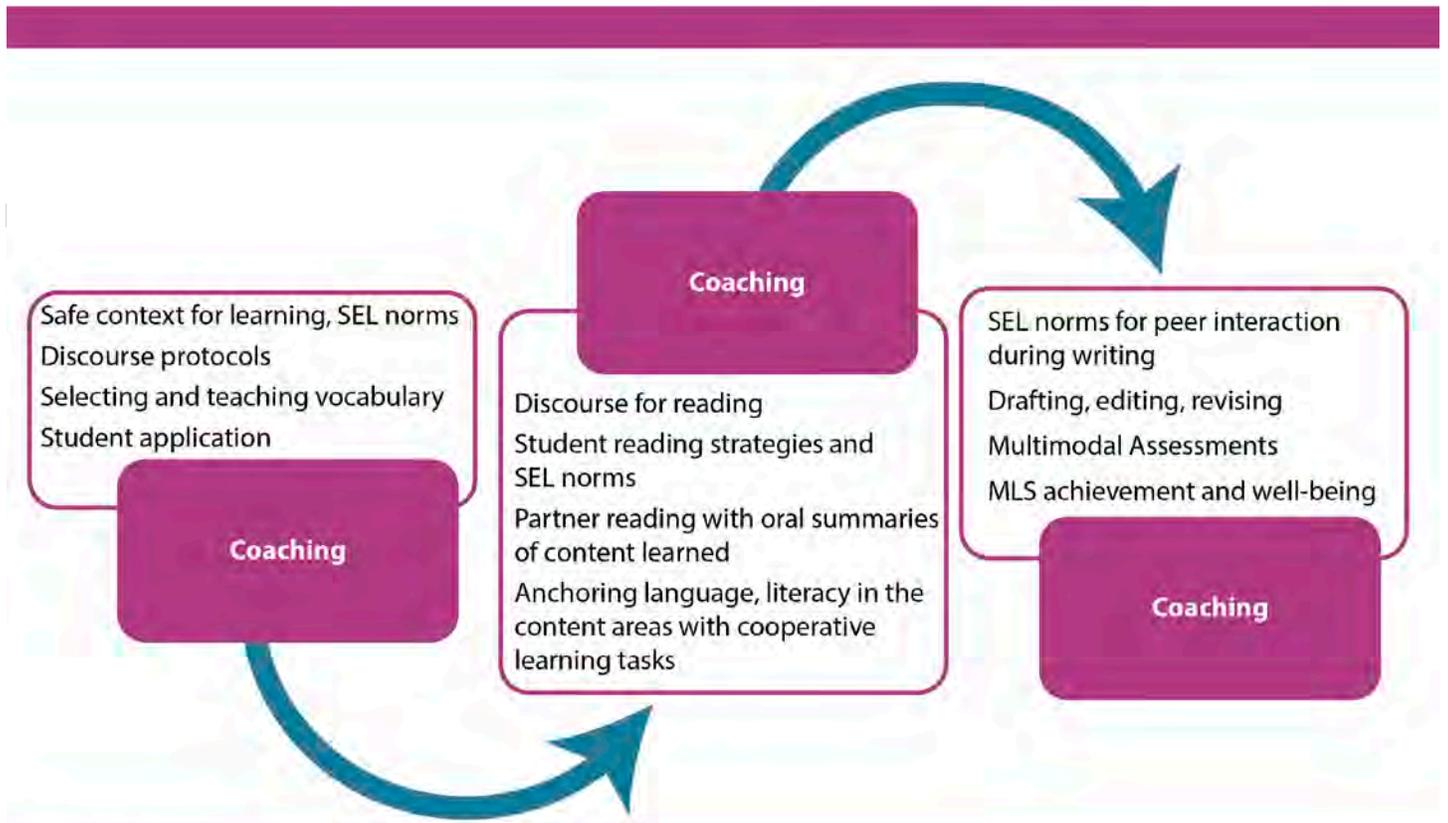
(LTELs) to middle and high school. LTELs and newcomers at the secondary level will also require literacy development in English, and perhaps in their home language. Secondary teachers need professional development and coaches skilled in integrating language, literacy, discourse, and content.

All good things continue in California!

The whole school approach. Coaching is most effective when the entire school is prepared and fully aware of coaching and instruction for multilingual, multicultural students. The whole-school approach succeeds because it emphasizes the skill development of MLs, allowing them to navigate cultures and build healthy relationships while excelling in language, literacy, and content. Furthermore, the entire school benefits from receiving recognition for its students' gains and the number of Seal of Biliteracy recipients. ■

References, notes, and author bio are available in the appendix.

Figure 4. Playbook with the sequence for implementation



Harnessing the Power of Translanguaging

Through CABE's Ongoing Job-Embedded Coaching



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Five-year-old Paulina announces, “I notice that *cono* and *cubo* end with an o, and cone and cube end with e.”

In a Spanish dual language immersion (DLI) first-grade classroom, the teacher invited the group of excited learners to observe the vocabulary words on the Side-by-Side Bridge chart. The chart contained the vocabulary words that the students learned during their unit on three-dimensional shapes. As the teacher underlined the “o” in *cono* and *cubo*, other students raised their hands excitedly, waiting for their turn to share their noticings.

Miss Maya was implementing a newly acquired strategy to support her students in developing their metalinguistic awareness, one of the goals of dual language immersion programs. Miss Maya and her colleagues at Mariposa Elementary, a TK-8 dual immersion school, have been working closely with CABE to shift their language separation approach to one that leverages students’ metalinguistic awareness through translanguaging strategies.

The Rise of Multilingual Learners in California Schools and the Urgency to Shift Pedagogy to Reflect Linguistic Equity.

Many bilingual teachers enter dual language immersion (DLI) classrooms without adequate preparation in the theoretical and practical foundations of bilingualism and biliteracy, leading to instructional gaps that can hinder student progress. As Escamilla (2010) explains, “teaching children to read in two languages requires knowledge of how literacy develops in each language and how the two systems interact,” a complexity often underestimated in teacher preparation. Yet, many DLI teacher preparation programs still lack explicit coursework on cross-linguistic transfer, language allocation policies, and the stages of second language acquisition, leaving teachers to rely on monolingual frameworks or on-the-job learning. This disconnect underscores the need for more robust, research-informed DLI teacher education that equips educators with the tools to intentionally develop both languages in tandem (Escamilla, 2010; Gándara & Santibañez, 2016).



CABE's job-embedded coaching approach empowers educators to integrate translanguaging strategies that build metalinguistic awareness through sustained, practice-based support, enhancing both teacher practice and student outcomes.

In this article, we will spotlight how this approach created safe collaborative learning spaces that empowered teachers to transfer their learning to the classroom.

What Is Translanguaging and Why Does It Matter

Translanguaging is a pedagogical and theoretical framework that recognizes the full linguistic repertoire of bilingual and multilingual individuals. Coined in Welsh educational contexts and expanded upon by Ofelia García and Li Wei, translanguaging challenges the traditional monolingual paradigm that views languages as separate, bounded systems. García (2009) describes translanguaging as “the process by which bilingual students use their languages as an integrated communication system.” Instead of treating English and the home language as isolated entities, translanguaging supports students in fluidly navigating between them to construct meaning, demonstrate understanding, and deepen learning. This theoretical shift reframes bilingualism from a deficit-based perspective to one that values students' entire linguistic identities, rooted in sociolinguistics, critical pedagogy, and dynamic bilingualism (García & Wei, 2014).

In practice, translanguaging allows students to engage more deeply with academic content. When students are encouraged to draw on all their linguistic resources, they gain access to prior knowledge, develop metalinguistic awareness, and enhance their critical thinking skills. Instructional strategies such as collaborative group work, multilingual writing, and cross-linguistic analysis help students make connections across languages and content areas. Moreover, translanguaging affirms students' cultural and linguistic identities, fostering a sense of belonging and increasing engagement. As García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) assert, “translanguaging spaces are pedagogical spaces where students can be themselves, engage meaningfully with rigorous content, and affirm their identities.”

In California's richly multilingual educational context, translanguaging is not only relevant but essential. The California English Learner Roadmap (CDE, 2017) advocates for “assets-oriented and needs-responsive schools” and calls for instruction that builds upon students' home languages. This aligns closely with CABE's vision to promote biliteracy, multicultural competency, and educational equity.

Despite these advances, translanguaging is often misunderstood. It is not a sign of linguistic confusion or lack of proficiency, nor is it simply code-switching between two neatly separated languages. Rather, it reflects how multilingual people naturally use language in real life, combining elements fluidly to communicate effectively. Debunking these myths is key to empowering educators to implement inclusive and academically rigorous practices that honor the full linguistic repertoire of their students.

CABE's Coaching Model: Job-Embedded and Equity-Focused

Too often, districts approach DLI teacher professional learning by allowing them to attend workshops, institutes, and conferences, and while those are important and valuable to teacher learning, the degree to which that learning transfers to classroom application is not reliable or consistent. In addition, competing professional learning initiatives alongside other priorities in districts tend to overshadow the needs of dual language teachers in favor of English-only instruction.

Lesson Study as the Coaching Framework in Dual Language Immersion

Lesson Study offers a powerful, collaborative professional learning structure for dual language immersion (DLI) educators, particularly when integrated into ongoing coaching cycles. Rooted in Japanese educational traditions and adapted for U.S. contexts, Lesson Study is a shared inquiry model where teachers work together to investigate and improve teaching practices. Within DLI settings, where educators must balance rigorous content instruction with the intentional development of two languages, Lesson Study creates space for teams to examine how translanguaging, biliteracy development, and culturally sustaining pedagogy



can be integrated meaningfully into instruction. This model aligns well with job-embedded coaching, allowing coaches and teacher teams to co-construct knowledge, test pedagogical approaches, and build capacity in real time.

A typical Lesson Study coaching cycle begins by identifying a shared problem of practice—for example, students struggling to transfer literacy skills between English and Spanish. The team then co-plans a lesson that explicitly incorporates translanguaging strategies, such as strategic use of The Bridge or metalinguistic contrastive analysis. The lesson is taught by one teacher or is co-taught by a team of teachers while others observe, focusing on student language use, engagement, and comprehension. During instruction, the observation team, which could include instructional coaches, other teachers, and administrators, notes important moments in the lesson and the types and quality of student interactions. Following the lesson, the team engages in deep reflection, using student work and observational data to refine their approach.

This process fosters shared ownership of instructional improvement, supports experimentation, and leads to transformative shifts in pedagogy. For DLI programs, Lesson Study strengthens coherence across classrooms and helps ensure that language and content goals are met.

Translanguaging in Action: A CAFE Coaching School Case Study

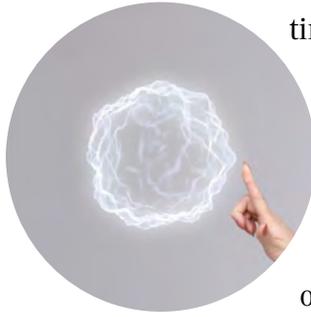
Mariposa Elementary School, located on the Central Coast of California, serves a predominantly Latinx student population, the majority of whom are emergent bilinguals participating in the school's DLI program. In Spring 2025, CAFE launched a targeted three-phase coaching cycle at Mariposa focused on implementing "The Bridge," a structured translanguaging strategy that supports cross-linguistic transfer and biliteracy development. The coaching goal was to strengthen teacher knowledge and instructional practice to intentionally integrate both Spanish and English in content areas across TK-8 classrooms. By leveraging students' full linguistic repertoires and raising metalinguistic awareness, the students at Mariposa Elementary would be well on their way to

bilingualism and biliteracy—a true superpower! During the **planning phase**, CAFE's professional learning specialists collaborated with grade-level teams to co-design science, social studies, or math lessons aligned to the content standards, language development standards, and literacy standards in both English and Spanish. Using a CAFE-developed lesson design and artifact templates, teachers identified and selected essential vocabulary and concepts taught in the unit's primary language and co-developed Bridge lessons to explicitly transfer these academic terms to the partner language. CAFE coaches introduced strategies such as Total Physical Response (TPR), transfer bridge charts/diagrams, cognate charts, and contrastive analysis mini-lessons to highlight language patterns and support metalinguistic reflection. The extension activities included in the planning allowed for scaffolded practice of the academic vocabulary in the opposite language. Planning also included accountability for the engagement of all students with language practice structures such as "Hands Up–Pair Up" or "Turn and Talk" to ensure full participation in student-led observations of cross-linguistic concepts.

The **implementation phase** occurred when teams of teachers co-taught their collaboratively designed lessons. Before the teacher teams implemented their lessons, the CAFE professional learning specialists ensured respectful observation norms were communicated to the group, as well as observation note-taking instructions. Once in the classroom, the teachers guided students through the formal Bridge process, which involved reviewing learned vocabulary using TPR, summarizing content in the language of instruction, practicing the terms in the partner language, and facilitating structured transfer activities. Observers—including adjacent grade-level teachers and both CAFE and school-based instructional coaches—noted student interactions, insightful cross-language comparisons, and authentic use of both English and Spanish in student discourse.

In the **reflection and revision stage**, coaching teams met immediately after the lesson to debrief with the teachers. During the lesson debrief, teachers, peers, and coaches first shared overall positive observations with the observed teacher team. This created a

safe environment that allowed for authentic feedback and reflection on the teacher’s moves and student responses. The critical dialogue focused on equity and access, particularly how multilingual learners demonstrated deeper conceptual understanding when empowered to use all their language resources. Teachers reflected on the importance of planning translinguaging moments in advance, which allowed them to leverage the students’ emerging biliteracy.



CABE COACHING APPROACH

A key aspect of successful professional learning is the role of coaches. CABE’s professional learning specialists facilitate teacher reflection through appreciative inquiry, focusing on key aspects of the lesson or lesson delivery, rather than critiques.

CABE’s coaching approach is grounded in Elena Aguilar’s Five Principles of Transformational Coaching—compassion, curiosity, connection, courage, and purpose—which serve as the foundational pillars that support meaningful and sustained change in DLI classrooms. As Aguilar (2020) metaphorically explains, just as “piles” in bridge engineering are driven deep into the ground to hold up the bridge deck, these principles uphold the integrity of the coaching process and help it withstand the “weight” of challenges educators face (pp. 45–46). At Mariposa Elementary, CABE’s professional learning specialists drew on these principles throughout the coaching cycle to create safe, collaborative spaces where teachers could reflect, take instructional risks, and transform their practices in support of multilingual learners.

Coaches centered teacher humanity and honored their experiences, recognizing the emotional demands of teaching in multilingual classrooms. Curiosity was cultivated through reflective questioning and structured inquiry during the lesson study, prompting teachers to deeply examine student language use and instructional strategies without judgment. Connection guided the work by fostering strong relationships among educators and reinforcing a shared commitment to biliteracy. Coaches modeled courage by encouraging experimentation with translinguaging strategies, such as The Bridge, even when it was an unfamiliar instructional rou-

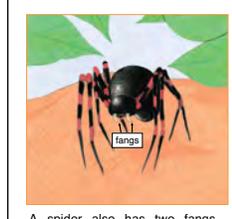
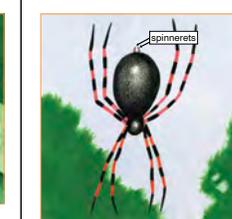
tine. Finally, the vision of transforming schools, where multilingualism is both acknowledged and celebrated, guided our purpose. These principles guided the coaching conversations and ensured the structure held strong, even amid the uncertainties and pressures of the day-to-day challenges in schools. In this way, CABE’s coaching model does more than support pedagogical change; it fosters a shift in teacher identity and belief, which is essential for reimagining what is possible in bilingual education.

The structured use of translinguaging through The Bridge led to more equitable language practices, deeper student engagement, and a noticeable shift in how teachers view multilingualism—not as a challenge to manage, but as a resource to cultivate. The work at Mariposa Elementary affirms that when teachers are supported through collaborative inquiry and job-embedded coaching, transformational practices can take root and directly impact student outcomes. This aligns with Hattie’s (2010) findings on teacher self-efficacy, which he identifies as having one of the highest effect sizes on student achievement in his meta-analyses of factors influencing learning.

The feedback shared by teachers showed a strong trend of increased teacher confidence and excitement for future Bridge lessons. As noted by Miss Maya, the DLI teacher, “I now see translinguaging as a tool, not just something that happens spontaneously.” Her increased awareness of how translinguaging can be structured and intentionally embedded in all lessons was evidence of the impact of the coaching cycle in both instructional shifts and teacher mindset.

As the linguistic landscape of our classrooms continues to evolve, our pedagogical approaches must evolve as well. Translinguaging is more than a strategy; it is a stance and a commitment to honoring the full linguistic repertoire of every learner. When we build teachers’ capacity to leverage translinguaging, we are supporting deep metalinguistic understanding, cultural affirmation, and academic empowerment. Through these practices, we shift from language instruction to language empowerment. ■

References are available in the appendix.

					
<p>A spider has two body parts. They are the head and the abdomen.</p>	<p>A spider has eight eyes on its head. It uses its eyes to see and hunt.</p>	<p>A spider also has two fangs on its head. It uses its fangs to inject venom into prey.</p>	<p>A spider has eight legs connected to its head. It uses its legs to move and feel.</p>	<p>A spider has spinnerets on its abdomen. It uses its spinnerets to make silk.</p>	<p>Some spiders use the silk to spin webs.</p>

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Teaching Non-Fiction/ Expository/Informational Text:

The Role of Deliberate Mediation/Scaffolding as a Sociocultural Practice in Developing Scientific Knowledge and Academic Language in L1 and L2




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Applying Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theoretical Framework: The Teaching/Learning of Scientific and Spontaneous Concepts in Schooling

Vygotsky considered schooling to be the continuation of children's personal and cognitive development. Most importantly, schooling is where scientific concepts originate. Children come to school with *everyday* concepts, learned from their daily lives. Vygotsky called them *spontaneous* concepts. Scientific concepts, however, originate in the highly structured and specialized activity of classroom instruction. (Vygotsky, 1986)

They represent the historical, linguistic, and practical knowledge from their society and ultimately bring systematicity, hierarchical organization, and consciousness into a child's

thinking. They are akin to *academic* language (Cummins & Hawkins, 2013), which researchers identify as the unique language functions and structures used in classrooms, which have the following characteristics: information seeking, informing, analyzing, comparing, classifying, predicating, hypothesizing, justifying, persuading, problem solving, synthesizing, and evaluating.

Mediation as the Agent of Development

For Vygotsky (1978), all human activity is about mediation. Mediation is the way individuals learn and develop as a person, as well as their higher mental functions. As he has

written, “The central fact about our psychology is the fact of mediation” (Vygotsky, 1982, p. 166). Mediation acts as the instrument of cognitive change and personal development through the language used in social interactions, both in cultural settings and in schools. Sociocultural and educational activities are internalized and transformed into internal, mental functions through the process of mediation (Vygotsky, 1978).

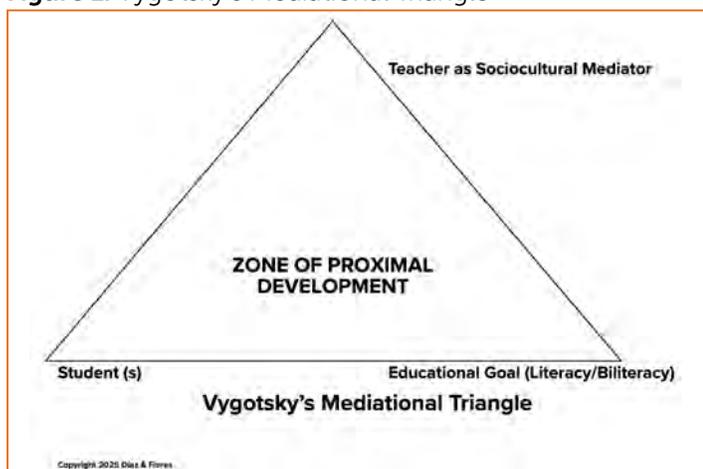
The source of mediation can be a material tool, a system of symbols, or another human being, such as a teacher serving as a sociocultural mediator (Díaz & Flores, 2001). Mediation is most effective when it occurs within a zone of proximal development (ZOPD). In schools, teachers are the key mediators in the learning process because they organize ZOPDs, utilizing social interactions, curriculum, and classroom discourse (language) to help students acquire appropriate knowledge critical to their cognitive and personal development. (See Triangle, Figure 1.)

Mediational structures (visual graphics) contribute to and support the creation and use of ZOPDs for student learning and development. They visually organize the scientific concepts; thus, their use in these socio-cultural and socioeducational activities (lessons) is subsequently appropriated (internalized) by students, and they become a part of their minds (thought/language). In other words, according to Vygotsky (1978), the language (oral/written) used during these teaching/learning (obuchenie) social interactions becomes internalized thought/knowledge.

Appropriation vs. Internalization

We want to distinguish between *appropriation* vs. *internalization*. For Vygotsky, **internalization** referred

Figure 1. Vygotsky’s Mediational Triangle



to the process by which external social activities, interactions, and cultural tools are transferred and integrated into an individual’s internal mental processes. In other words, it is how the social world becomes a part of our own individual thinking and psychological functioning. This is particularly the case for schooling when social interactions are school lessons designed to facilitate the appropriation of significant cultural and societal knowledge, especially scientific knowledge. In a Vygotskian framework, a science lesson is much more than a transfer of facts; it is a collaborative process of semiotic mediation. When a teacher and students explore science together, the students aren’t just “learning” information—they are appropriating the cultural tools of scientific thought. For example, in the lesson the teacher might ask: “What do spiders eat and how do they capture their prey?” Explain. What is your evidence?” Vygotsky holds that the student(s) internalize(s) this dialogic structure. In other words, the teacher’s voice/language becomes the student’s inner speech/thoughts.

Vygotsky would also hold that students appropriate semiotic tools like language, diagrams, charts, mnemonic devices, etc., which are parts of the lessons. For example, one student said that he remembered parts of the spider body because another student had said them aloud while reading from the list of scientific facts they had gathered from the book. He also pointed to the list of collective knowledge that the teacher had written on the chart titled *New Scientific Knowledge* (a mediational structure), which was taped to the wall. We realized that students were remembering parts from the entire sociocultural interactions within this socioeducational context. It was not just the formal words; it was also clues from the social context and others involved.

That is why we prefer using *appropriation* because it better captures the way students were recalling and retaining information rather than just *internalizing it*. Appropriation in its essence signifies the act of taking something, whether physically or conceptually, and making it one’s own, i.e., from the Latin roots *ad* and *propius* which means to make something *one’s own*. In a way, students embodied the memories of the social activity, much like yoga masters remind their students that the *body remembers*. It is a constructive process, not just a mere transfer of knowledge. The learner has more agency in his/her learning.

Mediational structures (Flores, 2010a) have the power to organize a collective activity involving teachers, students, curricular materials, and other tools to help students understand appropriate scientific concepts.

The Praxis of Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theories-in-Practice

Given that for Vygotsky, mediation is critical for organizing effective Zones of Proximal Development (ZOPDs), the *role of deliberate mediation* is paramount in the teaching/learning of scientific knowledge and academic language. The organization of such ZOPDs is the responsibility of the teacher. For us, teachers are the ‘sociocultural mediators’ (Díaz & Flores, 2001) who have the knowledge, preparation, experience, and ability to organize a ZOPD within which critical knowledge is shared and then appropriated by students. In the following, we describe the procedural steps a teacher takes to use Mediational Structures to create an appropriate and positive ZOPD using expository texts.

First, the teacher asks these pedagogical questions:

- 1) How do I select the topic/book? And the small group of children?
- 2) What does the instruction look like?
- 3) How do I intentionally organize it across many levels of social interactions?
- 4) How do I strategically engage the children in oral/written social interactions that use scientific concepts and academic language along with their prior knowledge and language use?
- 5) When do I deliberately use mediational structures and processes for the children to appropriate the potential—the internalization/appropriation of scientific concepts along with the academic language.

Selection of Topic/Book and Small Group

In considering the science topic, I, as the teacher, needed to consider the children’s interests and curiosities—I knew that the children were very curious about insects, spiders, and reptiles. I also knew that I would need at least six books—one for the teacher and one for each of the five students. In selecting the topic, spiders, for second-grade students who were all around level E-G, I chose the book, *The Spider’s Body* (Level J), because of the captivating illustrations and scientific content, and academic language, plus it was 3-5 levels above their instructional level. The five children were from three second-grade classrooms. All the children were bilingual in Spanish and English. For some, English was their second language, and for a couple, English was more dominant. We engaged them using

translanguaging whenever it went with the *biliteracy corriente*. (Ibarra Johnson, 2025)

Using the Pedagogical Mediational Structure: “The Backbone of Teaching/Learning (Obuchenie) to Teach Expository Writing”

The following mediational structure, *The Backbone of Teaching/Learning (Obuchenie) Using Deliberate Mediation* (Flores, 2025), outlines the deliberate instructional practices and sociocultural interactions that the teacher and children will actively engage in using oral and written language in the coming to know process of scientific concepts and the academic language that is used to explain and describe the study of that cultural object—in this case, *The Spider’s Body*. The goal is to write an expository summary of the scientific knowledge learned using the academic language.

The Backbone of Teaching/Learning (Obuchenie) Using Deliberate Mediation

1. Tapping Collective Knowledge
2. Introducing Book–Picture Walk and Talk
3. Modeling/Demonstrating Proficient Reading
4. Guided/Mediated Documentation of Scientific Knowledge
5. Collaborative/Cooperative Expository Co-Construction of Scientific Knowledge
6. Independent/Appropriation

Tapping Everyday Knowledge

By Tapping Individual/Collective Everyday Knowledge (spontaneous concepts), we deliberately prepare the children to make visible their collective *funds of knowledge* (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2005) as everyday knowledge around the topic of spiders. First, ask each child to list 3-5 things they know about spiders (See Figure 2) and then have them share their contributions as the teacher negotiates how to write them. (See Figure 3.) This type of repetition, i.e., negotiating written text using oral language, provides an *allatocness* (Berthoff, 1990) of how reading/writing uses the linguistic cueing systems (pragmatics, semantics, syntactic, graphophonic, and orthographic) to construct meaning as a related process. (Goodman, 1996; Flores, 2010b)

Tapping Individual/Collective Everyday Knowledge

1. Provide the Mediational Structure for students to document their **Everyday Knowledge**, as

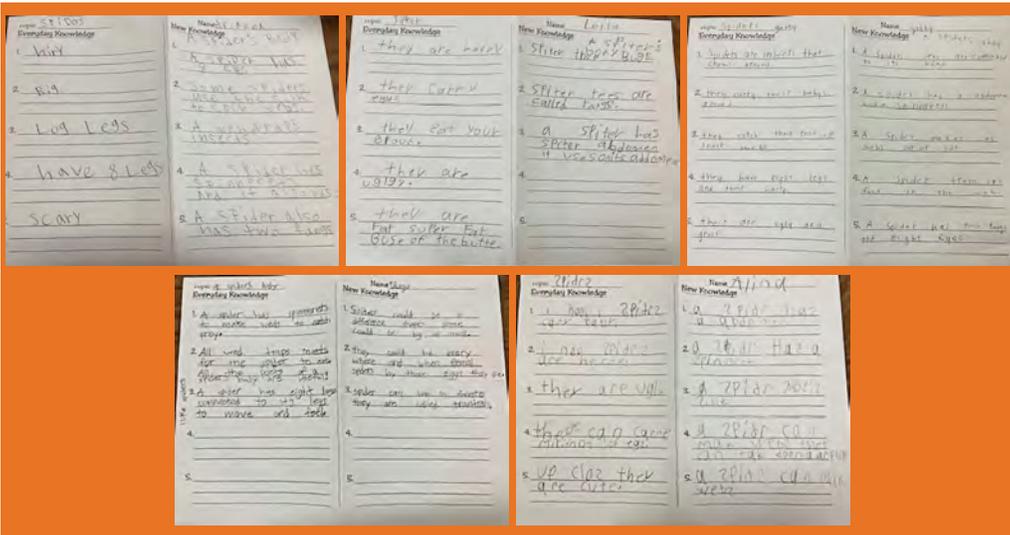


Figure 2. Individual Everyday Knowledge & New Knowledge Mediation Structure

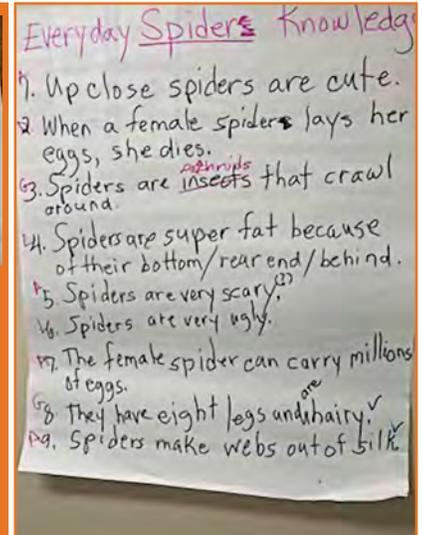


Figure 3. Everyday Knowledge Chart

indicated by the headings on the left side, which show numbered lines 1-5, and on the right side, the heading is **New Knowledge** with numbered lines 1-5) that they fill in later. (See Figure 2.)

2. Each child writes one to three to five things she/he knows about spiders, their everyday/spontaneous knowledge. By doing this, we show the children that we value their everyday knowledge as *knowing learners*.
3. When finished, each child reads/shares one of her/his items. As children share orally, the teacher writes each contribution as a sentence on a chart. As each sentence is written, the teacher asks them to read and reread the list chorally. (See Figure 3.)

Introducing the Spider Book: The Importance of Picture Walk and Talk

The Picture Walk and Talk is important because it creates an opportunity to discuss and ask questions about the illustrations, provide commentaries, share experiences, and, most importantly, allows the teacher to use the academic and scientific language noted on each page. It helps students to use various modalities to appropriate the targeted knowledge of the socioeducational context, preparing to read an expository text with scientific concepts and academic language.

Picture Walk and Talk about each page.

1. Now, a discussion between the children and the teacher engages the children in talking about the

illustrations page by page, either together or with someone, or the teacher asks questions related to what is new.

2. The important aspect is for the teacher to deliberately use the academic language that is written on each page. The students have not yet heard the text read aloud. By front-loading the academic language, the teacher is orally building on their prior knowledge of spontaneous concepts and language. Language plays an important part in these interactions because thought and language are deeply interconnected, and language use in sociocultural settings serves both as a communication tool and a means of organizing and internalizing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1962). Cognitive development is seen as fundamentally rooted in social interactions, with language acting as a crucial tool for learning and intellectual growth.
3. Repetition plays a key role in memory retention.
4. The above is one important aspect of *deliberate mediation* that connects the illustration to the labelling of the spider's body parts.

Modeling and Demonstrating Proficient Reading

Now that the teacher has tapped and made visible the collective knowledge about spiders through deliberate mediation using the chart, plus engaged the children in the picture walk and talk, she/he will read the text aloud as a proficient reader by **modeling and demonstrating** prosody and fluency while stopping to ask **Reciprocal Teaching** questions, such as:

A Spider's Body



Written by Barbara Flores, Elena Castro, and Eddie Hernandez
Illustrated by Michael Ramirez

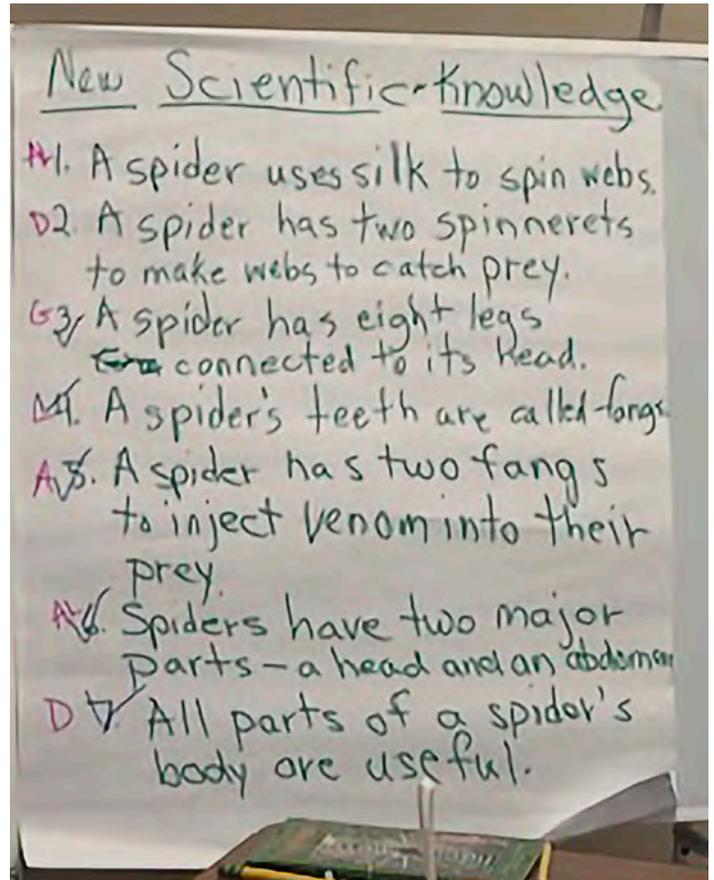


Figure 4. New Scientific Knowledge Chart sentences on a new chart labeled *New Knowledge*. She/He **engages** them in the process of collaboratively **sharing** with the teacher in co-constructing their expository facts in a collaborative written text titled, *New Knowledge* on a chart. (See Figure 4.)

Does this make sense? Does the illustration match the text? Why do you suppose that the spider can do that? I wonder how the spider makes silk?

Modeled/Demonstrated Proficient Reading

1. The teacher reads the book aloud as the children watch and listen. She/He is modeling how a proficient reader sounds by demonstrating the prosody (oral fluency).
2. The teacher distributes books and then all chorally read it page by page and discuss each page and connect the text with the labeling in the illustration by pointing and talking about the spider's parts and their scientific names.
3. Again, repetition in another form serves as a deliberate mediation between the oral and written language in the text.

The Importance of Guided/Mediated Documentation of Scientific Knowledge Using Multiple Mediation Structures

Afterwards, the children are asked to choose 3-5 new scientific knowledge facts they have learned by documenting their choices by returning to the text, rereading, and quoting their evidence in the mediational structure labeled *New Knowledge*. The teacher then negotiates, repeats, and writes their

Guided/Mediated Use of Mediation Structures

1. Next, after the complete book has been chorally read and talked about, the children are now asked to go back into the text and select five new scientific facts that they learned about the spider's body parts. They use the other side of the Mediation Structure labeled *New Knowledge*. [Note: I am going to change it to *New Scientific Knowledge*.] (See Figure 3.)
2. After they finish, each of the five children contributes at least one sentence of new scientific knowledge, and the teacher makes visible their collective scientific knowledge on a new Chart. (See Figure 4.)
3. What is starkly noticeable is that they are now using/repeating/talking about scientific concepts using oral academic scientific language as they read their sentences, and the teacher transcribes them on the chart.

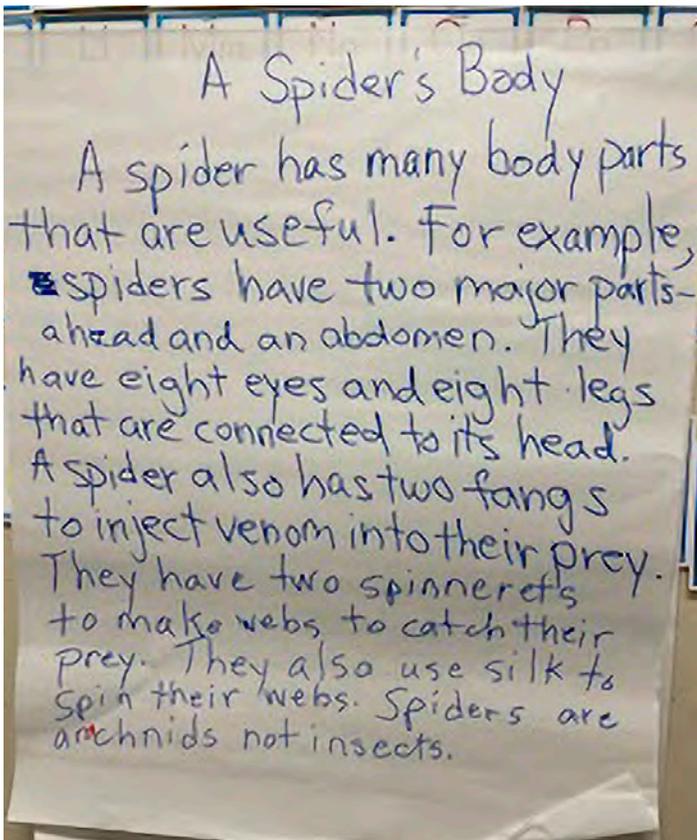


Figure 5 Collaborative Written Expository Paragraph

The Importance of the Collaborative/ Cooperative Co-Construction Summary of Scientific Knowledge Using Expository Text

Engaging children in Collaborative/Cooperative discussions, tasks, and thinking creates a ZOPD that allows children the space to authentically socially interact in the exchange of ideas, curiosities, and explorations. According to Vygotsky (1968; 1978), knowledge is socially constructed and appropriated through the authentic use of language. All language becomes internalized thought.

Why is this collaborative social interaction important?

Remember that in preparation for collaboratively writing the Summary of Scientific Knowledge of “A Spider’s Body, the children were directed to return to the text and to choose and write 5 new scientific concepts/facts that they found interesting and that they would share, so the teacher could write/document them in the New Scientific Knowledge Chart. This posted New Scientific Knowledge Chart becomes the mediational structure that deliberately mediates/guides their collaborative construction of their Summary paragraph.

By reading and rereading their written text and using the academic language associated with the scientific concepts and facts they have learned, the children, with the teacher’s guidance, engage in understanding how the reading/writing process works by asking questions, such as: Do we need a topic sentence? Does this make sense? Is this an accurate statement? Does the summary flow? How shall we end the paragraph? What concluding sentence shall we use?

Guided/Mediated

1. Before starting the paragraph, the teacher asks the students for the title and a topic sentence. The children talk among themselves and decide what the title and the topic sentence should be. The teacher then writes it, asking them to confirm as she/he writes them, checking to make sure their thoughts and words are captured.
2. The children next refer to the chart labeled New Scientific Knowledge to decide the order of the sentences that will be collaboratively written in the paragraph. The teacher then also injects the use of connectors as options to make it sound like written academic language.
3. It should be noted that “We cannot write about what we do not know—and what we do know has to be organized so that the writing is coherent, cohesive, and comprehensive. Mediated structures provide the bridge to proficient academic and expository writing.” (Flores, p. 9, 2010a)
4. Additionally, the last sentence that the children wanted to say stated that spiders were insects; however, the teacher questioned whether that was true and looked it up on the spot. Of course, the Google search indicated that spiders were indeed not insects but belonged to the arachnid species.

The Importance of Becoming an Independent Scientific Thinker/Writer/Reader Appropriation

After the collaborative expository summary had been negotiated and received final approval from all the children, they each decided to read the summary paragraph aloud, using a pointer. The next step is for each child to transcribe the paragraph to make it his/hers. The goal is for the children to appropriate this scientific/thinking/reading/writing process using nonfiction/expository/informational text and engage them in realizing their potential using mediational processes and structures. What did the children and teachers learn?

1. Students acquired scientific knowledge and academic language about spiders.
2. They clarified factual differences from their everyday knowledge with the scientific concepts/ knowledge from the text, and at the same time, validated the correct knowledge they listed.
3. They learned that collaborative work supports, promotes, and expands important scientific knowledge necessary to be an educated person and citizen.
4. Teachers acquired knowledge on how to organize successful ZOPDs for supporting students' appropriation of scientific knowledge.
5. Mediational structures are powerful tools for promoting teaching and learning of key concepts valuable to their community and society.

Concluding Remarks

Our major contribution in this article is the power of the mediational structure and deliberate mediation using *The Backbone of Teaching/Learning (Obuchenie)* as a powerful teaching/learning tool for assisting teachers in organizing lessons that effectively utilize expository/informational text to teach scientific knowledge and concepts, as well as academic language.

Above all, we initially showed how to value and respect the children's prior knowledge (Everyday Knowledge) and make it visible using two mediated structures (Everyday Knowledge Documentation by individual child) and then a co-constructed *Collective Everyday Knowledge Chart*. In addition, we also made

visible how to organize *Teaching/Learning* within the *ZOPD* to deliberately mediate to the potential by engaging the children in learning about scientific concepts and the use of the academic language associated with these scientific concepts so that they could appropriate them.

We have presented and demonstrated how Mediational Structures (Flores, 2010a) and processes help students learn and appropriate new scientific knowledge about spiders (See California ELA/ELD Framework and Yopp, Spycher & Brynelson, 2016). We have also expanded on Vygotsky's concepts of mediation, ZOPD, and how language use in socioeducational contexts is appropriated/internalized by students and eventually becomes scientific knowledge/thought, which, for Vygotsky, was the source of reflective consciousness. Importantly, we have also shown how the mediational structure capitalizes on and promotes the development and intertwining of spontaneous and scientific concepts, both of which Vygotsky viewed as interrelated and crucial for a child's intellectual growth. ■

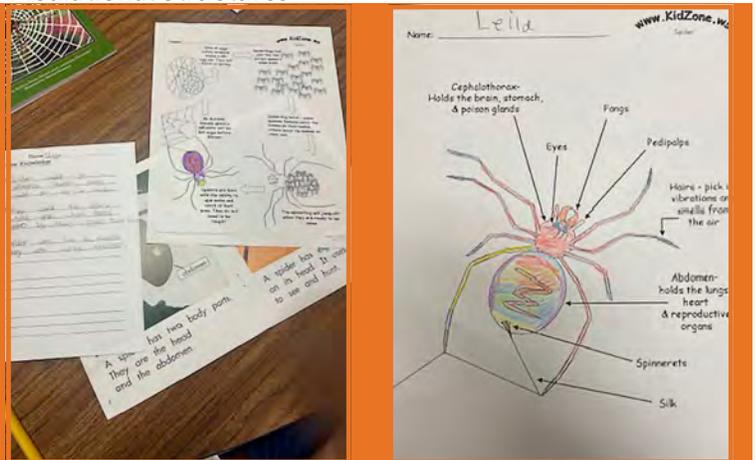
The Authors thank Superintendent Mauricio Arellano, Principal Melanie McGrath, Second Grade Teachers (Millán, Bailón, and Quezada), the children, and MTSS TOSA Arlene Quintana-Rangel at Antón Elementary School in San Bernardino City Unified School District for their participation and contributions for this article.

References and author bios are available in the appendix.

Dr. Bárbara Flores in classroom



Mediational Structures



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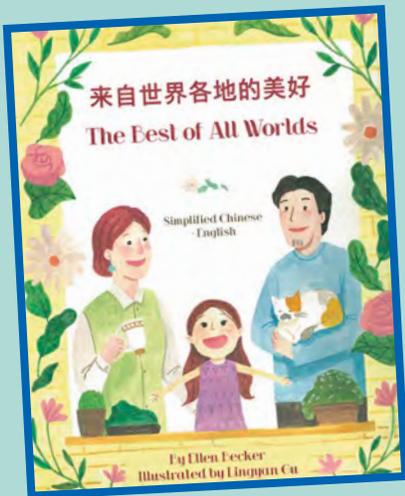
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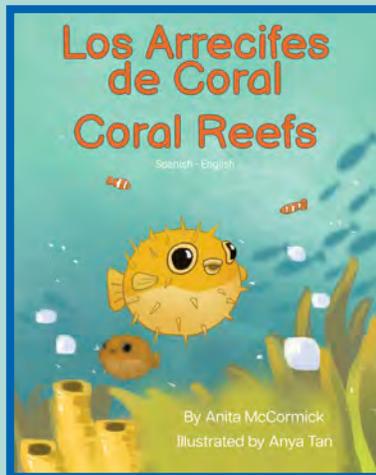
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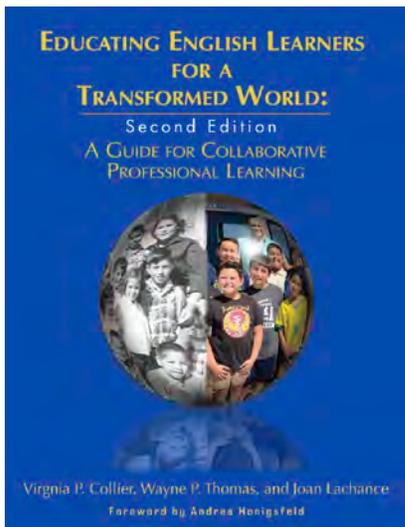
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Dual Language is Powerful for English Learners, PK-12



Virginia P. Collier, Ph.D.

Wayne P. Thomas, Ph.D.

George Mason University

Joan Lachance, Ph.D.

University of North Carolina, Charlotte

We researchers continue to shout to the world that dual language schooling is the most powerful way for students and teachers to come together and collaboratively create a new world! National policies currently appear to be taking us in the opposite direction. In the current political climate in the U.S., we could succumb to fear—for our kids, our students, and their families. But if we stop, breathe, envision what is ours to do, and share our visions and spread the word about dual language schooling, we will create a momentum that’s unstoppable. And the best way to do that is to focus on our local communities. The state of California is responsible for schooling, not the federal government (according to the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution). **So, California, your time has come!** As we have said before, dual language/bilingual educators are creative innovators. We have the power and the wisdom to create new ways of doing schooling. What does that look like?

Defining English learners. In this short article, we’re going to focus on the benefits of dual language

schooling for students who are not yet proficient in English. An older term for these students is “English learners,” while gentler words might be “emergent bilinguals” or “multilingual learners.” However, these terms also apply to native English speakers in dual language classes, so we’re choosing the older term for purposes of focusing on only your students still in the process of acquiring the English language.

How long? Why do English learners need a more powerful school program that is taught through their heritage language and English? We have made it clear that it takes a long time to reach grade-level achievement in a second language, an average of six years. While getting to that goal, students vitally need experiences across the curriculum that are taught in the language they know best (L1/first language), while also getting academic access to the second language (L2/second language). The stimulus of meaningful lessons in both L1 and L2 that connect to the world outside of school helps your students grow in knowledge and wisdom.

For example, understanding science, math, and social studies through thematic units that excite your students is crucial. As they continue to mature in the secondary years, it is important to share a cross-cultural curriculum that stimulates an understanding of the power structures of the past and envisions new societal relationships of the future.

Why does it take so long? Second language acquisition for school is a complex process. Language domains include phonology, vocabulary, grammar, semantics, pragmatics, paralinguistics, and discourse; and native speakers of the language continue to expand their own L1 development throughout their lifetime, from birth to the wisdom years of elders. Both the oral and written systems of the instructional languages are taught in school, through natural exposure to both languages in meaningful interactions with classmates and through some guided, explicit explanations from the teacher. But we now know that focusing solely on language lessons can be extremely boring, and the pace of 21st-century life influences students' impatience with old-school structures. Thus, dual language students and teachers are collaboratively finding ways to create new curricular experiences that interconnect with the bilingual/multicultural experiences of the adult world.

Dual language is the most powerful of all programs for English learners. In our new book, *Educating English Learners for a Transformed World* (2nd edition): *A Guide for Collaborative Professional Learning* (2025), we make the case for the superiority of dual language over all the other program types. Dual language, well-implemented, is far and above better than transitional bilingual education, English as a Second Language (ESL)—only taught through academic content, ESL pullout, or structured English immersion. These other programs for English learners, implemented from the 1960s to the present years, have been thoroughly tested and found to be lacking in many qualities. All programs that focus solely on English do not provide any support for students' L1. That automatically slows down students' cognitive growth and leads to low test scores. With no lessons taught in L1, by the time our students have acquired enough English to pass the English language proficiency test, they are so far behind in

their schoolwork that they never catch up to the constantly advancing native English speakers.

Transitional bilingual classes provide L1 support for a short period (typically 2-3 years), but during this time, English learners are isolated from native English speakers, often perceiving themselves as marginalized. Furthermore, the L1 support is limited to a few years. **Dual language is the mainstream taught through two languages, integrating students for collaborative learning.** English learners can flourish in dual language classes, eventually reaching at or above grade level in both L1 and L2, ready to achieve the California Bilingual Seal and graduate prepared for their bilingual/bicultural future. We (Thomas & Collier) have analyzed over 8 million student records from 37 school districts in 16 U.S. states, as well as all school districts in North Carolina. Our findings consistently show that dual language education is the most powerful program for English learners, PK-12.

We made the case in our *2020 Multilingual Educator* article that all groups benefit enormously in dual language classes—including English learners, students who have lost their heritage language, students from poverty, students of all ethnicities, and native English speakers. Focusing on English learners, it is important to remember that English learners should be admitted to your dual language classes, regardless of their age or level of prior education. Students arrive having gone through life experiences beyond their control—war, forced participation in gangs, pregnancy, or alone with no family support—whatever their situation, we welcome our students into our communities and we do what we can to provide meaningful experiences in school that connect to their needs. Regardless of grade level or age, students whose heritage language is the partner language belong in your dual language classes. We, as dual language educators, can find many creative ways to offer our students a lot of the support needed through both L1 and L2.

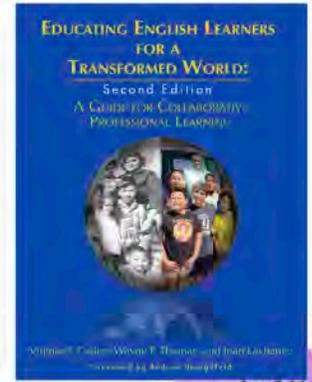
We, as dual language educators, have lots to do! Let's not focus on the past or on issues that stimulate fear. We are collaborators, creating a new future for all our students. ■

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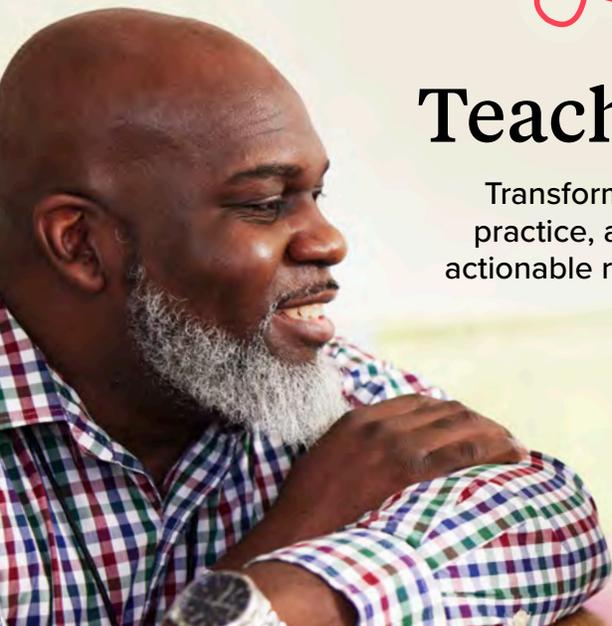
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WRITE at 35: A Legacy of Teacher Growth and Student Voice, A Future of Shared Purpose



Julie Goldman, Ed.D.

*Director, Equity Curriculum and Instruction
San Diego County Office of Education*

I invite you to reflect on a time when writing—or teaching writing—brought you joy or meaning. Perhaps it was a handwritten Mother’s Day card, a heartfelt song that your loved one wrote for you, an eager young writer in your classroom who enthusiastically dictated her epic adventure story, or the quiet personal satisfaction of revising a thesis statement on a topic that truly mattered. If nothing comes to mind easily, you are not alone. After asking thousands of educators to revisit a positive experience with writing or writing instruction, our team has observed, time and again, how challenging it can be for many educators to conjure a positive memory. Writing and writing instruction often hold more struggle than celebration, more uncertainty than confidence.

For more than 35 years, the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE)’s **Writing Redesigned for Innovative Teaching and Equity (WRITE) Institute** has been changing this narrative. As a nationally recognized model of academic excellence, WRITE supports TK-12 educators, schools, and districts to implement culturally and linguistically responsive literacy instruction. This program has built the capacity of thousands of instructional leaders to transform their classrooms and schools into spaces where

student stories are heard, published, and celebrated. As we mark this milestone, we honor WRITE’s legacy of cultivating teacher growth—and we look ahead to the next chapter of inspiring student writers.

What is WRITE?

Grounded in a commitment to educational equity, WRITE provides a comprehensive model: dynamic professional learning, a robust curriculum featuring genre-specific, grade-span units in English and Spanish, and sustained coaching that builds teacher expertise. At the heart of WRITE are three core pillars: (1) genre-focused instruction that emphasizes purposeful language; (2) formative, proficiency-based writing assessment that focuses on growth; and (3) equity-centered unit design grounded in research-based best practices. This triad supports educators to transform their classrooms into environments of belonging, creativity, and deep thinking. By bridging content learning with language development, WRITE supports culturally and linguistically diverse learners through meaningful cross-linguistic connections. It prioritizes bilingual and bidialectal pedagogies that leverage students’ linguistic assets. This approach enhances traditional writing

instruction models by placing a strong emphasis on the prewriting process—where teachers integrate rich content and layered texts, structure genre-based oral language development, and offer strategic scaffolds in reading and writing that lay the foundation for success in literacy (Haas, Goldman & Faltis, 2018). WRITE draws on six high-leverage writing practices: (1) teach genre writing as a process; (2) build on students’ backgrounds; (3) model writing for and with students; (4) develop students’ academic oral language; (5) teach grammar and vocabulary explicitly and in context; and (6) publish (and celebrate!) writing using technology. These practices, which I developed in 2013, represent a synthesis of high-impact approaches to culturally and linguistically responsive literacy instruction, grounded in research then and continually informed by emerging scholarship today (Goldman, 2013). Researchers Haas, Brewer, and Fishman (2014) referenced WRITE when they noted that “a very effective way [to create ‘expert’ teachers] is to have teachers experience this type of learning themselves, because, really, that is how we change—by experiencing something new that is successful in all its complexity” (p. 88).

History and Impact

The visionary behind WRITE, Donna Heath, retired SDCOE Senior Director, recognized early on the need to prepare English learners for middle and high school success. Guided by her experience as a

counselor and Spanish teacher, she championed the belief that “If we are going to be equitable for English learners, we need rigorous, challenging curriculum and capacity-building through literacy.” Under her leadership, WRITE was launched in 1990 with a Title VII grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Affairs. Originally called Project WRITE with the tagline “clear writing creates clear thinking,” the initiative began as an effort to improve writing instruction for English learners in the San Dieguito Union High School District. Since then, it has become a national model for equity-centered writing instruction. WRITE quickly gained momentum: it earned recognition as an exemplary program by the US Department of Education in 1995 and received a grant to replicate its model statewide. Notably, this work emerged during a politically charged era marked by Proposition 227, which sought, unsuccessfully, to dismantle bilingual education in California.

In contrast to the restrictive educational climate of its early years, WRITE offered a new direction. Over the next three decades, WRITE expanded its reach through strategic partnerships, including multi-year collaborations with Alliant International University, California State University, San Marcos, and San Diego State University, and broadened its scope to include Spanish-language instruction, preservice teacher preparation, and integration into credentialing programs. A pivotal moment came in 2002, when a small

Donna Heath speaks at Project Write Title VII Academic Excellence Award Celebration



WRITE team of five transitioned to the SDCOE under the forward-thinking leadership of retired SDCOE Senior Director Rosalia Salinas. Reflecting on the initiative, Rosalia shared, “Project WRITE modeled excellent professional development with effective classroom application. This combination fueled our campaign to bring WRITE to SDCOE for wider dissemination—and I am proud to have been part of that effort.” At SDCOE, the team launched a state-wide coaching model and continued refining and expanding its genre-focused curriculum. In 2004, WRITE received a Golden Bell Award for Professional Development from the California School Boards Association. With support from multiple state and federal grants—including the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Title III, and Educator Workforce Investment Grant (EWIG)—WRITE expanded its impact by advancing equity for diverse learners. These resources supported the integration of research-based practices and initiatives to address systemic barriers and implicit bias, including projects focused on the specialized needs of elementary dual language learners, secondary long-term English learners, and Native American youth. Most recently, WRITE has undergone a comprehensive redesign—updating its K-12 units and strengthening the accessibility of its digital resources.

As WRITE continued to grow in reach and impact, its success was shaped by a dedicated team of educators and leaders who carried the work forward together. Among them was Laurie Nesrala-Miles, Communications Manager at CABE, retired SDCOE Lead Coordinator, and co-founding writer of WRITE’s secondary curriculum, who played an instrumental role in shaping WRITE’s enduring impact. Over nearly two decades, she helped guide the program’s growth and evolution. Her influence continues through teachers who have implemented the model, many of whom describe a significant shift in their practice. She recalled a resonant moment during WRITE’s first year of implementation in Northern California when a teacher approached her and said, “Thank you. I had already decided that this would be my last year teaching. I hadn’t felt for a long time that I was effective. Thanks to this training, I feel like it’s making a real difference.” Laurie shared how WRITE reignited this teacher’s commitment to refining his craft and embracing more humanizing pedagogies.

“Thank you. I had already decided that this would be my last year teaching. I hadn’t felt for a long time that I was effective. Thanks to this training, I feel like it’s making a real difference.”

Stories like this reflect the far-reaching ripple effect of a practice that invites teachers to rethink what whole-child literacy instruction might look like in their classrooms. “It’s not just about teaching students writing skills,” Laurie explained, “it’s about honoring them as authors. It is about supporting students to find their voice and nurturing that voice.” With nostalgic emotion, she added that her long tenure at WRITE was the highlight of her entire career. “I’m grateful people are still benefitting from it,” she said.

Similarly, Silvia Dorta-Duque de Reyes, national bilit-eracy consultant and author with Benchmark Publishing, retired SDCOE Coordinator, and co-founding writer of the WRITE en español curriculum, reflected on the impact of parallel curriculum units in English and Spanish. When students engaged with the same book across both languages, they made meaningful connections and experienced a boost in confidence. “I got smart in my English class. I never felt so smart,” she recalled one student sharing with her. “This activity is like the one we did in Spanish class.” Silvia shared that, in interviews with her students (many recorded on old VHS tapes!), they often expressed how they hadn’t felt academically challenged before WRITE. “It changed us,” she said. “It changed the teachers, and it especially changed the students.” One clear measure of success was the increase in students enrolling in Advanced Placement (AP) Language and Literature courses. Over time, this expanded to AP History and Science, reflecting the broader impact the program had on student motivation and achievement.

Building on this momentum, Kristen Blake Olivas, retired Coordinator at SDCOE and co-founding writer of WRITE’s elementary curriculum, brought classroom

experience from implementing WRITE in middle school during the Reading First era. She described how the program offered scaffolded, genre-based instruction that emphasized teaching—not assigning—writing, which she recalled as groundbreaking at the time. “WRITE gave my students access—to explore their identities, understand how language works, and most importantly, to find their voice.” Mónica Nava, retired SDCOE Senior Director, echoed this sentiment: “This work impacted thousands and thousands of students. We saw the snowball effect. It was really more of a movement.”

Tammy Harris, founder of Tammy’s Teachings, retired SDCOE Coordinator, and co-founding writer of WRITE’s elementary curriculum, also talked about her time supporting elementary teachers. “We taught all the kids together,” she recounted, “with additional support for those who needed differentiated instruction.” In these classrooms, WRITE was integrated across all subject areas, reaching every student. The result was significant: students expressed their ideas with more clarity and confidence, opening doors to opportunities that had once felt out of reach.

To strengthen WRITE’s impact at the systems level, Dr. Jaguanana Lathan, CEO of New Generation Equity and former SDCOE Executive Director, led foundational equity systems learning in partnership with WestEd and University of California, Davis. “We noticed that teachers’ perceptions of their students as writers, readers, and thinkers directly impacted the way they designed instruction and assessed learning,” she explained. “To promote an assets-based lens, we worked with literacy coaches to support them to reflect on their own identities, mindsets, and skills in order to build the structures and systems necessary to support all students.”

These dedicated educators represent just a few of the dozens of WRITE leaders who have advanced and sustained this work. As part of this team for more than 25 years, I have had the privilege of walking alongside colleagues as the project grew from a small district to a multi-state movement, consistently offering educators a safe space to take risks and collaborate authentically. We’ve watched teachers enter WRITE classrooms uncertain of their ability to teach writing, especially to culturally and linguisti-

cally diverse students, and leave with a greater sense of agency and renewed purpose. Time and time again, we noticed that the most hesitant participants became the most passionate advocates. They have led change in their schools and districts, mentored peers, and collaborated with their administrators on how to sustain the work. They have shared stories about the joy of working with students to engage deeply with culturally relevant texts, the satisfaction of guiding students through meaningful revisions, and the emotion of seeing reluctant writers find their voices. WRITE has transformed how thousands of teachers teach—and it has changed how teachers see themselves.

Vision for the Future

WRITE is both a legacy and a commitment to the future. As classrooms, community, and student needs continue to shift, so does the work. Cynthia Craft, SDCOE Coordinator, reflected on her coaching with WRITE educators, noting how the work continues to grow in new directions. She emphasized the enduring power of written communication in shaping students’ futures: “It’s how we pass on wisdom, experiences, and lessons learned—how we share our joys and our sorrows with our students and send them out into the world with our words.”

This work is especially important for culturally and linguistically diverse students, many of whom experienced disrupted access to instruction, language support, and resources during the pandemic. Persistent gaps in materials and teacher preparation continue to hinder equitable learning. Addressing these disparities requires systems to implement trauma-informed practices that support language learning and content mastery. In response, WRITE has taken intentional steps to increase accessibility, most recently through the contributions of Carrie Lane, SDCOE Project Specialist, who enhanced the program’s digital resources.

WRITE continues to evolve to meet these challenges and to navigate digital literacy with intention by positioning writing as a tool for connection. As Dr. Maria McCord, SDCOE Executive Leadership Coach, explains, “the digital divide is no longer just about access to devices—it’s about meaningful integration of technology to meet evolving student needs like digital citizenship and tech fluency.” Redefining literacy in

this context means shifting from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” through real-world, student-driven projects where technology is used intentionally to access content, demonstrate learning, and open pathways to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and professional futures for multilingual learners.

Today, WRITE stands at another defining moment: responding to the urgent calls for inclusive literacy instruction and systemic transformation. The current climate calls for reflection and reimagination—and the WRITE team is rising to meet the moment with clarity and renewed vision. Izela Jacobo, SDCOE Senior Director of Multilingual Education and Global Achievement (MEGA), is guiding WRITE into its next chapter by elevating bilingualism and biliteracy as essential assets in equitable literacy instruction. As a former bilingual director for a district, Izela supported the implementation of WRITE’s approach and experienced firsthand how inclusive, research-based practices can transform teaching and learning for multilingual students. Now, she urges educators, leaders, and policymakers to invest in dynamic, research-based literacy instruction that reflects the realities of a multilingual world. “Reimagining literacy instruction in a multilingual world means moving beyond deficit models and embracing our linguistic and cultural diversity as a critical component of educational equity,” she explains. This vision calls for systemic change—one that values all languages, promotes bilingualism and biliteracy, and prepares students for an interconnected world through inclusive curricula and programs that develop literacy skills in multiple languages, including students’ home languages.

My colleagues and I could share an entire archive of WRITE stories: heartwarming, funny, and sometimes challenging. But it is the stories we carry from our students—profound moments that stay with us—that continue to guide our work. I will always remember a brave 16-year-old with no previous formal schooling who spoke an indigenous Mayan language from Guatemala. Remarkably, she learned the English alphabet and basic phonics in just a few days. After only a few months in the country, she wrote the following about her own migration experience: “It was a hot, sunny day when we started crossing the desert. The sun was hot like an oven. My first day was very hard. My brothers felt sick from the heat. We had no food or water. My second day was still very hot. The next day, we finally arrived in San Diego. We were very thirsty. We bought food, clothes, and shoes. My parents had to go to work to earn an income. Sometimes my mom cries when she remembers the desert.” Silviana’s words remind us why WRITE exists: to honor our students’ stories, nurture resilience, and make learning meaningful.

On behalf of the entire WRITE team, I want to express our deepest gratitude for the teachers who have trusted us, the students who have inspired us, and the administrators who have supported and strengthened this journey. Together, we continue to advance our shared purpose: to ensure that every student is seen, heard, and equipped with the language, literacy, and critical thinking skills they need to thrive. This is a moment worth celebrating—and a time to pause, reflect, and recommit to the work ahead. WRITE’s story is still unfolding, and the next 35 years hold even greater promise. ■

References are available in the appendix.

WRITE Lead Trainer Institute, Early 2000’s



Reaching Higher:



Ensuring Sustained Success for Reclassified Fluent English Proficient Students (RFEPs)



Manuel Buenrostro, M.A.
Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Ph.D.
Californians Together

Nearly one million, or 16 percent of students attending California’s TK-12 public schools, are Reclassified English Proficient (RFEP) students—those who enrolled in school as English learners (ELs) and later achieved sufficient English language skills to be deemed English proficient.¹

Reclassification marks an important milestone in an EL’s educational journey. It reflects the progress they have made in developing and mastering English-language proficiency. Yet, as a report from Californians Together, *Sustaining Success: Supporting the Ongoing Achievement of Reclassified Fluent English Proficient Students* reveals, reclassification alone does not ensure success. Rather, it is one part of an RFEP student’s education journey and presents a new set of opportunities and challenges.

While a principal focus is on supporting ELs to reach the threshold English proficiency necessary for reclassification, the report explores what comes next for RFEP students. Based on information from a survey of unified school districts across California, as well as interviews with staff in districts with exemplary RFEP achievement, the report highlights

effective practices and policies, gaps in access and achievement, and, crucially, the need for school and district leaders to work together to support the sustained success of RFEP students. This article summarizes some of the key insights from the report.

Profile of RFEP Students

RFEP students bring a wealth of linguistic and cultural assets to school. While the majority of these students’ first language is Spanish, they come from nearly 150 different language backgrounds.² Although RFEP students represent just two percent of 1st graders, this proportion increases with the grade levels. By 12th grade, nearly 75 percent of students who started as ELs have been reclassified, making up 30 percent of all 12th graders.³

RFEP students frequently outperform their English-only peers in English Language Arts (ELA). For instance, the 2023-24 3rd-grade data show that 70 percent of RFEP students met or exceeded ELA standards, compared to 47 percent of English-only students. However, this difference diminishes in the higher grades—by 8th and 11th grades, the RFEP achievement advantage has disappeared.⁴

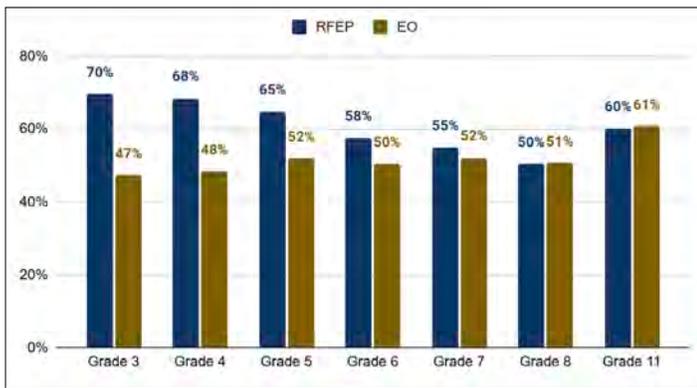


Figure 1: English Language Arts: 2023-24 Percentage of EL, RFEP, and EO Students Who Met or Exceeded Standards, by Grade

The picture is more concerning in math. RFEP math achievement starts strong in elementary school, with 73 percent of students being prepared to meet or exceed standards. After a steady decline over the grade span, only 26 percent of 11th-grade RFEFs showed improvement (Californians Together, 2023). While the math achievement scores of English-only students also decreased over the grade span, the decline is significantly greater for RFEP students.

These statewide achievement data, disaggregated by RFEFs, provide important information for educators, students, families, and the public. However, a foundational challenge identified in the report is the troubling lack of publicly available statewide data on long-term outcomes for RFEP students, such as high school graduation rates, A-G course completion (the courses required for admission to California’s public universities), and participation in rigorous coursework like Advanced Placement (AP) or dual enrollment opportunities.

Current Practices: Monitoring and Support

The report includes information from surveys of EL leaders in 127 unified school districts, representing almost 40 percent of California’s 345 unified school districts. Surveys were administered in unified districts that encompass the full grade span to explore and understand current practices in monitoring and supporting RFEP students from reclassification to graduation. Among the key findings:

- **Monitoring is Widespread, but Depth Varies:** All responding districts monitor RFEP students as expected, given federal and state requirements

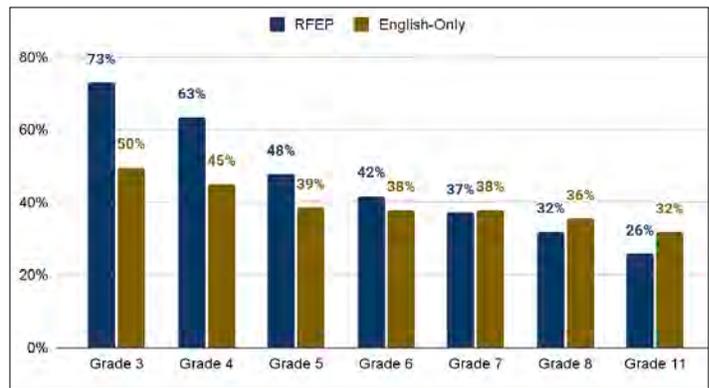


Figure 2: Mathematics: 2023-24 Percentage of RFEP and English-Only Students Who Met or Exceeded Standards, by Grade

for a four-year monitoring period. Report cards and ELA assessment scores are common tools used in education. However, monitoring math achievement is far less prevalent, with only 46 percent using state math assessments for this purpose. This point is critical given the declining math performance in higher grades and the foundational importance of math skills.

- **Formal Plans and Budgets are Lacking:** Although RFEP monitoring is conducted, only about half (54 percent) of districts reported having a formal plan specifically for monitoring and supporting RFEP students. Even fewer—just 23 of the 69 districts with plans—had a dedicated budget to support these plans. This suggests that RFEP support might often be ad hoc rather than a systematically planned and resourced endeavor.
- **Data Sharing Needs Improvement:** While data is generally shared with teachers and administrators, sharing with students (61% of districts) and parents (66% of districts) is less frequent. Furthermore, a significant number of districts (70 percent) do not share RFEP monitoring data with their school boards, potentially limiting broader accountability and strategic oversight.
- **Lack of Awareness about Long-Term Outcomes:** Districts often responded “Don’t Know” when asked about RFEP students’ attainment of key milestones, such as A-G completion, Seal of Biliteracy attainment, AP class completion, and participation in post-secondary education. This underscores the critical data gap and suggests a need for better tracking and awareness at the local level.

These findings suggest that while the intent to support RFEP students exists, school and district leaders should review existing systems and resources required for providing this support and determine what is needed to facilitate the sustained success of these students.

Pathways to Sustained Success: Lessons from Promising Districts

An analysis that controlled for socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, conducted for this study, revealed a wide variation in overall RFEP achievement among unified school districts with similar profiles.

Through this analysis of the report, the authors identified school districts where RFEP students showed greater ELA and math achievement, and conducted interviews with a subset of those districts. The interviews, with the Alhambra, Porterville, Twin Rivers, Firebaugh Las Deltas, Calexico, and Fresno Unified School Districts, focused on what they are doing to support RFEP achievement. These districts, often serving high proportions of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and RFEP students, demonstrate the effectiveness of intentionality and targeted efforts. Some important strategies in these districts include:

- 1. Strong Foundational EL Programs:** These districts invest heavily in high-quality EL programs that not only build English proficiency but also ensure students have strong academic foundations across all content areas. As one leader from Fresno USD stated, “the instruction and support leading up to the reclassification is the foundation for how kids are going to achieve after they’ve reclassified.”
- 2. Robust and Meaningful Monitoring:** Monitoring in these districts is not a mere compliance exercise. It is an ongoing, data-rich process used to inform instruction and intervention. They utilize digital tools for timely data collection and analysis, examining multiple measures beyond just test scores, including grades and teacher observations. Firebaugh Las Deltas, for example, uses a follow-up form where teachers detail how each RFEP student is doing and what interventions are in place for any student who is struggling.

- 3. Connecting Monitoring to Targeted Support:** In these districts, data is not only collected but also acted upon. When monitoring indicates a student is struggling, a clear process for providing support is triggered. This support is integrated within the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) available to all students, but is consciously applied to RFEP students. In Calexico USD, EL specialists work with every student on individualized reclassification plans and continue to monitor and support them post-reclassification, creating a “team effort” system.
- 4. Investment in Professional Development:** Educators in these districts receive ongoing training on how to support both EL and RFEP students. This includes strategies for integrating language development into content instruction (Integrated ELD) and understanding the specific needs of RFEPs. Alhambra USD’s use of Project GLAD district-wide and Calexico USD’s training for *all* teachers on ELD strategies exemplify this commitment.
- 5. Data Transparency and Collaboration:** These successful districts foster a culture where data is shared and discussed regularly among teachers, administrators, and often, students and parents. Alhambra USD staff, for example, share RFEP data with students through one-on-one conversations with parents during conferences. Porterville USD emphasizes ongoing data sharing with classroom teachers, so they are aware of who their RFEP students are.
- 6. Engaging Families and Students:** Parents are seen as key partners. Districts like Firebaugh Las Deltas and Calexico make concerted efforts to inform parents about the reclassification process and their child’s progress, motivating deeper family involvement. Students are also involved in understanding their own progress and goals.

These districts demonstrate that with the right systems, mindset, and strategies, continued growth and achievement for RFEPs is possible.

Advancing RFEP Success: Key Recommendations for State and Local Action

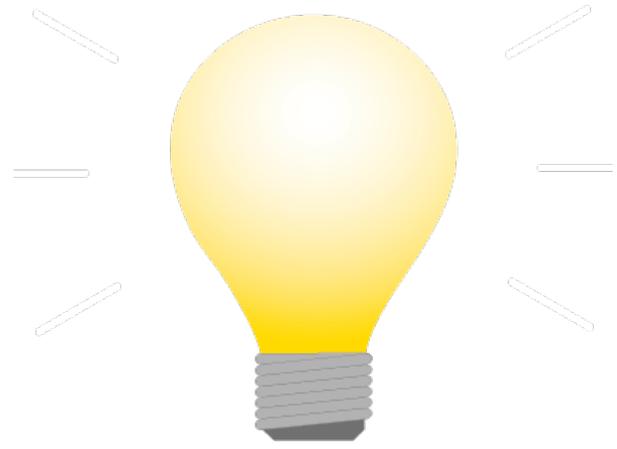
Reclassification should be a doorway to greater opportunity, not an exit from necessary support. The following recommendations from “Sustaining Success” offer a call to action:

For State Leaders and Agencies:

- 1. Transparent RFEP Outcome Data:** Mandate the statewide collection and public reporting of comprehensive data on RFEP student outcomes (including high school graduation, A-G completion, advanced course-taking, and Seal of Biliteracy attainment). This data is crucial for identifying needs, tracking progress, and ensuring equity.
- 2. Strengthen Accountability:** Incorporate RFEP students into the state's accountability system and ensure their outcomes are reported separately in the Dashboard.
- 3. Develop Additional Monitoring Guidance:** Develop and issue guidance for districts on holistically monitoring RFEPs—beyond ELA to include math and rigorous course access—and implementing effective, long-term support strategies.
- 4. Champion Biliteracy Pathways:** Significantly invest in expanding statewide access to high-quality TK-12 bilingual education programs. Actively promote equitable attainment of the State Seal of Biliteracy and continue to support expansion of Bilingual Pathway Recognition Awards.
- 5. Boost Local Capacity:** Provide dedicated state funding for professional development for educators on RFEP student needs. Facilitate the sharing of best practices and ensure districts have adequate and flexible resources for ongoing RFEP student support.

For Local School Districts, School Leaders, and Educators:

- 1. Know and Champion RFEP Students:** Utilize local data to understand the diverse backgrounds, strengths, and needs of your RFEP students. Make their sustained achievement a visible and stated priority.
- 2. Implement Comprehensive Monitoring:** Develop and consistently use formal plans to monitor RFEP student progress across ELA, math, science, and access to rigorous coursework. Assign clear responsibilities for monitoring.
- 3. Provide Systemic, Differentiated Support:** Integrate RFEP support strategies and dedicated resources into LCAPs, EL Master Plans, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Offer targeted academic and language interventions, particularly in areas like mathematics, and provide extended learning opportunities as needed.



- 4. Increase Access to Bilingual Programs TK-12th Grade:** Expand access to quality bilingual programs, including dual language immersion and developmental bilingual programs. Also, continue to celebrate multilingual attainment by increasing access to the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition Awards and ensuring that EL and RFEP students attain the State Seal of Biliteracy.
- 5. Invest in Professional Development and Collaboration:** Commit to ongoing, job-embedded professional development for all educators on effective strategies for RFEP students. Build strong collaborative structures that enable staff to share insights, analyze RFEP student data, and refine support efforts together.
- 6. Support Local Accountability:** Share data with all stakeholders, including the school board, to increase focus on the importance of finding ways to support the success of RFEP students from reclassification to graduation.

These focused actions can help ensure that reclassification is truly a stepping stone to continued academic achievement and lifelong success for all RFEP students.

The Path Forward

The report offers valuable insights and presents a compelling case for a renewed focus on RFEP students. By embracing data-informed practices, investing in robust support systems, fostering strong instructional environments, and championing the unique strengths of these students, schools and districts can transform this milestone into sustained momentum. It is time to ensure that every RFEP student not only reaches their full potential, but is also equipped for success in college, career, and life. ■

Notes are available in the appendix.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO LIBERATION



Francisca Sánchez, M.A.
META/Provocative Practice

Poetry is no mere exercise.
Rather, it is an expanding universe,
a song you decide to sing.
Revolution.
We are the song of people outnumbered
who refuse to die quietly.
Look around into an oppressive history
replete with rebirth and resurrection.
Rejoice in the irrepressible ideas of people.
Look for pattern.
Look for parallel.
Look for detail
and spheres of meaning.
There, we will find
that all roads lead to liberation
when we dare to step outside
of what is.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This poem is part of a collection called
WHEN WE DANCED LIKE GODS, released in winter 2025.

ASYLUM

Francisca Sánchez, M.A.
META/Provocative Practice

Yesterday, el trompón, un Narciso sin triunfo,¹
issued a new directive,
a list of forbidden words,
and scientists wrung their hands in protest
that their critical research studies would be jeopardized.

Don't mention women or disability or bias.
Forget about trauma, ethnicity, and socioeconomics.
Equity, diversity, and inclusion have been banned,
and Blacks and Hispanics are now personae non gratae.
But we already knew that, didn't we?
El trompón narciso has been exceedingly clear on that!

Science circles moaned their dismay at the announcement
and countered that science is not a political issue.
What ivory tower have they been living in?
Meanwhile, universities are frantically scrubbing their websites
in their rush to comply with the whitewashing of America.

A friend is distraught, awake at 4 AM,
asking how this could be happening in the land
of the free and the brave, and by the way,
where are our leaders?

I say, perhaps this will be the wake-up call
our leaders need, although I don't have much hope.
I suppose the answer is we need new leaders,
perhaps people who can dream
beyond the boundaries of our known world!
And perhaps this will be the time of the poets to shine
and let their truths show us a beyond facts and science.

And what about us? We're not dead yet, are we?
This is the time to stand up and speak out.
What do we have to lose, given the insanity
that is now masquerading as the new normal???

And, WTF are we doing up at this hour????
I'm crawling back into bed!
Perhaps when I wake again,
I'll have dreamt a better answer.

Unless el trompón has already figured out
how to invade even our dreams
and REM herself, like Lady Liberty,
has been co-opted beyond all repair.

In that case, time to pack our bags,
and like fugitive dreamers,
find new borders to cross
and seek asylum somewhere else
because apparently the USA has now
become its own asylum run by
the insane, unbalanced, and psychotic.

Call it what you will
-bedlam, booby hatch, crazy house, cuckoo's nest,
funny farm, loony bin, madhouse, nut house, snake pit –
one thing is clear:
Here, the inmates are now running the asylum.



1 El Trompón, from “trompa,” which refers to an elephant’s trunk, is a play on Trump, giving his name a negative twist, and doubling down on the fact that “trompón” also means “daffodil” in Spanish. Narciso is the more common Spanish name for daffodil, but it also refers to Narcissus. The connection to Trump should be obvious. The addition of “sin triunfo” refers to the “trump card” which is a winning card, and in this case, no winning hand at all.



Miracle at the Wedding in Cana

Linking Art to Multilingualism and Multiculturalism



Jeena Ann Kidambi
Panchavarna Folk Artist

As a third-generation American, my family fought to keep our culture alive. For example, until I started school, my family would only speak to me in Tamil, our mother tongue, and would use it as a way to share cultural stories and wisdom. Even after I learned English, my mother enrolled me in Tamil classes, allowing me to strengthen my grasp of writing and reading, an opportunity she had never had. Starting these classes at the age of eight, I did not appreciate the chance I was given and would instead try to play or do another foolish task whenever possible. However, without realizing it, Tamil opened me up to art and culture in a way that I never expected.



Temptation in the Desert

Unlike second-generation American students who often visit their parents' home countries to see their grandparents, my family is rooted in the US.

Nevertheless, by watching Tamil movies and appreciating our art, I absorbed a culture that would have otherwise been lost. Slowly, I wanted not only to immerse myself in my culture, but also to allow that culture to reflect in all parts of my life. Therefore, already a student of Western art, I began to teach myself panchavarna art, an art style originating in the Tamil-speaking region of India. With this new skill, I put my culture on paper and, for the first time, could truly see myself represented in art. Called to share my culture with others, I created an Indian representation within the genre of Catholic art,

painting scenes such as the "Miracle at the Wedding in Cana." My panchavarna art is filled with Indian symbolism in the jewelry (representing divinity), South Indian clothing (representing tradition), and the use of Indian motifs, such as the typical use of banana leaves as plates for food. My art encompasses foods such as ladoos, a typical Indian sweet, moodas, or straw stools found in every South Indian home, and traditional Indian pottery. I have expanded my series to include more than 14 pieces, all of which showcase my culture and provide representation to countless Indians. This would not have been possible without my family's efforts to preserve our language. My language, which embodies my culture, guides me in my work, and I am eternally grateful to those who passed it on to me. ■



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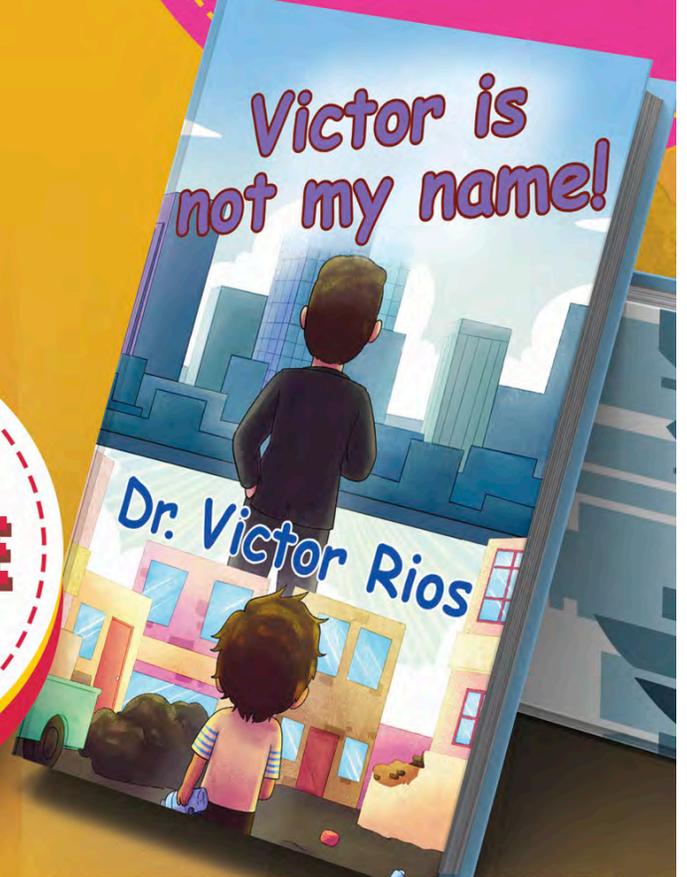
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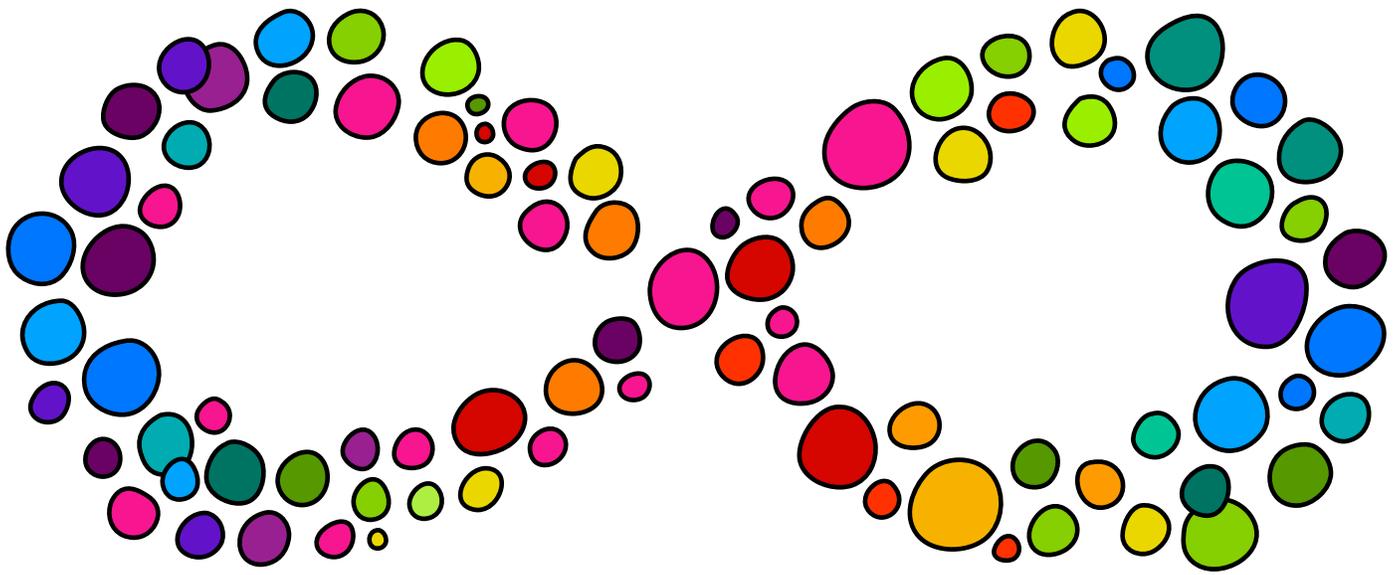
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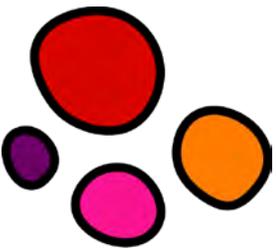
"I wrote this book based
on my own life, but told in a
way a young child can see
themselves in the pages. My
hope is that when children
read *Victor Is Not My
Name!*, they'll know they are
more than their struggles,
and that their
story isn't
over yet."



A MEANINGFUL ADDITION TO CLASSROOMS,
LIBRARIES, AND FAMILY BOOKSHELVES EVERYWHERE.



Neurodivergent Multilingual Learners: Using UDL to Ensure Equitable Access



Alejandra Arce, Ed.D.
CABE Professional Learning Specialist

Multilingual learners (MLs), also known as English language learners (ELLs) or English learners (ELs), who are often neurodivergent and qualify for special education (having an Individualized Education Plan, IEP), present a unique challenge for educators. When teaching students who are both MLs and neurodivergent, also known as dually identified or more recently as multilingual students with exceptionalities (Honigsfeld & Cohan, 2024), teachers have to think about how to support their language acquisition and meet their specific learning needs. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles paired with evidence-based strategies can break down barriers and promote equitable access to grade-level content. By integrating culturally and linguistically responsive practices, educators can create inclusive environments where these students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

In the fall of 2021, there were 5.3 million MLs in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics). Of those ML students, 837,400 had an IEP (as reported by the Government Accountability Office). According to the National Center for Educational

Statistics, the average National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics scale score for 4th graders who were MLs in 2020 was 216. The average score for neurodivergent students was 212. The average for all 4th-grade students was 236 (National Center for Education and Statistics, 2023). A similar pattern is also evident in NAEP reading scores. This evident gap between the scores of all students and the scores of students who are MLs or neurodivergent calls us to think about employing best practices that will support MLs who are also neurodivergent. To that effect, in California, the state Legislature passed Assembly Bill 2785, which required the California Department of Education to provide guidelines for educators that support multilingual learners who may qualify for special education. This resulted in the publication of the *California Practitioner’s Guide for Educating English Learners With Disabilities* (2016). According to this document, neurodivergent MLs can achieve standards-based expectations when:

- Standards are implemented within the foundational principles of UDL.
- Evidence-based instructional strateglum are

culturally and linguistically responsive and reflect the interests, preferences, and readiness of each student to maximize learning potential.

- Appropriate accommodations are provided to help students access grade-level content by culturally and linguistically responsive educators.

In order to effectively differentiate instruction for neurodivergent MLs, teachers must understand the relationship between all the factors that influence student learning, including language, culture, home, and school. When a student is exhibiting difficulties, it can be challenging to determine whether these arise from linguistic or academic needs. Differentiation is important, but for it to be effective, educators need to determine whether the student requires linguistic or academic support and need to have a deep understanding of the levels of support needed at different English proficiency levels. One way to best meet the needs of neurodivergent MLs is through the implementation of the UDL guidelines. UDL is a research-based framework that guides educators' instructional practices by reducing barriers, providing appropriate support, and maintaining high expectations for all learners. According to the CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology) website, the "goal of UDL is to cultivate learner agency that is purposeful and reflective, resourceful and authentic, strategic and action-oriented" (2004). To accomplish this, the three principles of UDL are utilized—engagement, representation, and action and expression.

Engagement addresses the "why" of instruction. Since engagement is at the core of all learning, there is a need to support the attention and commitment of students by providing them with authentic and meaningful learning experiences. This is to spark student interest, which in turn makes students more engaged and motivates them to get the most out of

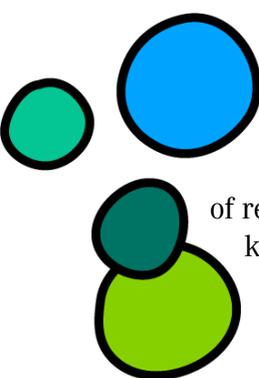
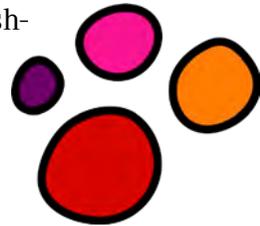
their learning. The second principle is representation. **Representation** addresses the "what" of instruction. Since learners differ in their understanding of content, the principle of representation requires educators to build knowledge and comprehension through multiple means of representation. The third guideline of UDL is action and expression. **Action and expression** refer

to the "how" of teaching. Since students will differ in their responses to learning and in how they express what they know, they must be given multiple options for expression and multiple scaffolds to achieve academic success. According to Dr. Margo Gottlieb (2021) "UDL principles coupled with multilingual resources increase opportunities for multilingual learners and multilingual learners with Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) to access and achieve grade-level content." As such, when educators fully integrate UDL principles with best practices for second-language learners, neurodivergent MLs have the best chance for academic, English-language and social-emotional success.

Engagement

In a 2007 study, Marzano found that students in highly engaging classrooms outperformed their peers by an average of almost 30 percentile points. Similarly, according to Hollingshead and Carr-Chellman (2019), "The quality of student engagement correlates directly with the quality of student learning: an engaged student learns better." When addressing engagement for our neurodivergent ML students, teachers can provide choices, vary demands and/or resources to optimize challenge, and support students in developing self-awareness (California Department of Education, 2019). The three guidelines for engagement include welcoming interests and identities (honoring the learners' whole selves); sustaining effort and persistence (tackling challenges with focus and determination); and emotional capacity (harnessing the power of emotions and motivation in learning).

To fully engage multilingual learners, culturally responsive pedagogy is essential. Teachers must fully know each student. Knowing their level of English proficiency in the different domains (reading, writing, speaking, listening), their level of knowledge in their primary language, and knowing about the culture and experiences of the student will help teachers better adjust instruction to fully support neurodivergent MLs. This will allow educators to honor their multilingual assets. Other supports for neurodivergent MLs include allowing students to use their primary language (use their first linguistic repertoire), helping students know their own levels of English, and supporting them in setting realistic goals for their progress. It is also vital for these students to receive focused, structured, and



targeted English language development strategies (Honigsfeld & Cohan, 2024).

Strategy: TAG Feedback

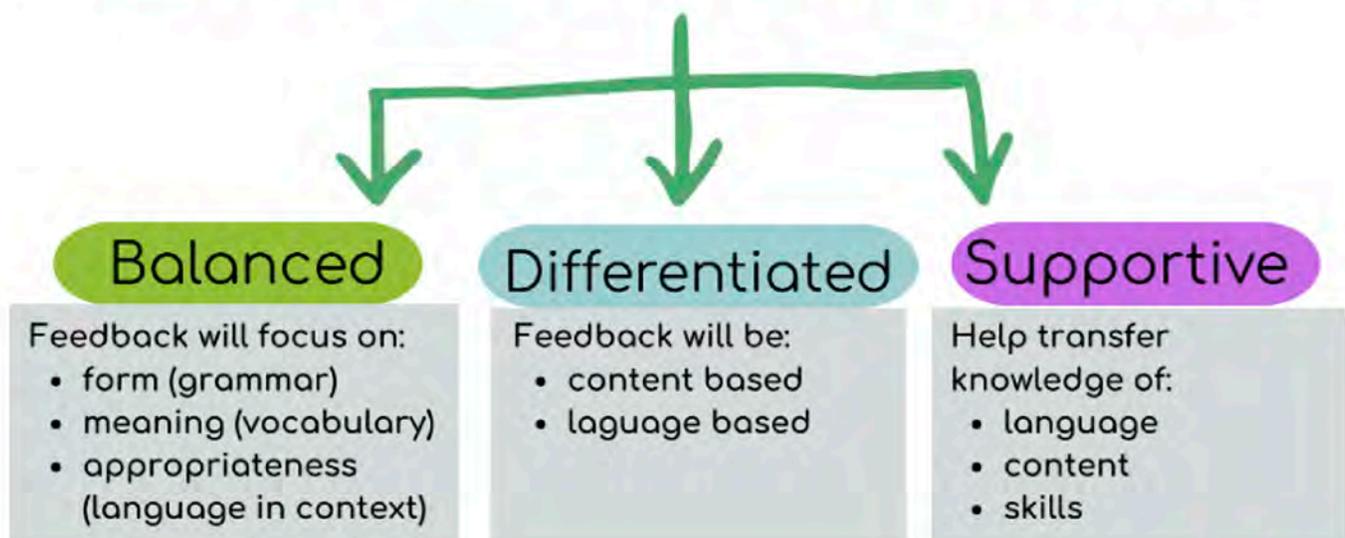
One strategy that can be used to set up action-oriented feedback is TAG Feedback. TAG feedback refers to the teacher: 1) telling the student something they liked, 2) asking students a question, and 3) giving a suggestion. Feedback is an instructional practice that has been proven to increase student learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In order for language to develop, learners need to know what they understand correctly and what they do not. Giving action-oriented feedback encourages perseverance and helps develop efficacy and self-awareness in students. It also encourages risk-taking and offers students another perspective.

Providing action-oriented feedback is supportive of neurodivergent students because it allows teachers to offer appropriate and effective scaffolding, acknowledge the diverse needs of students, accommodate learner differences, provide opportunities for reflection, and help students learn how to articulate and advocate for their needs (Torres & Rao, 2019).

For feedback to be effective, it must emphasize effort, improvement, and the achievement of the goal, rather than intelligence or innate ability. It must also be frequent, timely, and specific. Providing feedback on too many errors can frustrate

learners and deter them from participating in classroom learning. Therefore, for neurodivergent MLs, feedback must also be balanced, differentiated, and supportive (Allman, 2019). Since multilingual students will need support for both content and language acquisition, teachers need to balance their feedback and decide if the feedback's focus should be on form (grammar), meaning (correct vocabulary terms), or appropriateness (language appropriateness based on context). Feedback must also be differentiated. This means that teachers will need to decide whether the need is content-based or language-based and provide feedback accordingly. Finally, feedback will need to be supportive. Supportive feedback is positive, and it helps students with the transfer of knowledge of language, content, skills, and strategies from the student's native language to English (metalinguistic awareness). Recasting, when a teacher re-states a student's words/response following the rules of grammar, is a way educators can give supportive feedback to MLs.

Feedback for MLs is...



Source: Allman, B. (2019). Effective and Appropriate Feedback for English Learners. Principles of Language Acquisition.



Representation

According to the *California Practitioner's Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities* (2016), when addressing representation for our neurodivergent MLs, educators can provide transcripts or primary language supports; provide visual supports; allow students to access information and respond in their primary language; or guide informational processing, visualization, and manipulation (California Department of Education, 2019). To address the needs of neurodivergent ELs, students must be allowed to interact with content that is flexible and offers multiple modalities and perspectives. Students must be allowed to communicate through languages that create a shared understanding. Finally, they must be allowed to construct meaning and generate new understanding (CAST, 2024). By making complex ideas more comprehensible through scaffolds, teachers are better able to support neurodivergent MLs. By designing with multiple means of representation, all learners will be able to sense and receive information and transform it into usable knowledge.

Strategy: Marzano's 6-Step Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary knowledge is essential to reading comprehension. Research has consistently shown that vocabulary knowledge is an important predictor of

reading fluency and comprehension (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004). Research has shown that vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with academic success (Nagy & Townsend, 2012). Multilingual learners require vocabulary to be taught in context in order to reap the benefits and experience an increase in academic achievement (Marzano, 2001, 2004). However, multilingual learners not only need explicit vocabulary instruction in technical vocabulary, but they also need explicit instruction in high-utility words that students are likely to encounter in various contexts. Marzano's 6-step process involves direct instruction, linguistic and nonlinguistic definitions, recording word learning in a notebook or journal, talking about words, and playing with words. Multiple exposures are at the heart of the process. In this process, teachers start by providing a definition, description, explanation, or example to students. Second, students are asked to restate the definition or description provided by the teacher. On the 3rd Step, students are asked to create an illustration of the word. In Step 4, the teacher provides activities that help students engage with the word. Step 5 asks students to discuss the word with one another periodically. Finally, Step 6 asks teachers to engage students in games that allow them to play with the word and reinforce their understanding of the word.

Marzano's Six Step Process for Teaching Academic Vocabulary

01



Provide a description, explanation, or example of a new term.

02



Ask students to restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words.

03



Ask students to construct a picture, symbol, or graphic representing the word.

04



Engage students in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the term.

05



Ask students to periodically discuss the term with another.

06



Involve students in games that allow them to play with term.

Resource: Marzano, R. J. (2004). *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement: Research on What Works in Schools*.



Marzano's 6-step vocabulary development helps multilingual learners by providing multiple ways of expression, helping with language development in the four domains, and giving them the opportunities to make culturally relevant connections. For neurodivergent students, the structured framework provides additional scaffolds and supports their multisensory learning.

Action and Expression

When addressing action and expression for neurodivergent MLs, teachers can integrate assistive technologies, provide concept mapping tools, and establish success criteria (California Department of Education, 2019). To address the needs of neurodivergent ELs, students need opportunities

STRONGER AND CLEARER EACH TIME



1 THINK TIME

Teacher poses a question
Student thinks about response



2 PRE-WRITE

Students write their initial response
Student prepares to share



3 PAIR SHARE

Students are paired
S1 responds while S2 listens
S2 responds while S1 listens

4 REVISE PRE-WRITE

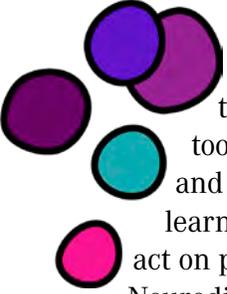
Pair takes a moment to jot down new ideas, evidence, or language they can use in their next partnership

5 SWITCH PARTNER AND REPEAT

Students repeat steps 3-4 with at least 2 more partners building and borrowing from the previous partner to make their answer stronger and clearer



Adapted from Zwiers (2014)



to interact with accessible materials and tools. They must also be able to compose and share ideas using tools that help attain learning goals. They must also strategize and act on plans to make the most out of learning.

Neurodivergent MLs require scaffolded oral and written tasks, utilize multimedia tools to facilitate non-traditional ways of communicating their ideas, provide time for students to reflect on their learning, and simplify routines whenever possible, incorporating visual cues such as color coding (Honigsfeld & Cohan, 2024). Allowing neurodivergent students to express what they know and understand in multiple ways opens the door to an authentic understanding of what students can do. Recognizing collectivistic cultures and supporting collaboration and collaborative learning within their classrooms also increases the opportunity for neurodivergent MLs to reach academic success.

Strategy: Stronger and Clearer Each Time

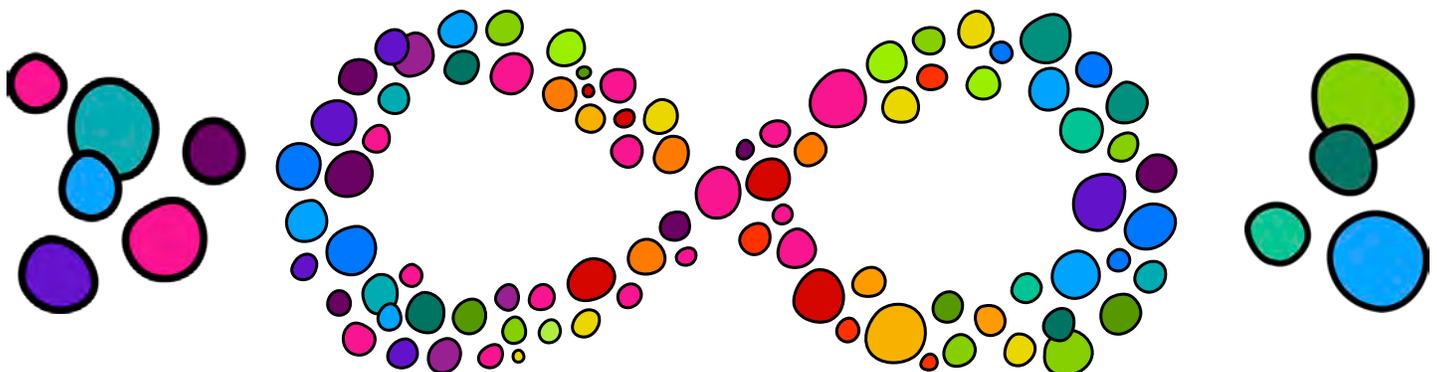
For multilingual learners, having conversations fortifies literacy, language, and learning. Allowing students to learn with and from peers is a research-based best practice. Research has shown that interactive learning enhances cognitive development, as students who learn through social interactions can better internalize concepts and can make them their own (Klingner & Vaughn, 2000). For neurodivergent MLs, a structured way to socialize and a purpose for movement in class are both beneficial. Stronger and Clearer Each Time is a routine that was adapted from Stanford’s UL/SCALE Mathematical Language Routines. However, this strategy can be used in any content area and gives students a structured and interactive way to revise and refine their ideas before sharing them. In this strategy, students are first given a prompt or question to respond to individually. After students have had time to come up with an answer, they are given the opportunity to share their

response with at least two different partners. To make the sharing more structured and less intimidating, using strategies such as Inside-Outside Circles can be beneficial. When students switch partners, they have the opportunity to adjust their original answer by borrowing and using ideas from their first partner. Each time they hear an answer from a peer, students have the opportunity to make their initial responses stronger and clearer.

The Stronger and Clearer Each Time strategy supports multilingual learners by fostering authentic communication. It also teaches students to improve the quality and quantity of their work, thus optimizing output. Giving a structure like Stronger and Clearer Each Time supports neurodivergent students in that it encourages and supports opportunities to collaborate with peers. The structure helps students be self-motivated and become more independent while allowing teachers to capitalize on students’ existing strengths and abilities (Torres & Rao, 2019).

Neurodivergent MLs have been shown to be less likely to reclassify than their neurotypical peers. This is partly due to their complex educational needs. Implementing UDL principles will help remove the barriers that these students have in accessing the grade-level curriculum. However, simply following the UDL considerations or using language development strategies is not enough. To fully support neurodivergent MLs, educators will need to deliver specialized instruction that includes both comprehensive English language development and special education interventions. Utilizing strategies that are beneficial for English learners and follow the UDL considerations is a way to start giving these students the opportunity to be successful in school. ■

References are available in the appendix.





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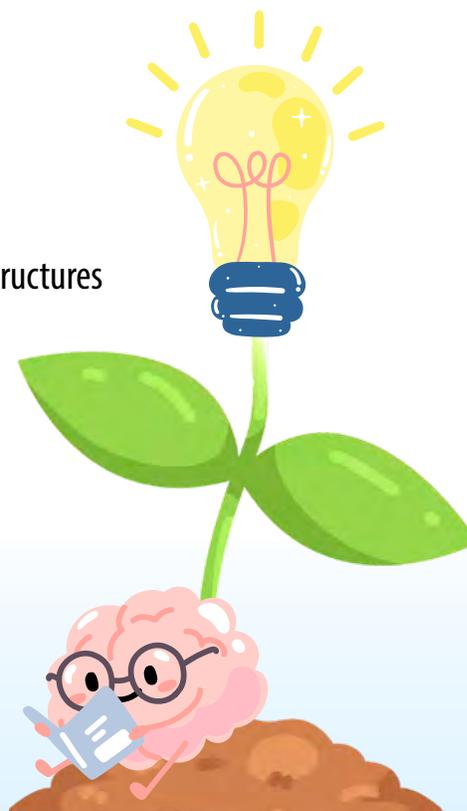
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CONOCIMIENTO, CONFIANZA Y COMUNIDAD:

A Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Family Engagement Program



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Introduction

This article presents findings from a longitudinal family engagement study conducted by three researchers (Alfaro, Huerta, and Maldonado) from San Diego State University's Center for Equity and Biliteracy Education Research (CEBER) in partnership with colleagues from the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). This collaboration offers compelling evidence that culturally and linguistically responsive family engagement programs have a measurable impact on student achievement. In the following sections, we describe PIQE's Signature Family Engagement Program and provide an overview of our study's literature review, methods, and results. In addition to documenting student outcomes, our study amplifies parents' voices, revealing how knowledge, communication, confidence, motivation, and community transformed not only their children's educational outcomes but also their own lives as well.

Framing Family Engagement

Family engagement is a concept that includes both children's academic success and the agency and advocacy of families (Flores & Kyere, 2021; Ochoa & Alfaro, 2024; Olivos & Ochoa, 2024). Family engagement reflects active, reciprocal, and culturally responsive practices in which families collaborate with schools in the educational process (Sheridan et al., 2011). A growing body of research affirms that community-centered family engagement contributes to improved stu-

dent outcomes. While foundational models, such as Epstein's (2001) typologies, have established important considerations for school-family partnerships, more recent scholarship emphasizes that effective family engagement requires advocacy and transformation, particularly in communities neglected by educational systems (Olivos et al., 2011). As Olivos and Ochoa (2024) remind us, parent involvement that is practiced as a mode of participation (i.e., things to do) is very different from parent engagement that is transformative (i.e., things that need to change) (p. 257).

Transformative family engagement draws on Freirean principles of dialogue, critical reflection, and problem-posing education (Darder, 2014; Freire, 2007). Through this process, parents cultivate critical consciousness, challenge deficit-based school practices, strengthen their voices, and act as agents of change—not only for their children but also for themselves and their communities (Alfaro, 2018). Solórzano and Bernal (2001) describe navigational tools for families to work through and against inequitable school structures as a process of transformative resistance. Finally, Lewis and colleagues (2023) argue that realizing the full potential of transformative family engagement requires that educators intentionally disrupt dominant power dynamics by co-constructing partnerships with families that are culturally sustaining, linguistically inclusive, and respectful of community members' knowledge.

Data Collection and Analysis

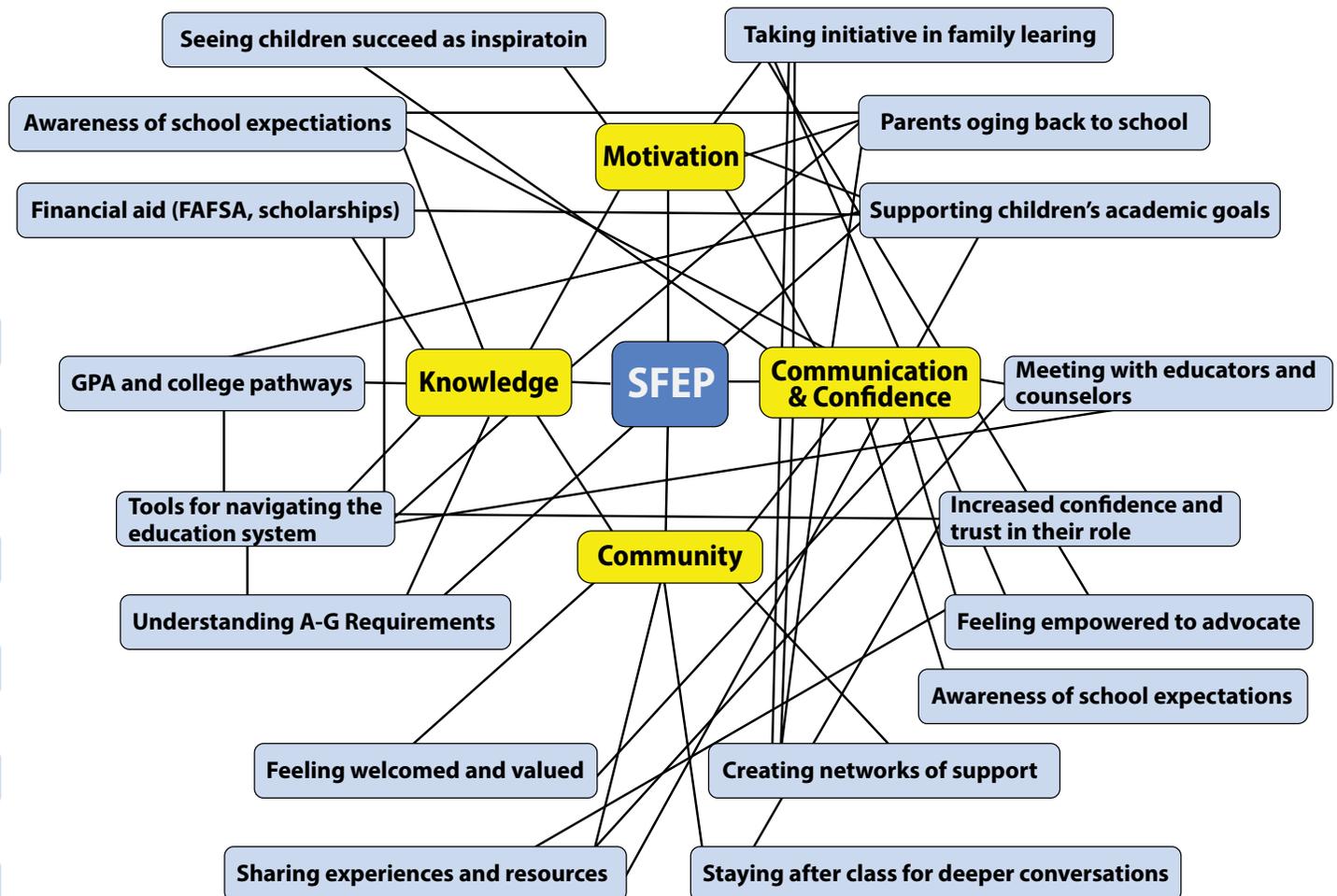
This article shares results from PIQE's 2024 Longitudinal Academic Impact Report. PIQE is a nonprofit organization that partners with over 100 school districts in California. With seven regional offices serving families in 48 counties and curriculum available in 16 languages, PIQE implements several evidence-based programs. The purpose of this report was to analyze the long-term impact of PIQE's Signature Family Engagement Program (SFEP) on students and their families. The SFEP is an eight-week program designed to empower parents and caregivers to support their children's education. The program includes a series of workshops covering college requirements, financial aid, and effective communication with school staff.

To analyze the impact of the program, our study focused on families with middle and high school

students who completed the SFEP between 2012 and 2017. 1,047 parents participated in a 171-question telephone survey covering topics related to their engagement and perceptions of student progress. Of these, 983 completed the survey in Spanish, and 64 completed it in English. In the second phase of the study, 122 parents participated in follow-up interviews (114 in Spanish and 8 in English), ranging in duration between 4 and 27 minutes. All data were collected by PIQE and analyzed by CEBER, with a commitment to honoring the authentic voices of Latine communities (Aponte-Soto et al., 2024). We used survey data (including open-ended responses) to summarize parent and student demographics and analyze student outcomes such as high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment. Interview audio and transcripts were analyzed using thematic coding, which revealed four core themes that explain how the program supported family engagement and student success.

Figure 1

Thematic Map of PIQE's Signature Family Engagement Program (SFEP) Learning Outcomes



Note: This thematic map illustrates the four main themes, Knowledge, Communication/Confidence, Motivation, and Community, along with their subtopics derived from Family caregiver interviews.

Results

The findings from our study demonstrate a positive association between caregivers' participation in the SFEP and improved student outcomes. Additionally, participants reported that their engagement in the program had a positive impact on their personal, academic, and professional lives. Survey results revealed a 91 percent high school graduation rate among students whose families or caregivers participated in the program, surpassing state and national averages (California Department of Education, 2024; Irwin et al., 2024). Of those graduates, more than half went on to enroll in college or university. Among students designated as English learners, the high school graduation rate was 92 percent. Of those English learner graduates, 57 percent enrolled in postsecondary education. These compelling survey results indicate the program's positive impact on multilingual students.

In follow-up interviews, participants described an increased understanding of how to support their children's academic progress and a stronger confidence in communicating with educators. Participants specifically reported significant gains in their understanding of college pathways and financial aid opportunities. Many reported that participating in the program inspired them to return to school, launch a small business, or take on leadership roles in their communities. Our analysis of the interviews revealed four themes that explain how participants in the program supported family engagement and student success: (a) conocimiento/knowledge, (b) confidence and communication, (c) motivation, and (d) commitment to la comunidad. These interview results indicate that the SFEP provides participants with the personal and navigational tools to support their children's educational progress better, as seen in Figure 1.

Conocimiento/Knowledge. The theme of conocimiento/knowledge was a powerful takeaway for program participants. Family caregivers expressed that they had gained new knowledge about financial aid applications, scholarships, grades, grade point averages, and the A-G university admission requirements. This newfound conocimiento/knowledge helped parents understand the U.S. education system, and they were now able to support their child's future educational trajectories. One parent stated,

“Como padre de familia, me abrió el panorama académico para navegar los requisitos A-G

para llegar a la universidad. Esto nos impactó a toda la familia, yo y mi esposa empezamos un negocio para ayudar a mis hijos a pagar los costos del colegio” (As a parent, it opened up my academic horizons to navigate the A-G requirements to get to college. This impacted our entire family, and my wife and I started a business to help my children pay for college.)

This quote highlights how the newfound knowledge obtained through participation in the workshops inspired long-term changes not only for the parent but for the entire family.

Confidence and Communication. Family caregivers reported that participation in the SFEP guided them to find their voice. They reported gaining confidence in communicating with school personnel and asking questions about how to guide their children academically. One participant shared an example of how they gained confidence in speaking to their child about graduation requirements. Another participant stated,

“Sé hablar mejor con mis hijos, empujarlos a seguir adelante, platicar con los maestros...antes me daba pena...yo tengo derecho de preguntar cómo van mis hijos...ya no soy cerrada. Soy indígena, y ya no tengo pena, esto me impactó la confianza en mí misma” (I know how to speak with my children better...push them to keep going, talk to their teachers...I used to feel embarrassed...I have the right to ask how my children are doing; I am no longer closed-minded. I am Indigenous, and I am no longer ashamed. This has impacted my self-confidence.)

Participants expressed that the program created a space to reclaim their confidence and build stronger relationships with other participants and community members.

Motivation. Family caregivers reported that their participation in the program motivated them to pursue their own personal and professional goals. Participants described the workshops as opening their eyes to a plethora of opportunities. One parent shared that they were “tomando clases para terminar la preparatoria” (were taking classes to complete high school). Another parent stated, “Me he superado para tener mi propio negocio” (I improved myself to have my own business). Another parent stated that the program “Abrió mi mente más para ver qué hay” (opened my mind to see what's out there).

Commitment to La Comunidad. A shared sense of commitment to community was indicated by parents who participated in the program. Participants shared that they were able to connect, create friendships, and define a shared purpose. One parent stated, “Supe cómo convivir” (I knew how to interact with others). While other parents considered it important to stay after the workshops to dialogue with each other about the themes they had just learned, participants also described their increased commitment to the community as becoming advocates. One parent stated, “It helped me give advice [to other parents] about the opportunities that are offered to students [to enroll in college]”.

Survey and interview results affirm that PIQE’s family engagement program is culturally and linguistically responsive, designed to foster long-term family and student success. Educators interested in implementing culturally and linguistically family engagement programs may consider creating structured multilingual learning opportunities for parents to increase their *conocimiento* of educational knowledge, such as courses and grades, college readiness, and financial aid information. Specifically, this study highlights the importance of measuring and monitoring parents’ confidence, as reflected in their communication with educators and demonstrated agency and leadership. In addition, recognizing parents’ motivation emerged as a clear finding: parents expressed that participation in the program inspired them to set goals for their children, as well as for themselves. Participants’ acquired *conocimiento*, confidence, and motivation may also be evident in their advocacy, agency, and contributions to the community, such as demanding that educators and schools expand multilingual learning opportunities for students and families.

Conclusion

Over the years, *Multilingual Educator* has been a leading platform for exploring the possibilities of family engagement through personal reflections (Hernández, 2022) as well as school- and district-based research (Casesa et al, 2024; Castro, 2022; DeLeon-DeeHaan, 2022; Hernández, 2024; Morales-Thomas & Garcia Ramos, 2023). Our article builds on this body of work by contributing impact-focused results that demonstrate the relationship between PIQE’s Signature Family Engagement Program (SFEP) and student achievement outcomes. In our statewide mixed-methods study of

1,250 students whose family caregivers completed a linguistically and culturally responsive family engagement program, we found that an impressive 91 percent of all students graduated from high school, outperforming both state and national averages. Notably, 92 percent of English learners also graduated from high school. We also found a strong association between participants’ completion of the family engagement program and their children’s enrollment in college or university, underscoring the positive impact on postsecondary access. When asked which concepts were most impactful, participants reported gaining knowledge about financial aid and learning how to understand and navigate A-G course requirements for university admission. Participants most frequently reported two key behaviors resulting from program completion: engaging in academic conversations and feeling prepared to meet with teachers and counselors.

Our findings reaffirm that equity and excellence in education are not opposing goals but mutually reinforcing (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015). PIQE’s SFEP is a scalable, research-informed, curricular model that offers both quantitative and qualitative evidence affirming the essential role of family engagement in multilingual education. While clearly documenting student achievement gains, our study amplifies parents’ voices, revealing how knowledge, communication, confidence, motivation, and community transformed not only their children’s educational outcomes but their own lives as well. Participants shared that the program strengthened their sense of identity, language, and cultural awareness, enabling them to pursue their own personal and professional growth. Family caregivers consistently recognized the SFEP as a transformative initiative that promotes educational equity. The SFEP deepened participants’ understanding of the interconnected roles of home, school, and community, and equipped them with the tools to support their children’s academic, personal, and professional aspirations, while advancing their own. By preparing families to navigate the education system with knowledge and confidence, the SFEP provides family caregivers with the foundation to engage, challenge, and disrupt cycles of generational, racial, and gender inequity (Alfaro et al., 2024). ■

References and author bios are available in the appendix.

A Journey of Radical Re-Membering

As a multilingual, multiracial woman, I have traveled a complex journey to find and affirm my roots, to reconnect and re-member my multiple identities. This meant confronting and disrupting the fearsome barriers designed to silence, diminish, and limit me, and, to some extent, make me invisible.



Liliana Sánchez
META/UCSB

Who am I, and who gets to define who I am? There is plenty of room to confuse the definers in all these layers that make up who I am, and those definers are all around us, even among those who are supposed to be our advocates, our teachers, our mentors. The results can be understood more fully through the notion of intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Her theoretical framework, intersectionality, is a theoretical framework that helps us understand how these identities overlap and intersect to create systems of oppression and privilege. As Crenshaw explains, mapping these intersections can help us disrupt the tendency to see any of these singular identities as exclusive or separable.

I grew up in a small Central Valley town, where most of the population was poor and Latino, and where that was equivalent to being uneducated. In that context, my family was in the minority. I come from a professional family, one generation removed from first-generation immigrants, where education was considered essential to upward mobility and success. So, in school, I

was always considered smart, rich, and motivated. That did not always position me in a positive and affirming light. For example, my family valued travel as a way to experience a broader world not available in my town, and as an important learning opportunity. But when I shared my travel experiences with my peers, their response left me feeling dehumanized and belittled. For instance, when I shared that I would be spending a year in Jordan, some of the comments I received were “Are you going to have to wear that thing on your head?” and “Are you going to ride a camel to school?” More than anything, these types of comments made me feel othered and belittled.

And because I’m mixed, there were any number of hurtful slurs launched at me—slurs that exactly demonstrated that for the most part, my peers could not comprehend the notion of intersectionality—something none of my teachers addressed—and viewed identities as singular and static. Such as when I wore my hair in box braids and I was challenged by white peers who decreed that I wasn’t black, so

I couldn’t wear braids. On another day, one boy in my 6th-grade class actually yelled to the teacher, “Can you tell this Nigerian woman to shut up?”

While things like this were individually hurtful, they were also confusing, causing internal struggle and issues with my sense of where I belonged. For me, the cumulative effect became a barrage of assaults on my sense of identity and self-confidence. These assaults continued into high school, and it was only then that I received the language to classify them as micro-aggressions and to understand better why they had such a powerful effect on me, and most importantly, that I was not experiencing an individual assault, but rather that this was a collective experience shared by many “others”, that I wasn’t alone, and I wasn’t crazy.

Given all this, two events dramatically changed my life trajectory. First, in middle school, I began learning Arabic through a series of summer programs, which sparked my interest in the Middle East. We learned about King’s Academy, a

private prep school-type institution in Jordan. Because COVID-19 had just hit the US and our schools were transitioning to an online format, I applied to King's to experience a richer learning environment and expand my knowledge of Arabic and Middle Eastern culture and arts.

I was accepted and spent my sophomore year at King's Academy. There, my sense of identity went through another transformation. King's is a private school, literally sponsored by the King of Jordan. Students who attend King's are, by and large, very wealthy and privileged. So, I went from being the smart, rich, motivated student in my town to being the poor, not very well-educated outsider at King's. This was devastating to my already shaky sense of identity and belonging, and it largely overshadowed my ability to fully participate in the academic, cultural, and social riches that King's offered.

I returned to my hometown for my junior and senior years with a renewed desire to explore and solidify the African American part of my identity, which led directly to the second significant change. In middle school, I learned about historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Spelman College, a well-known and highly regarded private, historically Black women's liberal arts college in Atlanta. I remember thinking that if I were accepted to the number one-rated HBCU, the assaults on my identity would stop because no one would be able to tell me that I

wasn't black. That, unfortunately, became my overriding motivation for attending Spelman.

However, from the time I arrived on the Spelman campus, it became clear that I had misjudged how much I could belong or wanted to belong to the Spelman community. I hadn't counted on the fact that Spelman has a large legacy population, and there were women there for whom attending Spelman was part of a generational tradition. There was no way

I could compete with that if my true passion was solely set in being seen as a black woman. There, too, I was confronted with my own stereotypes of what black women are. In a sense, I had brought with me my own ignorance about the diversity within that community and the African diaspora. Once again, I needed to rethink my identity journey, realizing that Spelman was not the panacea I longed for and that I needed to take a new path.

That path led me back to California, where there was a greater possibility of bringing my Latina and African American cultures together to establish a clearer sense of my own diverse, multi-faceted identity. Given my experiences, mirrored by those of many students like me, what can we do? There IS a way forward, but it requires shifting and expanding our understanding of identity and its relation to everything! After all, identity is a complex and fundamental concept, composed of a unique set of char-

acteristics that allows us to know who we are and how we fit into the world, providing the framework for understanding our place in it.

From the time we are children, our identity is constantly evolving based on the interactions that we experience and how we interpret the meaning of those interactions. For so many of us who are often seen as "other", our identity is a vulnerable and fragile thing. Educators, especially, need to be mindful that their words and actions, or their silence and inaction, do not damage, undermine, hinder, or circumscribe the development of a full and healthy identity—because when our identity is diminished, we perceive ourselves as small. When our identity is made invisible, we see ourselves as invisible, and our sense of potential and possibility suffers.

While teachers are not miracle workers, when it comes to their relationships with their students, they can do more than they imagine. Educators, especially teachers, must deeply understand that what they say and do has consequences. They can be instrumental in RADICAL ACTS OF RE-MEMBERING, RECOVERING, AND REPAIRING. We can think of these as the Radical Three Rs.

I very specifically position RE-MEMBERING as an antidote to dis-membering. I mean re-membering in the sense of reconnecting all those parts of our identities that we need to be fully functioning human beings in the world. For example, educators can create classroom activities that directly engage students in affirming their identities and reflecting on their place in

While teachers are not miracle workers, when it comes to their relationships with their students, they can do more than they imagine.

the world. They can create space for students to bring their whole selves, including their family histories, traditions, languages, and cultures, into the classroom.

RECOVERING is about healing in the sense that it connects to wholeness, health, and holiness. All four of these words come from the Old English root *hāl*, which means “whole” or “uninjured”. The interconnectedness of these words suggests that well-being is multifaceted, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, linguistic, and spiritual dimensions. How can educators support students in being whole and healthy, in healing, and ultimately in achieving holiness in the sense of reaching their sacred potential?

We can directly acknowledge students’ experiences and physical, mental, emotional, linguistic, and spiritual dimensions as legitimate resources and sources of knowledge, and not just use these because it’s February or Día de los Muertos. Who we are is not an episodic experience. When Black History month is over, we’re still black and dealing with the traumas of living while black in a system not made to uplift people like us. And to experience my history as only filled with trauma and struggle in itself creates additional trauma. To heal, to be whole, and to be healthy, I need to know that joy exists for me and people like me, that we have a vibrant history of resistance as well as the more well-known history of oppression. Educators can help us experience joy in who we are.

Our third R, REPAIRING, reflects the idea of reparation and restoration. Both words share the same

Latin root “*reparare*,” which means “to restore,” signifying the act of fixing or making amends for something damaged or wronged. Educators can play a special role in helping right the wrongs of our history. As Maya Angelou said, “History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.” If we acknowledge our past, our history, we can learn how to create a better future. And to quote Spanish poet Antonio Machado, “*Caminante, no hay camino—se hace camino al andar.*”

It can be as simple as this: Educators, be our advocates and allies. Help us become leaders in our lives, in our communities, in our world. Make space for us to be seen and heard with respect and legitimacy. Help us move from your classrooms into larger venues in the school and the community so that more powerful others begin to see us in a positive light. And there’s a particularly powerful thing we can do around “repairing.” That has to do with how we respond to the cultural and linguistic realities of students. We can’t ignore that when we don’t value something, it becomes difficult for us to consider it in a positive light. When we don’t value something, it becomes even more challenging for us to actually see it. We have to confront this.

We have to figure out how to analyze the systems and pedagogies we’re currently using and repair those so that they’re much more culturally and linguistically responsive.

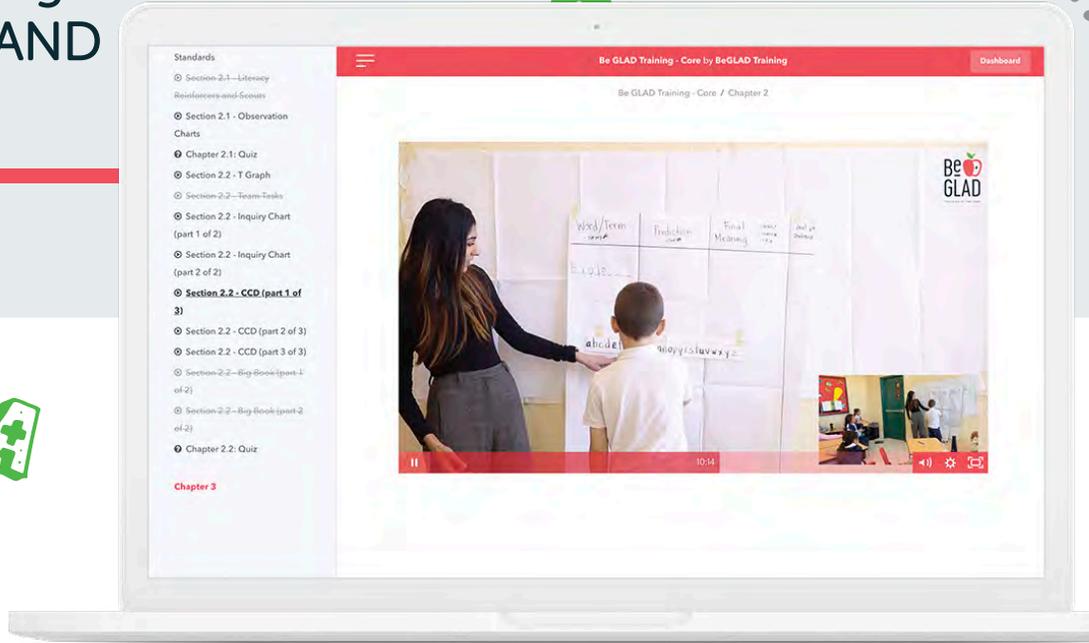
Radical, right? As educators, we must commit to being radicals. After all, a “radical” (from the Latin word “*radix*,” which means “root”) is considered the fundamental or basic part of something, just like a root is the base of a plant. You, the educators, are at the root of how our young people can grow into healthy human beings. It’s through you that students can be firmly anchored in their lives and receive the water and nutrients they need to grow strong, to survive droughts and winds, and other changes swirling around them.

And who are the educators? Educators are all of us. If you’re passionate about transforming education, enact that passion in all aspects of your lives. Remember, we’re not here simply to preserve existing institutions. Rather, we have a responsibility to challenge injustice. So, be brave. Become a radical. Take on the three Rs: Re-member, Recover, and Repair. When we’re able to do that, when we dare to step outside of what is, we will find that all roads lead to liberation. ■



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Empowering Multilingual Learners:

AI-Assisted Goal-Setting Conferences in Mandarin Dual Immersion Classrooms



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Abstract

Mandarin dual immersion classrooms often face challenges, including inconsistent student ownership, unclear learning objectives, and limited individualized goal-setting. This article examines how AI-assisted goal-setting conferences, involving students, families, and educators, can address these issues. Rooted in motivation and self-regulated learning theories, this model empowers multilingual learners to take charge of progress. By integrating culturally responsive practices and AI-supported reflection tools, educators can better engage families and promote both language development and academic growth. Practical implementation examples, outcomes, and implications for dual immersion education are discussed.

Introduction

In Mandarin dual immersion classrooms, educators often grapple with students' limited agency, a disconnect between classroom tasks and personal relevance, and insufficient individualized academic direction (Zimmerman, 2002). These challenges are further compounded by the linguistic and cultur-

al complexities that multilingual learners face when navigating multiple languages at home and school. To foster a culture of goal-directed, reflective learning, schools must move beyond traditional parent-teacher conferences and adopt goal-setting conferences—collaborative, student-centered discussions that, when supported by AI tools, align student aspirations with standards-based outcomes, strengthen school-home partnerships, promote equity, and ultimately empower multilingual learners to take greater ownership of their academic journeys.

Theoretical Foundations

Goal-Setting and Self-Regulated Learning

Goal-setting enhances student motivation, engagement, and academic success (Schunk, 2003; Zimmerman, 2002). Students who set specific goals are better able to monitor their progress, adjust their strategies, and persist through challenges (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). For multilingual learners, guided reflection and ownership of learning are essential. Co-constructed, culturally relevant goals deepen engagement and intrinsic motivation (Ames & Archer, 1988; Murayama & Elliot, 2009).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive instruction affirms students' linguistic and cultural identities (Gay, 2010). In dual immersion, goal-setting should recognize home languages, family values, and cultural knowledge, thereby bridging the gap between school and home while fostering a sense of belonging.

What Are Goal-Setting Conferences?

These structured, collaborative meetings involve students, teachers, and families in co-developing academic, behavioral, and linguistic goals based on assessment data. Typically held once per trimester, they include student check-ins to refine progress.

Equity and Cultural Responsiveness in Goal Setting

Traditional parent-teacher conferences often marginalize immigrant families (McWayne et al., 2013). In diverse programs like Mandarin immersion, inclusive strategies are essential. Conferences must provide multilingual support and respect communication preferences. Affirming cultural values and leveraging linguistic strengths foster authentic family engagement.

The FOSTER Framework

To guide equitable and culturally responsive goal-setting conferences, the FOSTER framework outlines six key components:

- F: Family Involvement** – Families provide insight into students' learning styles and cultural assets, building trust and aligning goals with home expectations (McWayne et al., 2004; Kim & Sheridan, 2015).
- O: Ongoing Monitoring** – Portfolios, journals, and self-assessments track progress and refine goals (Black & Wiliam, 2009; García & Wei, 2014).
- S: SMART Goals** – Goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound enhance focus and persistence (Doran, 1981).
- T: Teacher Facilitation** – Teachers guide discussions, align goals with standards, and support autonomy (Vatterott, 2015).
- E: Empowerment** – Student agency grows through involvement in goal-setting, monitoring, and reflection (Zimmerman, 2002; Schunk & Pajares, 2005).
- R: Reflection** – Activities like journaling and peer feedback deepen metacognition and self-regulation (Schunk, 2003).



Sample Implementation Across the School Year

A year-long cycle of goal-setting conferences in a Mandarin dual immersion classroom may follow this structure:

Trimester 1: Building Foundations and Setting Goals

- **Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences:** Teachers meet families to understand students' cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds, building trust while identifying strengths and needs.
- **Student Data Chats:** Following conferences, teachers analyze assessment data (e.g., Level Learning, iReady, classroom observations) and meet one-on-one with students to co-create personalized SMART goals.

Trimester 2: Monitoring Progress and Strengthening Student Ownership

- **Action Planning:** Students identify three concrete action steps aligned with their goals and record them in personal trackers.
- **Monthly Check-Ins:** Teachers conduct brief meetings to monitor progress, adjust action steps, and provide targeted support using data and observations.
- **Student Goal-Setting Update Conferences:** At the end of Trimester 2, students reflect on their progress, revise their goals as necessary, and prepare for continued growth.
- **Ongoing Parent Updates:** Families receive progress reports highlighting achievements and growth areas in both Mandarin and English, encouraging sustained involvement.

Trimester 3: Sustaining Growth and Celebrating Progress

- **Continued Monitoring and Reflection:** Teachers maintain monthly check-ins and refine goals using updated data.
- **Celebration and Closure:** At year's end, students reflect on their journey, celebrate accomplishments, and share growth with peers and families—reinforcing self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness.

AI-Assisted Implementation of the FOSTER Framework

The integration of artificial intelligence tools within the FOSTER framework shows strong potential for

enhancing goal-setting conferences in Mandarin immersion contexts. This section highlights the use of AI across framework components, supported by classroom examples.

Family Involvement Through AI-Mediated Communication

ChatGPT and similar large language models facilitate three critical aspects of family engagement: pre-conference communications, progress updates, and post-conference summaries. Educators can generate these efficiently with structured input.

Sample Prompt Input Structure

- **Role:** Bilingual Mandarin/English educator preparing student goal-setting conferences
- **Input Student Data:**
 - Name: 陈小明
 - Current Level: ACTFL Novice High
 - Strengths: Accurate tone distinction (妈 vs. 马), consistent use of Chinese punctuation
 - Growth Areas: Stroke order errors (园), struggles identifying main ideas
- **Requirements:**
 1. **Generate:** a 3-paragraph letter in English and Simplified Chinese
 2. **Include:** specific praise with data, one parent reflection question, and one home observation task
 3. **Format:** Professional, with bolded key terms

The generated output offers clear pedagogical benefits. First, AI sustains linguistic precision across both languages, accurately translating terms such as “stroke order” (笔顺). Second, it contextualizes feedback within culturally familiar practices, such as suggesting kitchen items for character practice—an approach aligned with Li's (2020) findings on culturally sustaining pedagogy. By streamlining communication, AI reduces preparation time by up to 80% while ensuring consistent, culturally responsive messaging. Accurate translations tailored to education help families engage more confidently in their child's learning journey.

Ongoing Monitoring via Integrated AI Systems

The combination of Snorkl's speech analysis and ChatGPT's feedback refinement creates a robust monitoring system. Students record responses to prompts such as: “Choose four to five key moments from your day. Describe what happened, who was

involved, and your feelings.” Snorkl generates feedback to help students refine their responses. Students can resubmit, and teachers can review both recordings and feedback.

Snorkl’s analysis identifies patterns in language use (e.g., code-switching, content depth). Teachers then use ChatGPT to generate progress trackers, suggest next steps, and prepare family updates. For example, a student struggling with emotional vocabulary might receive targeted practice frames: 当...的时候, 我觉得... (“When...happened, I felt...”).

Together, Snorkl and ChatGPT transform raw responses into meaningful insights. This integrated approach supports targeted language development and streamlines feedback between students, teachers, and families. By leveraging real-time data and AI scaffolds, educators can precisely monitor progress, responsively adjust instruction, and sustain momentum toward academic and linguistic goals in Mandarin immersion.

SMART Goal Development and Student Empowerment with AI

AI-powered tools like Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT’s Advanced Voice Mode allow Mandarin immersion students to actively shape their language learning goals while building confidence through oral practice. These platforms help students articulate SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals that are aligned with their proficiency levels. Through interactive dialogue, learners receive real-time feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and content, which directly informs adjustments to their objectives. Educator or adult supervision is recommended when using this product.

For example, during storytelling, AI might ask, “你能描述这个角色的感受吗?” (“Can you describe how this character feels?”), prompting students to use emotional vocabulary. Families and teachers can design tailored prompts, such as “Act as a Mandarin tutor for a 2nd grader summarizing main ideas,” ensuring alignment with classroom goals. As students revisit goals through AI conversations, they internalize language structures and metacognitive habits that foster self-directed learning.

Teachers provide culturally responsive guidance to families—especially those unfamiliar with Mandarin—

on how to scaffold at home. Prompts such as “My child needs to practice adding emotional details (e.g., ‘我很兴奋因为...’) and summarizing key points. Please ask follow-up questions like ‘为什么?’” help AI offer appropriate support. Teachers can also review AI chat logs or student reflections to track progress. By embedding conversational AI into the goal-setting process, students gain ownership of their learning and receive meaningful reinforcement beyond the classroom, regardless of home language background.

Teacher Facilitation and Reflection Through AI Integration

AI tools like Diffit and ChatGPT streamline differentiated instruction and foster reflection in Mandarin immersion classrooms. With Diffit, educators can adapt Chinese texts to students’ proficiency levels by inputting a passage—such as one about the Mid-Autumn Festival—and receive scaffolded versions: simplified texts for novices, enriched versions for intermediates, and authentic texts with extension prompts for advanced learners. Teachers can adjust complexity, embed comprehension checks, and add organizers while preserving cultural integrity. Diffit also auto-generates worksheets tailored to different learning styles, saving planning time and supporting diverse goals. Sentence frames (e.g., “这个节日庆祝___”) or prompts can further strengthen academic language use.

ChatGPT supports reflection by guiding bilingual dialogue based on authentic work and assessment data. Prompts like “What was most challenging about writing this paragraph?” (“你觉得这篇作文最难的部分是什么?”) helps students express their process in both languages. AI-generated summaries highlight growth (“Xiaoming used five new emotion words this month”) and suggest culturally responsive family strategies (“Ask: 今天什么让你觉得开心? to practice feeling vocabulary”). Teachers can also synthesize student reflections using prompts like “Turn these three journal entries into a progress timeline with two glow/grow comments,” saving time while producing actionable insights. Outputs should be reviewed for accuracy and tone.

Together, Diffit and ChatGPT position teachers as strategic facilitators who provide meaningful, personalized support throughout the goal-setting and reflection cycle, while ensuring Mandarin immersion

students access culturally relevant, level-appropriate content and guided self-awareness in their learning journey.

While the FOSTER framework offers structure, AI tools are flexible and overlapping—ChatGPT, for instance, can draft family letters, refine goals, and generate reflection prompts. What matters most is pedagogical intentionality: selecting tools that are aligned with students’ proficiency, assets, and readiness. Educators should adapt and iterate continuously, using AI not as a replacement for judgment but as an extension of it, strengthening relationships and responsiveness at the heart of Mandarin immersion education.

Implications for Dual Immersion Programs

The integration of AI-assisted goal-setting conferences holds powerful implications for Mandarin dual immersion and other multilingual programs. When used thoughtfully, these tools expand access to personalized learning, deepen engagement, and strengthen home-school connections. In classrooms where students are developing both content knowledge and biliteracy, AI provides scaffolds that support clarity and continuity across languages and grade levels. By enabling real-time feedback, differentiated supports, and bilingual communication, AI empowers students to take ownership of their

learning while inviting families—regardless of language background—into the process. In doing so, conferences shift from compliance-based events to collaborative, student-centered experiences that elevate multilingual learners’ voices and identities.

At the same time, the use of AI requires ethical care. Educators must protect student privacy, ensuring platforms adhere to FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) guidelines and safeguard identifiable data. Transparency with families about the use of information is essential for building trust. Additionally, while AI can generate multilingual content, educators must verify the linguistic accuracy and cultural sensitivity, especially when dealing with nuanced or identity-related topics. Overreliance risks eroding the human-centered nature of conferences; thus, teacher judgment, empathy, and context must guide application.

Ultimately, AI should not replace teacher expertise, but amplify culturally responsive pedagogy. When implemented with intentionality, AI can help dual immersion educators reimagine conferences as spaces of empowerment—where students articulate growth, families contribute insights, and teachers co-construct pathways rooted in equity and excellence. ■

References and author bio are available in the appendix.



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EL CINE COMO AULA BILINGÜE: UN PUENTE ENTRE DOS MUNDOS



Ethan Price

*University of California, Irvine,
HABLA Lab*

[The English version of this article is available in the appendix.]

El español siempre ha sido —y sigue siendo— mucho más que un idioma en mi casa: es la fibra que entrelaza generaciones y memorias. Mientras crecía en California, rodeado de una gran mayoría angloparlante, mi madre se aferraba a nuestro idioma como un acto de amor, resistencia y orgullo. A través del cine, descubrí no solo historias enganchantes, sino también mi identidad bicultural—una que traduce el mundo en más de un idioma.

Desde pequeño, el cine en español no fue solo entretenimiento. Era, sin saberlo, una forma natural de aprender mientras nos divertíamos. Recuerdo que al principio, mi padre —quien solo habla inglés— tenía dudas sobre que mi madre nos hablara exclusivamente en español y francés. Le preocupaba que eso retrasara mi aprendizaje del inglés o me causara dificultades escolares. Era un temor común, bienintencionado, pero equivocado. Muy pronto vi que no solo adquirí los tres idiomas con fluidez, sino que desarrollé habilidades lingüísticas más avanzadas que las de muchos de mis compañeros monolingües. Estudios recientes de la

Universidad de California en Irvine, como los dirigidos por la Dra. Elizabeth Peña y su equipo del laboratorio Human Abilities in Bilingual Language Acquisition (HABLA), demuestran que los niños expuestos a múltiples lenguas no sufren trastornos del lenguaje, sino que desarrollan habilidades lingüísticas robustas en cada idioma. Además, aprender varios idiomas simultáneamente fortalece la flexibilidad cognitiva, la memoria y la capacidad de resolución de problemas.

En mi caso, cada lengua me ha ofrecido no solo palabras, sino distintas formas de pensar. He aprendido que no importa el problema: siempre hay, al menos, tres formas de abordarlo. El inglés, mi herramienta cotidiana, me da estructura y claridad. El español, que uso en casa, me conecta con la emoción y la intimidad; es pasión y pertenencia. El francés me invita a la profundidad, a la elegancia y al matiz. Cada lengua no solo me comunica con el mundo, sino que me ofrece una forma distinta de pensar, de sentir y de comprender. Hablar más de una lengua no me ha dividido; me ha multiplicado.

Todo empezó en la sala, frente a la tele, acurrucados en el sofá. Ver DVDs de Disney en español era una tradición que no solo nos unía, sino que mantenía vivo el idioma que hablábamos en casa. Así fue como mi mamá aprendió inglés y como yo, sin darme cuenta, iba puliendo mi gramática y vocabulario. Clásicos como *El Rey León*, *La Sirenita* y *Aladdín* eran algunos de nuestros favoritos, pero fueron *Cars* y *Harry Potter* los que realmente me marcaron. Aunque fueron creadas en inglés, verlas en español les daba otra energía—hablaban como nosotros, y eso lo cambiaba todo.

Cada historia reforzaba un vínculo con lo nuestro que ningún libro de texto podría haber logrado. *Cars* me enseñó, en mi idioma, que la amistad y la humildad valen más que cualquier trofeo. Con *Harry Potter*, la magia se sentía más cercana, más mía. Todavía no he visto esas películas en inglés, y aunque podría, siento que perderían algo. En español no eran solo traducciones: eran parte de cómo aprendí a ver el mundo.

El esfuerzo de mi madre por conservar nuestras tradiciones a través del cine me ayudó a conservar, expandir y valorar mi vocabulario. En un entorno multicultural como el mío, esta conexión ha sido esencial. Me ha dado una perspectiva única y una identidad multicultural que enriquece mi vida cotidiana. El cine, más allá de ser entretenimiento, me ha permitido unir mis orígenes y mi identidad, conectando dos mundos y creando un espacio donde podía ser yo mismo, sin tener que traducirme.

Sé que no soy el único que aprendió más con películas que con libros. El cine, con su capacidad para evocar emociones y contar historias universales en nuestro idioma, ha sido clave para preservar mi herencia y conectar con mis orígenes. Ha sido algo que no solo me define, sino que me conecta con quienes también crecieron entre dos culturas. Aunque de pequeño no entendía por qué tenía que estudiar gramática, leer y escribir, hoy agradezco profundamente poder comunicarme con mi familia que no habla inglés y conectar con personas desconocidas con las que comparto el mismo idioma. Gracias al cine en español, he podido crecer con una identidad hispana sólida, algo que llevo con orgullo en mi vida diaria.

El bilingüismo me conecta cada semana en el mercado artesanal donde trabajo, un espacio vibrante de intercambio cultural que refleja la diversidad lingüística

de California. Ahí, atender a turistas, familias locales y vendedores como yo se convierte en algo más que una transacción: es una experiencia humana. Hablar con alguien en su lengua—ya sea español, inglés o francés—no solo facilita una venta, sino que despierta sonrisas, recuerdos y una sensación inmediata de confianza. Muchas veces, el simple gesto de saludar con un “Bienvenido/a” o cambiar espontáneamente de idioma durante una conversación (*code-switching*) transforma por completo el tono de la interacción. He visto cómo una palabra familiar en su idioma puede iluminar el rostro de un cliente. Pero también me ocurre al revés: cuando soy yo el comprador en otros contextos y alguien cambia espontáneamente a mi idioma, siento que pertenezco, que soy visto. El bilingüismo, entonces, no es solo una herramienta funcional; es una forma de establecer puentes reales entre personas. Esa habilidad—saber cuándo y cómo cambiar de código lingüístico con empatía—no se enseña en los libros: se vive, se escucha, se aprende en el contacto diario. Eso es poder y también pertenencia.

Aunque de pequeño la gramática me agobiaba, la educación bilingüe me dio herramientas que van más allá de las reglas: aprendí a pensar críticamente, a escribir con claridad y a destacar académicamente en más de un idioma. Obtuve un 5 en el examen AP de español en noveno grado, el *State Seal of Biliteracy* y estoy por conseguir el equivalente en francés al final de este curso. También recibí una mención honorífica y una beca en la competencia internacional *John Locke Essay Competition* (2024) y el primer premio en prosa de Albricias, la revista de la Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica. Nada de eso habría sido posible sin la educación bilingüe que comenzó, simplemente, con una película doblada en casa. Para mí, el bilingüismo no es solo una habilidad; es una forma de mirar el mundo con más profundidad y empatía.

Desde mi primer año de secundaria, he estado trabajando como asistente de investigación (RA) en el laboratorio HABLA que forma parte de la Escuela de Educación en la Universidad de California, Irvine (UCI). Mi participación, como estudiante trilingüe de 17 años, ha sido posible gracias a la generosidad de un equipo que me ha permitido aprender y contribuir en tareas como la codificación de datos, además de participar como sujeto en algunos estudios. Esta doble experiencia —como observador y observado— me ha ofrecido una perspectiva singular sobre los procesos

de adquisición del lenguaje, tanto desde dentro del laboratorio como desde la vivencia personal.

He observado cómo técnicas como el “*scaffolding*” – estructuras temporales que permiten al estudiante avanzar con apoyo estratégico—hacen que el aprendizaje fluya de forma natural, tanto en el aula como en contextos informales. Lo que los investigadores describen como “input significativo”—una exposición comprensible y contextualizada al lenguaje— lo viví al escuchar diálogos en mi lengua materna que me hablaban tanto al corazón como al intelecto. Fue una experiencia que me permitió integrar lo que aprendía de manera natural, algo similar a lo que se conoce como “*translanguaging*”, donde se combinan elementos de diferentes idiomas para enriquecer la comprensión y expresión. Esta visión me ha preparado para ser un educador reflexivo en el futuro—alguien que no solo enseña, sino que también escucha, adapta y aprende con sus estudiantes. Quiero ser el educador que construya espacios donde la identidad lingüística de cada alumno sea celebrada como una fortaleza y no tratada como una barrera. Mi experiencia personal refleja lo que tantas familias hispanas viven a diario: la lucha por conservar nuestra lengua materna en un entorno que a veces la silencia. Es también un ejemplo del tipo de educación bilingüe rica, emocional y espontánea que CABE defiende: una que nace en casa, se fortalece en la comunidad y se proyecta hacia el futuro.

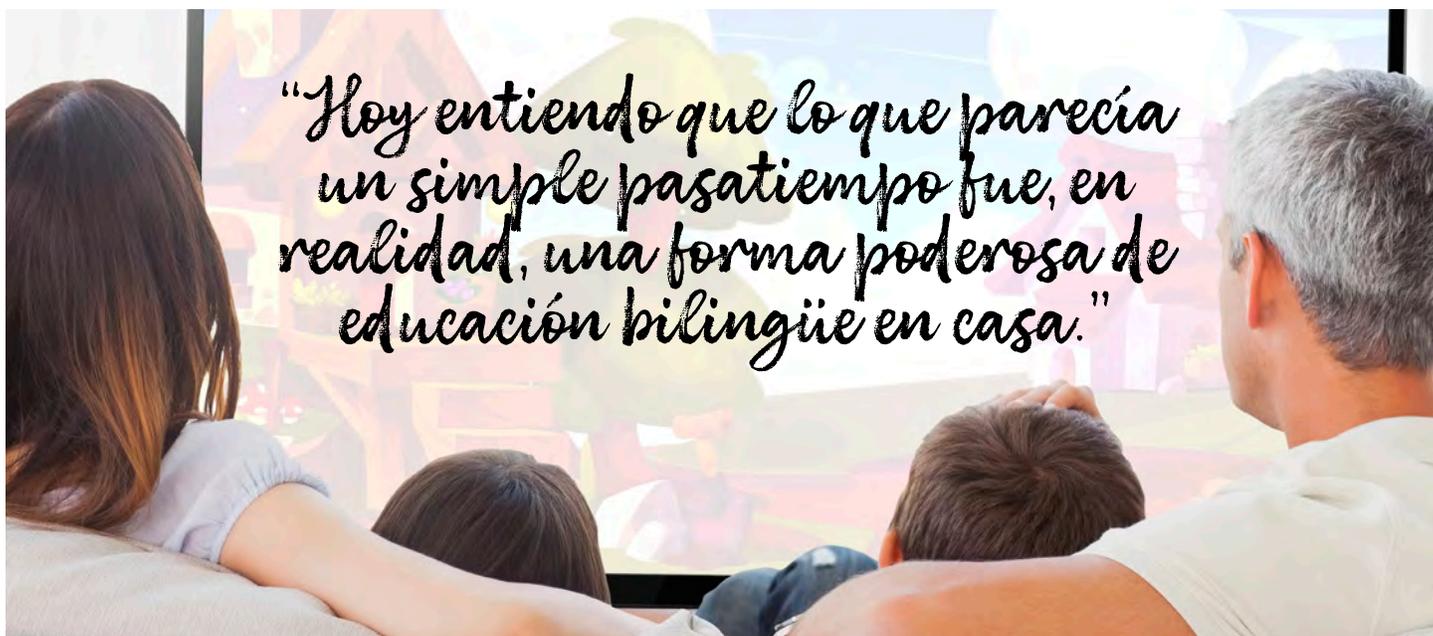
Más allá del laboratorio, también participo en Tertulias, una iniciativa impulsada por mi mentor Reinaldo Cabrera Pérez en la Escuela de Educación de UCI, dedi-

cada a fomentar el bilingüismo y la equidad lingüística. Inspiradas en el modelo de las charlas, estas reuniones invitan a estudiantes, docentes y académicos a explorar cómo el lenguaje se entrelaza con la identidad, el poder y las oportunidades educativas. Ser parte de Tertulias me ha permitido ver el valor de mi experiencia trilingüe reflejada en un contexto colectivo de aprendizaje y acción.

Hoy entiendo que lo que parecía un simple pasatiempo fue, en realidad, una forma poderosa de educación bilingüe en casa. Esa sala frente a la tele fue mi primer salón de clases, donde aprendí a pensar, sentir y soñar en dos idiomas. Gracias a esas experiencias, no solo conservo el idioma de mis raíces; lo vivo y lo llevo conmigo en cada conversación, cada texto que escribo, cada vínculo que construyo. Mi historia, como la de muchos otros estudiantes bilingües, demuestra que el idioma no es solo comunicación: es vínculo, memoria y posibilidad.

Cada palabra en español que pronuncio es una afirmación de quién soy y de dónde vengo. Y mientras haya una pantalla, una voz y un niño escuchando su lengua materna con atención y orgullo, la educación bilingüe seguirá viva, no solo en las aulas, sino en hogares como el mío. Como futuro educador, sé que el lenguaje no solo preserva nuestro pasado, sino que también abre puertas a lo que está por venir, en casa, en el aula y en cada conversación que atravieso en tres lenguas. ■

The English translation, references, and author bio are available in the appendix.



Bridging Hearts and Heritage:

Social Emotional Lotería as a Culturally Grounded Approach to Social-Emotional Learning



Anna D. Heinbuch, Ed.D., PPS
First Gen-Minority Latina-Owned Small Business

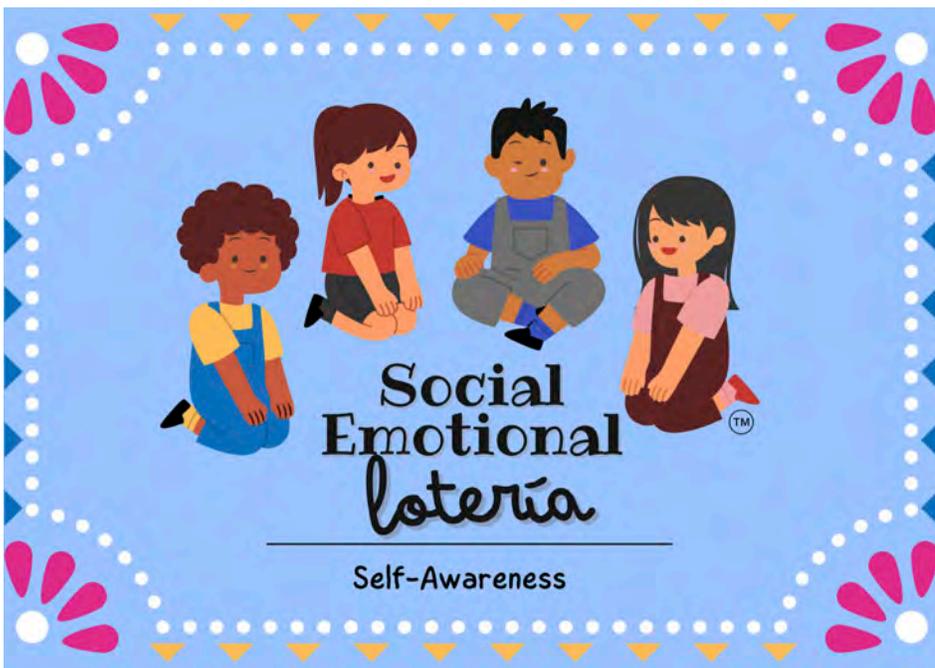
In a time when student well-being, cultural responsiveness, and inclusive education are essential priorities, *Social Emotional Lotería* (SELotería) offers a timely and innovative contribution to the field of social-emotional learning (SEL). Created by Dr. Anna D. Heinbuch,

founder of NeuroNurture Apoyo Educativo, LLC, this six-week, research-informed curriculum blends culturally relevant pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and the core SEL competencies outlined by California Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL) to support

diverse learners across age ranges. More than just a curriculum, SELotería is also an interactive instructional game—reimagining the traditional Mexican game of *Lotería* with SEL-themed imagery and reflective prompts that foster emotional insight, identity exploration, and connection through play. Together, these elements make SELotería a multidimensional program—and a movement—centered on equity, cultural pride, and family engagement.

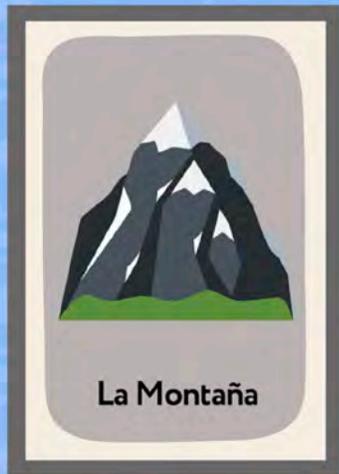
A Game That Teaches: What Is Social Emotional Lotería?

Social Emotional Lotería reimagines the traditional Mexican game of Lotería as a powerful learning tool. Each card becomes a visual metaphor—a candle for inner light, a river for emotions, a mirror for identity—inviting students into dialogue and reflection on emotions, identity, strengths, and



THE MOUNTAIN - LA MONTAÑA

Theme: Overcoming Personal Challenges



When climbing a mountain, some parts are easy, and some are hard. Can you think of a time when something was hard at first but got easier because you kept trying?

(Recognizing strengths)

A mountain can seem really big when you start climbing. What are some things you can say to yourself to keep going even when it feels tough?

(Encourages growth mindset)

Imagine you reached the top of the mountain. How would you feel?

(Encourages exploration of emotions)

If you climbed a mountain every day, would it get easier? How does practicing something make us better at it?

(Encourages self-efficacy)

Reaching the top of a mountain is a big goal.

What goals do you have?

(Promotes self-efficacy)

values. The curriculum spans six structured weeks, each focused on a CASEL-aligned theme, from recognizing emotions to cultivating self-efficacy.

While designed with neurodivergent learners in mind, its accessibility through UDL principles and photo-elicitation strategies makes it inclusive for all learners—particularly English learners and students from historically marginalized backgrounds. Each lesson can be facilitated in classroom settings, small groups, or even at home, allowing for cross-generational learning and parent engagement.

The curriculum has been implemented by educators, school counselors, mental health professionals, family engagement specialists, and community-based organizations spanning a variety of age groups

and grade levels. Currently, it serves as both Tier 1 and Tier 2 support in multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). It is fully bilingual and available in both English and Spanish. The current self-awareness curriculum is the first of five CASEL-aligned domains.

Best Practices and Proven Strategies

SEL Lotería blends research-informed techniques with culturally responsive practices to create an inclusive and effective SEL experience:

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** Rooted in neuroscience and tested extensively in diverse learning environments, UDL supports flexible access and expression for all learners (Schwab et al., 2019).
- **Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS):** Based on Housen’s aesthetic development theory, VTS

helps students engage deeply with metaphors and visual prompts, building empathy, critical thinking, and communication skills (Housen, 2002; Yenawine & Miller, 2014).

- **Photo Elicitation:** This strategy utilizes culturally relevant visuals to prompt emotional dialogue and foster perspective sharing. It’s particularly effective for multilingual learners who benefit from visual scaffolds to express complex emotions and identity-related themes (Choon-Chai, 2019).
- **Metaphorical Imagery:** Cards like “The River,” “The Candle,” or “The Mirror” help students connect complex feelings to tangible, visual concepts, promoting emotional regulation and identity exploration (Loeffler, 2004).

- **Evidence-Based Structure:** The curriculum uses pre/post assessments, weekly CASEL-aligned objectives, and reflective journaling—evidence-based practices proven to improve SEL outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017).

Together, these strategies not only support academic growth but also help students develop the SEL com-

petencies necessary for long-term success.

Inside the Six-Week Curriculum: Building Self-Awareness Through Cultural and Visual Literacy

The Social Emotional Lotería curriculum is structured into a six-week unit, each week focusing on a specific facet of the Self-Awareness competency from

the CASEL framework. These lessons are designed to foster emotional understanding, identity development, and personal growth, particularly for multilingual, neurodivergent, and culturally diverse students.

Each week centers around a set of original playing cards inspired by traditional Lotería, redesigned with culturally meaningful symbols and

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LOTERÍA CURRICULUM BLENDS RESEARCH-INFORMED APPROACHES, SUCH AS CULTURAL RELEVANCE AND VISUAL STRATEGIES, WITH EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES ROOTED IN ESTABLISHED SEL FRAMEWORKS LIKE CASEL.



Research-Informed

- Culturally responsive practices like using Lotería for engaging students in SEL, aligning with research on cultural relevance (McCallops, 2019)
- Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS): It is based on developmental and cognitive psychology research, particularly aesthetic development. Studies in cognitive science have shown that thinking about visual images enhances critical thinking, communication, and the ability to reflect on complex ideas (Housen, 2002).
- Photo Elicitation: The use of images to promote emotional engagement and discussion is research-based, focusing on promoting reflection and critical thinking (Choon-Chai, 2019)
- Metaphors and visual prompts (e.g., "The Candle," "The River") are research-informed strategies designed to help students explore self-awareness and emotional regulation. (Loeffler, 2004)

Evidence-Based

- Use of the CASEL Framework, which is backed by multiple meta-analyses showing SEL improves academic outcomes (Taylor et al., 2017).
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, a widely tested and validated framework to enhance access and engagement for diverse learners (Schwab et al., 2019).
- Pre/Post-Tests in the Lotería curriculum measure SEL growth, an evidence-based method of tracking student progress in SEL. (Durlak et al., 2011).
- Weekly themes and structured SEL activities are aligned with CASEL's five core competencies, demonstrating efficacy in multiple studies for improving student outcomes. (Mahoney et al., 2018).

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THE WAVE - LA OLA

Theme: Awareness of Emotional Ebbs and Flows

What does it mean that our emotions come and go like waves?

(Encourages exploration of emotions)

Can you describe a time when your emotions felt like big waves?

(Encourages self-perception)

Big waves can be overwhelming. What are some things we can do when we feel overwhelmed by our emotions?

(Promotes self-confidence)

Each wave has its own strength. What strengths do you bring that are like powerful waves?

(Recognizes strengths)

Your actions are like waves influencing what happens on the shore.

How do your actions make an impact?

(Promotes self-efficacy)



metaphorical depth. These visual anchors are paired with research-informed instructional strategies like Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and Photo Elicitation, engaging students in higher-order thinking, language development, and emotional expression.

Weekly Themes and Core Components:

Week 1 – Recognizing Emotions

Card Example: *El río (The River)*

- Students reflect on how emotions flow and change, building emotional vocabulary and body awareness.

Week 2 – Identifying Strengths

Card Example: *El árbol (The Tree)*

- This week focuses on self-confidence and resilience by connecting personal strengths to a powerful visual symbol.

Week 3 – Exploring Identity

Card Example: *El espejo (The Mirror)*

- Students explore cultural, linguistic, and personal identity, fostering pride in their heritage and embracing multilingualism.

Week 4 – Understanding Values

Card Example: *La brújula (The Compass)*

- Through discussions about internal motivation and moral compass, students identify core values that influence behavior.

Week 5 – Emotional Regulation

Card Example: *La ola (The Wave)*

- This week teaches strategies to navigate overwhelming emotions using grounding and mindfulness techniques.

Week 6 – Self-Efficacy and Reflection

Card Example: *El faro (The Lighthouse)*

- Students reflect on their growth, setting personal goals and identifying trusted supporters in their lives.

Each lesson is supported by visual worksheets, collaborative activities, and journaling prompts, with adaptations for small groups, classroom instruction, or home engagement. The visual and symbolic depth of the cards makes them accessible and resonant for students of all ages and language backgrounds.

Using culturally familiar and emotionally rich imagery helps students anchor abstract concepts in familiar contexts, promoting deeper comprehension and emotional literacy. This approach is grounded in

developmental psychology and culturally responsive pedagogy, ensuring that learners not only understand SEL concepts but also see themselves in the learning.

Playing Social Emotional Lotería: A Game-Based Approach to Self-Awareness

At the heart of the Social Emotional Lotería curriculum lies a joyful, collaborative game experience that transforms social-emotional learning into something familiar, engaging, and culturally rooted. Inspired by the traditional Mexican game of

Lotería, the SEL version is adapted to create meaningful reflection and dialogue around self-awareness and personal growth.

How the Game Works

In its educational format, Social Emotional Lotería is played much like Bingo:

1. Cantante (Caller): A student or child announces the card drawn from the Lotería deck.
2. Guía (Facilitator): A teacher, counselor, or caregiver reads the corresponding discussion prompts from the guide.

3. Players mark their boards as images are called, aiming to complete three-in-a-row and shout “¡Lotería!” when they win.
4. At each turn, participants pause to reflect on the symbol on the card and engage in thoughtful dialogue prompted by questions aligned with CA-SEL competencies.

Unlike traditional didactic SEL lessons, Social Emotional Lotería is play-based and culturally affirming. The game’s interactive nature keeps students engaged, while the guided questions ensure depth and reflection. Each round becomes a springboard for conversations that foster self-discovery, empathy, and resilience by incorporating Visual Thinking Strategies, photo elicitation, and metaphorical imagery.

This flexible, inclusive approach makes Social Emotional Lotería uniquely effective across various contexts, engaging not only students but also families, educators, and entire communities.

Voices From the Field: Perspectives From Students, Parents, and Educators

Educators describe SELotería as a “game-changer.” One counselor shared, “My students are opening up in ways I haven’t seen before. The metaphors give them language to understand their feelings—and their families connect with it, too.”

Parents, especially those from Spanish-speaking or immigrant backgrounds, find that Lotería bridges cultural and generational gaps. “I played Lotería as a kid. Now, my daughter is learning about feelings and strength through something



that connects us,” shared a parent in a community circle.

Students across grade levels report feeling “seen” and “proud” of their identities. The visuals and metaphors help them explore difficult topics in safe, engaging ways. A 5th grader reflected, “The River card helped me talk about my anger. I never knew how to say it before.”

A Curriculum Rooted in Equity and Identity

Social Emotional Lotería’s hallmark is its cultural relevance. Developed by Dr. Anna Heinbuch, a first-generation Latina educator, the program is intentionally designed to reflect the identities and experiences of students of color. It moves beyond superficial representation by embedding language, traditions, and symbols that resonate deeply with Latinx communities and multilingual learners.

Aligned with CABE’s vision of biliteracy, multicultural competency, and educational equity, SELotería amplifies the voices of culturally and linguistically diverse students. It affirms identity while developing SEL competencies essential for academic and life success.

Advancing CABE’s Mission: SEL Lotería as a Model of Equity and Empowerment

The **Social Emotional Lotería** curriculum embodies CABE’s core vision of Biliteracy, Multicultural Competency, and Educational Equity for All. By weaving together culturally grounded content with bilingual resources, SEL Lotería directly supports students in developing emotional intelligence and linguistic strength. The curriculum is fully available in English and Spanish, ensuring that students from

multilingual households see their languages reflected and honored in the classroom.

In alignment with CABE’s mission to support diverse students in graduating college-, career-, and globally-ready, Social Emotional Lotería fosters a foundation of self-awareness, resilience, and confidence—essential traits for academic and life success. The six-week program equips students with the ability to identify and manage emotions, reflect on their identities, and set meaningful personal goals—all within a context that respects and celebrates their cultural heritage.

Through its culturally responsive framework, SEL Lotería exemplifies CABE’s Theory of Action in several distinct ways:

- It exemplifies equitable practices by delivering flexible, inclusive content that meets the diverse learning needs of multilingual and neurodivergent students.
- It promotes a sense of community through collaborative learning experiences, such as community circles and family engagement activities, ensuring students and caregivers have a voice in their social-emotional development.
- It demonstrates admiration and respect for cultural and linguistic heritage by using symbols, traditions, and stories rooted in students’ lived experiences.
- It actively advocates for and empowers educators and families, offering tools that dismantle barriers and build capacity for effective, empathetic instruction.
- It is respectful, inclusive, and honest in its design—centering

student identity and family culture as a source of strength and learning.

By integrating visual anchors from Mexican culture, bilingual instruction, and CASEL-aligned practices, SEL Lotería stands as a compelling model of how schools can advance CABE’s goals—cultivating inclusive, caring learning environments where every child, family, and educator can thrive.

Conclusion

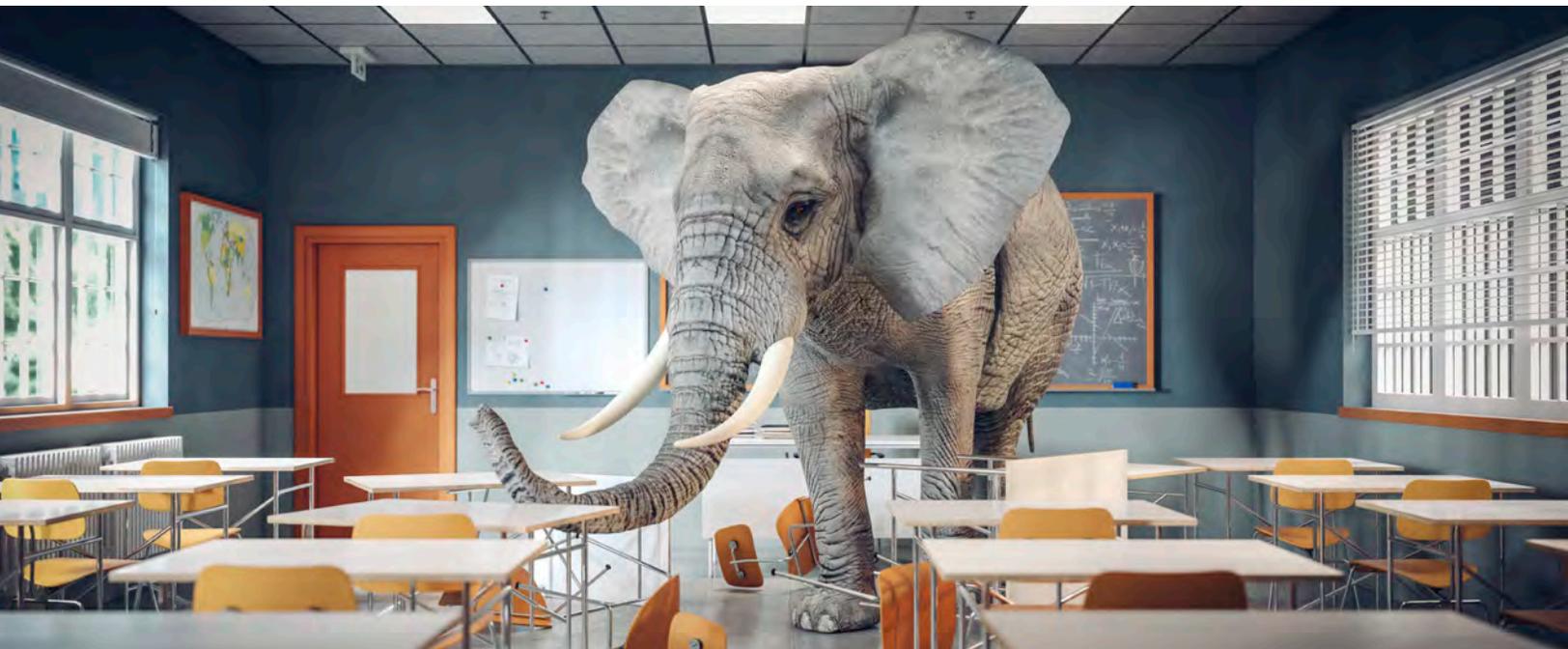
Social Emotional Lotería offers a roadmap for integrating cultural identity with emotional development. It invites educators, families, and students into a shared learning space that values tradition, voice, and emotional intelligence. In doing so, it exemplifies the kind of innovative, inclusive, and research-aligned practices that define the future of education for English learners and culturally diverse communities. As SELotería expands into additional SEL competencies—including Social Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision Making, and Healthy Relationship Skills—the program will continue to support students in culturally sustaining and emotionally transformative ways.

To learn more about Social Emotional Lotería, visit: www.neuronurtureapoyoeducativo.info or follow on Instagram: [@NeuroNurture_Apoyo_Educativo](https://www.instagram.com/NeuroNurture_Apoyo_Educativo)

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References are available in the appendix.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM:



Preservice Teacher Spanish Proficiency



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I met with district and community leaders to discuss current issues in PreK-12th-grade dual language (DL) education. The most interesting inquiry was, *Why are universities unable to produce bilingual teachers with high levels of Spanish?* As a professor in higher education serving populations of Latino preservice teachers, eyes were on me to provide a compelling explanation to the *elephant in the room*—a problem that is unpleasant to address. The answer traces the trajectory preservice teachers embark upon from infancy to adulthood and how their home languages have been valued and taught throughout their schooling, a lifelong preparation to master their linguistic assets. Although a simple answer to the question, it is not the trajectory for many aspiring bilingual educators when the elephant in the room feeds on systemic inequities.

The Elephant in the Room

The default programming in California for bilingual PreK-12 students is monolingual English education, unless parents find access to a bilingual/dual language program in their neighborhood school. Although California (CA) has made strides in the legislature (e.g., Proposition 58) to reverse this course, the shortage of bilingual teachers is preventing California's statewide expansion of bilingual education as the main option for multilingual students (Global California 2030). Therefore, most preservice teachers have never experienced learning in a bilingual setting; most, if not all, of their education has been encased in English. Many of the preservice teachers enrolled in our university's Bilingual Authorization (BILA) program do not recall ever having a bilingual content class, other than a high school Spanish

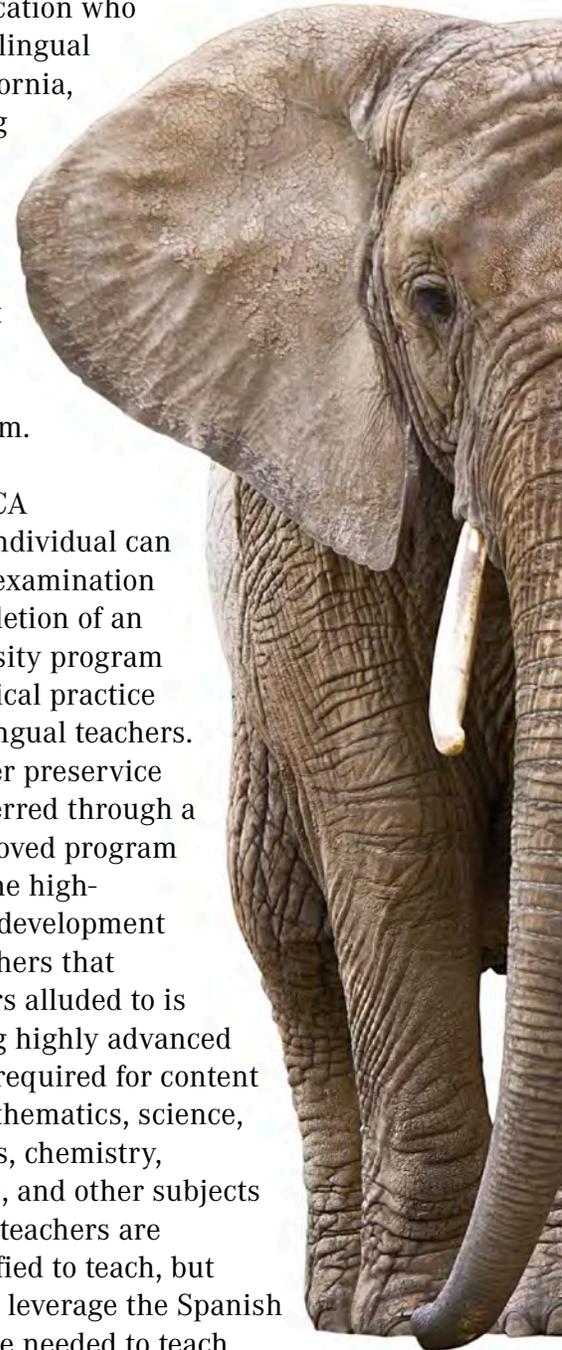
class. Few have participated in DL programs and/or received a Seal of Biliteracy upon graduation. Most attribute their biliteracy to their parents, who served as their primary language givers, speaking only Spanish at home, attending religious/cultural events, watching novelas, visiting relatives in Mexico, or having prior schooling in their native lands. Despite the linguistic inequities they face in US schools, they still aspire to become bilingual teachers and give this gift to their communities.

In California, the BILA (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2025) encompasses several types of instruction for English learners: English Language Development (ELD); Primary Language Development; Specially Designed Academic Instruction Delivered in English (SDAIE), and Content Instruction in the Primary Language. Let us understand that it is not a bilingual credential where all methodology courses are offered in the primary language, nor a program where preservice teachers spend 100% of their clinical practice teaching in the primary language (e.g., Multiple Subject, Single Subject, Education Specialist), but rather an authorization that is added to a holder of a valid CA credential, where most likely, the program was conducted in English. To meet the primary language certification, preservice teachers must pass the CA Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET): World Languages, which is valid for 10 years. Alternatively, certification can be granted to those who hold a valid CA Single Subject with a major in a language other than English. Finally, the CA Commission on Teacher Credentialing does not require that the BILA courses be taught in the primary language; therefore, each university decides on the content delivery, language of instruction, assignments, and readings.

In addition, the Bilingual Teacher Performance Expectations (BTPEs) (CTC, 2021) incorporated into the BILA courses are not required to be taught in the primary language. The BTPEs, developed from the initial credential program (e.g., Multiple Subject, Single Subject, Education Specialist), address theoretical connections to the primary language that are mainly connected through translanguaging but offer little guidance to instructional practice. The six BTPEs include: 1) Engaging/Supporting Students, 2) Creating/Maintaining Effective Environments, 3) Understanding/Organizing

Subject Matter, 4) Planning Instruction/Designing Learning Experiences, 5) Assessment, and 6) Developing as a Professional Educator. All BTPEs expand on Teacher Performance Expectations (TPEs) already introduced, practiced, and assessed in their initial credential program, but are not specific to primary language instruction or developing the native language fluency of professional educators. As leaders in education who want to expand bilingual education in California, instead of creating a patch to update the Bilingual Authorization with BTPEs, the state should enact policy to develop a real Bilingual Credential Program.

According to the CA Commission, an individual can obtain a BILA by examination without the completion of an accredited university program that provides clinical practice with certified bilingual teachers. Therefore, whether preservice teachers are conferred through a Commission-approved program or examination, the high-quality linguistic development of preservice teachers that community leaders alluded to is short of producing highly advanced levels of Spanish required for content instruction in mathematics, science, history, economics, chemistry, physics, literature, and other subjects where preservice teachers are exceedingly qualified to teach, but perhaps unable to leverage the Spanish academic language needed to teach complex subjects through state standards (BTPEs 3 & 4). This being the case, districts need to implement professional development in Spanish to continue advancing the academic language proficiency of preservice teachers during their professional education (BTPE 6).



Preservice Teachers' Self-Assessment of Spanish

At the start of our university BILA courses, we invite preservice teachers to create a multilingual profile of their languages and identities. They also self-assess their Spanish language proficiency in all four language domains using the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Scales (2012). Granted, these scales describe the linguistic assets of foreign language speakers. Still, it provides a comprehensive description of language functions and the performance of interpersonal and interpretive modes in context and discourse, along with the comprehensibility of communication through levels/sublevels that range from novice to distinguished proficiency (see Figure 1). For our purposes, it provides a general description of how bilingual preservice teachers perceive their Spanish proficiency at the onset of the program, categorized as Distinguished, Superior, Advanced (High-Mid-Low), Intermediate (High-Mid-Low), and Novice (High-Mid-Low). Preservice teachers reflect on their use of Spanish in their daily lives, particularly when communicating and listening to other speakers of the language, and how they perceive themselves as readers and writers of Spanish within their respective contexts.

Figure 1 represents the Spanish self-assessment of three BILA academic cohorts (2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025) totaling 100 preservice teachers when they entered the program. The clusters in Figure 1 show the distinct levels of proficiency across four language domains. Results show that preservice teachers self-selected *Advanced High* levels of Spanish in listening and reading domains, which are interpretive and interpersonal in nature, as compared to their selections of *Advanced Mid* in speaking, and *Advanced Low* and *Intermediate Mid* in writing. These modes of communication require performance task-oriented language functions and sentence structures that entail knowledge of academic vocabulary, phraseology, and pragmatics (ACTFL, 2012). Findings indicate that bilingual preservice teachers entered our BILA program

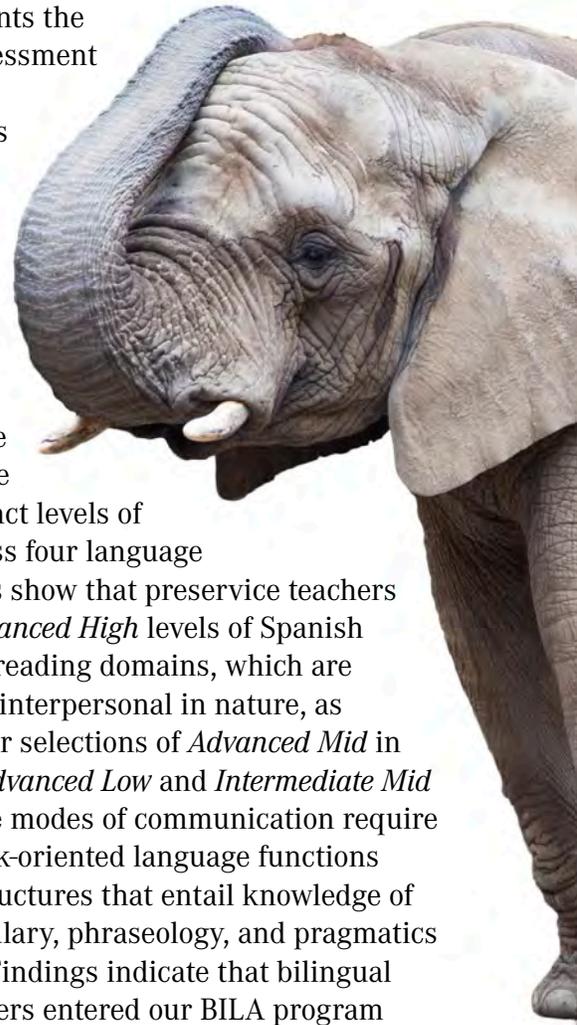
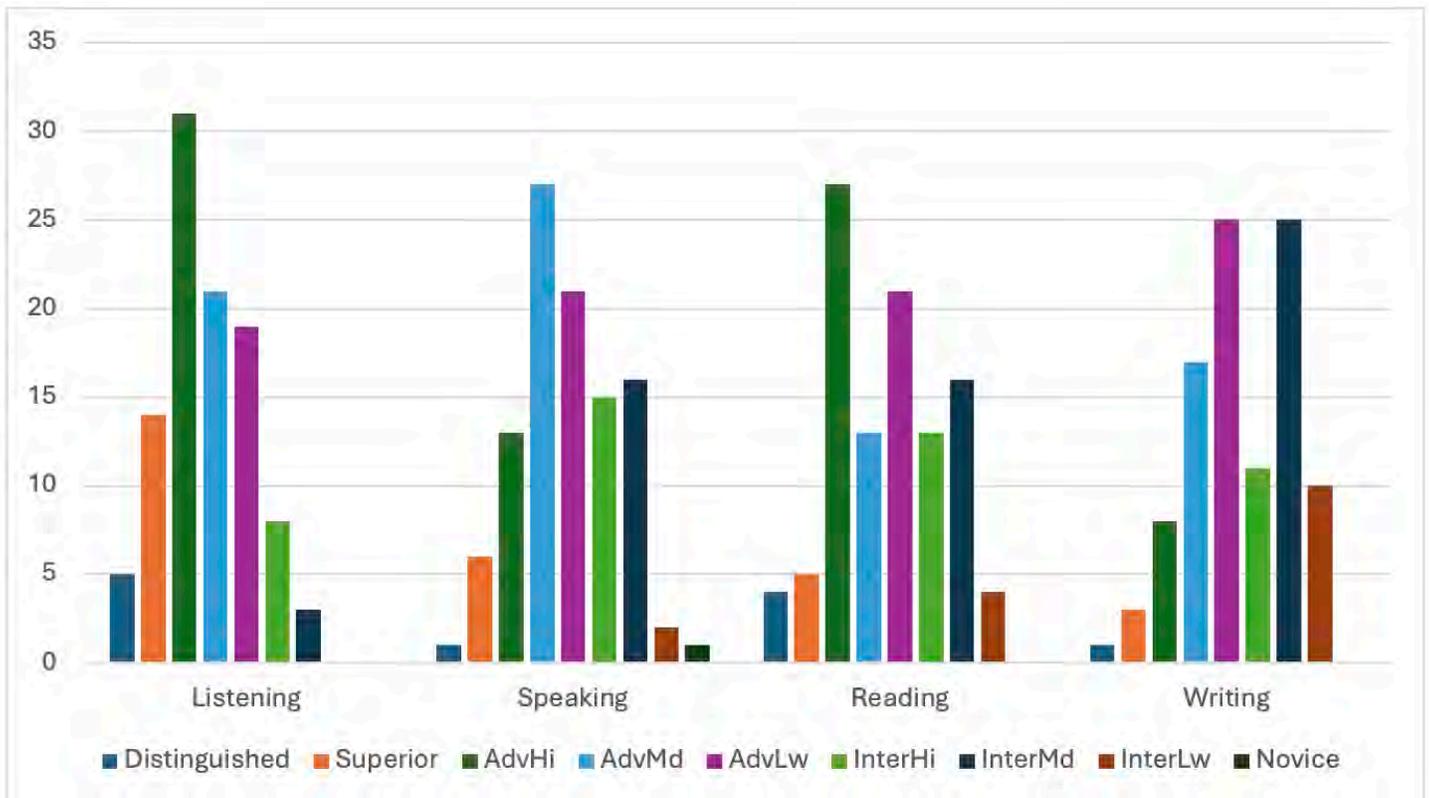
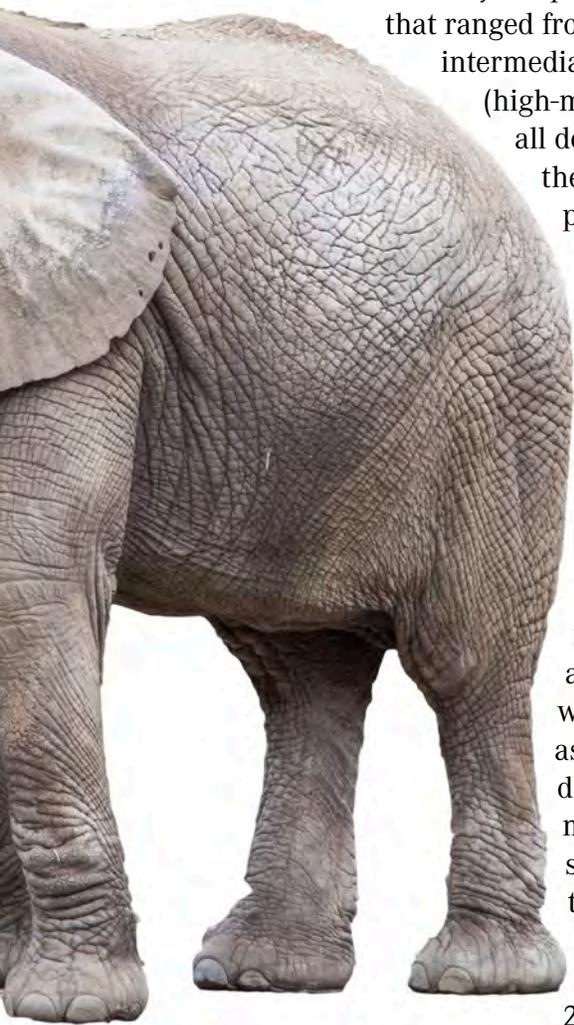


Figure 1 Preservice Teacher Self-Assessment of Spanish Proficiency Levels (ACTFL Scales) (2022-2024)





with a diversity of Spanish levels that ranged from advanced to intermediate sublevels (high-mid-low) across all domains. Knowing the vast range of proficiencies and their desire to increase their Spanish language skills, this becomes the primary goal of our BILA classes, which are taught in Spanish and supported with readings, assignments, discourse, and monitoring strategies in the language of instruction (Hernández, 2024, 2018).

Based on their BILA assignments and performance assessments, the confidence levels of preservice teachers increase throughout the year. Preservice teachers write assignments in Spanish and use spellcheck to revise and edit papers. They receive peer feedback and sign up for writing conferences with the instructor. Written assignments often exhibit grammatical approximations typical of heritage speakers or second language learners (e.g., accents, conjugations, false cognates, agreements, word order) that are influenced by the age of onset of their languages, the level of exposure to Spanish, and the effect of their dominant language. But notably, their writing is natural, has clarity and voice, is culturally authentic, and indicative of linguistic investments to strengthen their Spanish. Preservice teachers with lower confidence (due to personal or educational factors) often write in English and use Google Translate or AI tools to convert their text into Spanish. Although papers meet criteria, the language is too perfect, as if lifted from textbooks, or

somewhat artificial, as though the vocabulary were forced or unnatural, unlike what they sound like during discussions or presentations. They know it and tell me about it, but ultimately, they chose these scaffolding strategies as they continue to master their Spanish skills. With time and the type of assignment, they know when to experiment more with Spanish and create more authentic pieces. Most often, they take the CSET LOTE (California Subject Examinations for Teachers, Language Other Than English) in Spanish at the end of the program or retake the exam more than once.

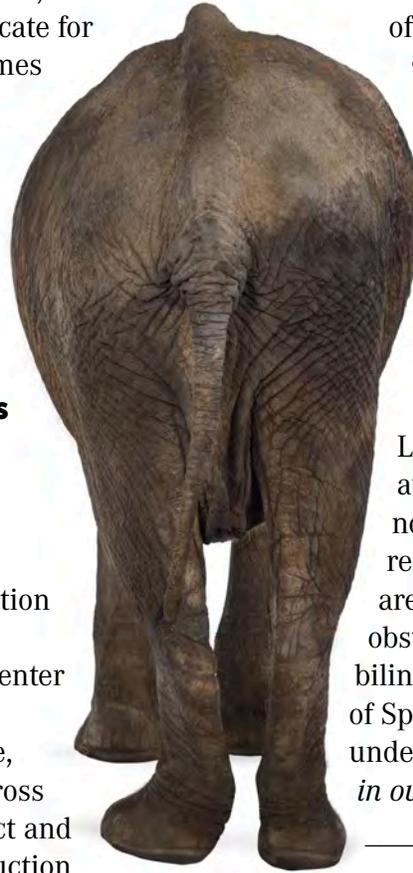
Although many of our preservice teachers are native speakers of Spanish, others identify as heritage speakers and/or second language learners. No language assessment available can encompass this linguistic diversity in our CA preservice teachers, nor measure the gaps in language loss due to the detrimental consequences of two decades under Proposition 227 (1998) and legislation against bilingual education—one of the primary reasons for the current shortfall of highly qualified bilingual teachers (Hernández, 2018; Alfaro & Hernández, 2023). Prop 227's dismantling of bilingual programs, emphasis on English instruction, and the implementation of Structured English Immersion for English learners diminished the native language proficiency of individuals seeking careers as bilingual educators (Hernández, 2024; Hernández & Alfaro, 2020). The research clearly shows that when heritage languages are in contact with the dominant language (e.g., English), the vitality and status of the nationalized language diminishes the heritage language through reduction and simplification of semantics, functions, and structures of the language (Silva-Corvalán & Enrique-Arias, 2017). A group of preservice teachers impacted by years of language loss is now reclaiming their heritage languages at a time when the national sentiment against immigrants has soured the country's linguistic diversity with a new Executive Order—Designating English as the Official Language of the United States (The White House, 2025). The stakes could not be higher for the elephant in the room, and we must do everything possible to protect the primary language of our students.

The linguistic typology across bilingual preservice teachers is vast and varied within their PreK-

12th-grade schooling experiences, multilingual backgrounds, and personal investments in language varieties (Hernández & Alfaro, 2020). Unfortunately, their language diversities are not generally celebrated nor addressed in the limited time spent in teacher preparation programs (Alfaro & Hernández, 2023). Most often, credentialing courses rarely intersect with Spanish courses offered in other university departments (e.g., Modern Languages Department) that could strengthen the proficiency of bilingual preservice teachers or help prepare them for state examinations (Hernández & Alfaro, 2020). As university budgets shrink, bilingual faculty are reduced, course offerings are decreased, articulation between college departments is curtailed, and the ability of high-ranking leaders to advocate for bilingual programs, which are sometimes considered the bottom rung on the ladder, is diminished, often leaving them at the bottom of the ladder. There is a desperate need to support university bilingual programs if California seeks to enact changes in the educational landscape.

Bilingual Teachers as Champions of Spanish Instruction

We promise quality DL programs that develop bilingualism and biliteracy during the school life of a student, yet forget to leverage a high-quality education for preservice teachers that begins in elementary school, so that when they enter a BILA program in their college years and self-assess their Spanish language, they can select *distinguished* levels across domains. We must stand firm to protect and champion our Spanish language instruction



in schools and universities. If we want to support the linguistic growth of highly qualified bilingual teachers, we must respond with actions to the inquiry raised by the community leaders: *Why are universities unable to produce bilingual teachers with high levels of Spanish?*

Imagine a Spanish-speaking child begins school, continues her/his educational trajectory, graduates from high school, enters college, finishes a credential program, and becomes a bilingual teacher. What was your role in this child's bilingual educational journey?

- Was the child able to attend a bilingual program in their community?
- How did the program structure protect the status of the Spanish language classes?
 - Did this child love their Spanish language classes?
 - How excited were you about teaching this child in Spanish every day?
 - How confident would this child be in Spanish when they enter a bilingual teacher preparation program?

Look around, is there an elephant staring at you in the room? If so, elephants do not always represent a hidden truth we refuse to accept, but at times, elephants are associated with the wisdom to remove obstacles. So, if we want to produce future bilingual preservice teachers with high levels of Spanish proficiency, it begins with all of us understanding what to do about *the elephant in our room*. ■

References are available in the appendix.

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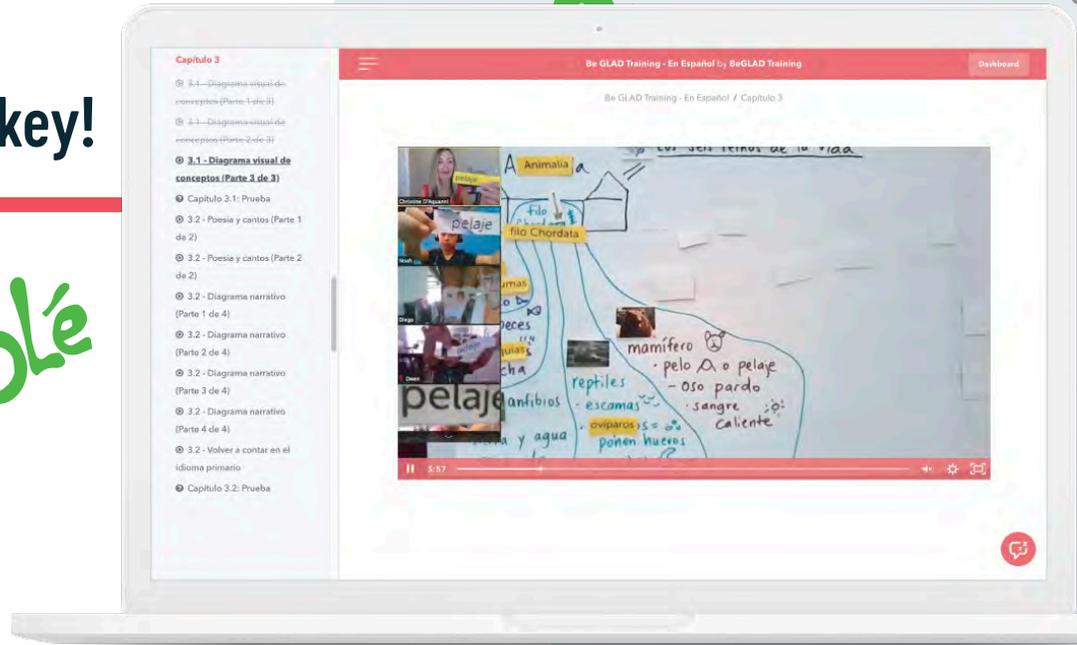
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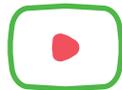
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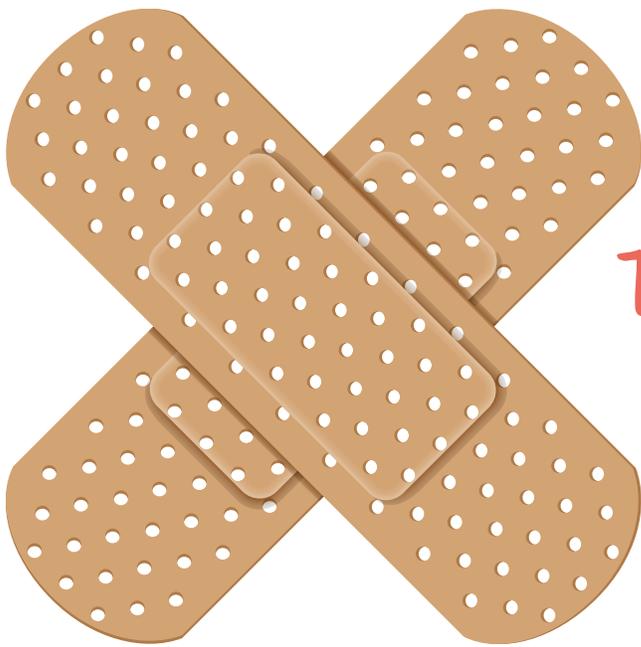
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My Personal Healing Teaching With Trauma-Informed Practices in a Multilingual Classroom



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What if the classroom were not just a space for learning, but for healing and self-reflection? As adult learners, it is impossible to enter the classroom without traumas and biases acquired through prior experiences. According to a longitudinal study conducted by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), of California residents who participated in a survey conducted from 2015 to 2019, sixty-nine percent of adults shared they had been exposed to one to two Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) before the age of eighteen. People who experience ACEs are more likely to battle with mental and physical health issues. A student's life journey affects the choices they make every day, consciously and unconsciously and the educators entering the classrooms are no different.

A year ago, I embarked on planning a workshop along with two other colleagues. We all teach English to adults in multilingual classroom settings. We agreed we had all had students in our classrooms that demonstrated side effects of past traumatic events in their lives, and we were interested in finding ways we could share with other colleagues resources and activities they could actively use in their andragogy that could support students' well-being and lower the affective filter in the classroom. So we decided to research and present on trauma-informed practices for adult learners.

As we researched our topic, I became fascinated with learning terminology and how trauma affects not just our mental well-being, but also our overall physical health. I also became reflective on my own mental health, and I began to think of my own journey into the classroom from student to educator, and how trauma has affected my life.

As a first-generation child born in the US to immigrant parents, I was born in a country that was foreign to my mother and father. They had to adapt to linguistic and cultural differences from those in their native country of El Salvador. El Salvador has a complicated history of violence and civil disruption. These factors have led to many of its citizens leaving their native country in search of basic needs like safety and financial security for their families. Both my parents also came from matriarchal, single-parent households, and were abandoned by their alcoholic fathers, who would die of the disease. While both would leave behind poverty and physical dangers when they immigrated, they carried with them the heavy load of never healing from their exposure to ACEs. These common traumas, I assume, would create a trauma bond, but with time, would also be the demise of their love story. I learned from a very young age that the saying “hurt people hurt people” was, in fact, true. This would be the foundation of my complicated path to building healthy relationships

and boundaries, a sense of safety, and unlearning behaviors that were not conducive to my overall well-being and that of my children.

As the oldest daughter, I would endure neglect and verbal abuse, mostly from my mother. My mother would become enraged when she felt frustrated or overwhelmed and take it out on others. Many times, I would feel like I was walking on eggshells, trying not to upset her. My father would succumb to various addictions throughout his lifetime that helped him cope with his inner demons. He was a functional alcoholic at one point, and would go undetected in the eyes of people who were not part of our everyday lives, as a man who was hard-working and a great provider. This became a Complex Trauma for me, which is defined as an ongoing type of trauma that can last for an extended period of time and is known to cause challenges for individuals and their families. Alcoholism was a trauma we would live with as a family for three decades, and that ultimately killed my father. Some challenges I have had to overcome due to the complex trauma of alcoholism in my family are codependent behavior, which is emotional and psychological reliance on others, struggles with confrontation, people-pleasing, and constantly burning out because it is hard for me to make and keep safe boundaries and not be “nice” so everyone can like me and validate me. I also struggle with depression and negative self-talk.

It is through this workshop that I have been developing and adapting into my own teaching that I began to understand myself more, and the way adult learners acquire new knowledge when they have had traumatic events in their lives. It is a lifelong journey of healing that everyone hopefully chooses to embark on, and where we learn to embrace and accept all the stages of life we go through. I am still learning and growing, as are my students, who often remind me of the importance of resilience, patience, and grace towards one another.

Here are some research-based tips and activities on how you can adopt trauma-informed practices into your teaching as well as into your own life journey:

Smile and Enjoy the Little Things

Hooper, Marotta, and Lanthier (2008) note that parentification is when a child is given an adult role



and is expected to act like a parent rather than a child. We are expected to make adult decisions when, in fact, your brain has not fully developed, and the responsibilities we are given are not developmentally appropriate. As such, we forget to stay curious and creative, and are not allowed to enjoy our childhoods fully.

So I encourage you to go out and hug a tree! Lie down in the grass and stare at the clouds, and imagine they are fantastical images. Practice using all your senses and stay present, and enjoy the gift of being alive. Enjoy the small triumphs! Give yourself permission to be silly and not have an agenda.

- ★ In class, I invite you to try sensory activities with your students and discuss them, such as drawing with non-traditional art materials, exploring and participating in show-and-tell, or making a dream journal with daily prompts.

Breathe

Our brain needs oxygen. It receives oxygen by breathing air into and out of our bodies. If we are always in survival mode, our bodies do not adequately absorb the air we need to keep our brains functioning at their normal rate.

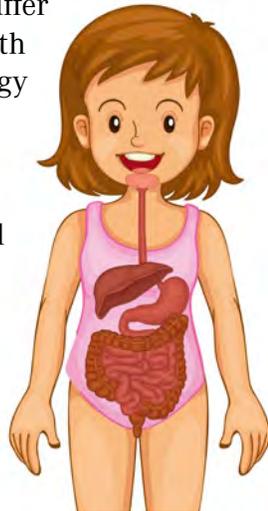
Nakamura, Oku, and Fukunaga (2024) assert that breathing impacts brain function and can influence emotional regulation and cognitive abilities from memory to neuroplasticity. It is essential to regulate your breathing during stressful times. Check yourself the next time you find yourself in a stressful situation. Notice how you breathe and try to regulate your breathing, and see the difference it makes!

- ★ Practice breathwork with your students, especially your evening students who may struggle with traffic or transitioning from work to the classroom. As an icebreaker, focus on intentionality for two to three minutes with the Dragon Breathing Technique.



Take Care of Your Gut

When we are stressed and our brain perceives a threat, it sends signals to our vital organs to protect us. Our bodies are always trying to protect us. However, when our bodies and minds are not regulated due to stressors, it might send the wrong signals. This is why many of us suffer from digestive problems. Gut health is linked to mood regulation, energy level, cognitive function, and skin problems. Emotional disorders, such as depression and anxiety, are frequently linked to functional gastrointestinal disorders, suggesting connections between gut function and psychiatric diseases (Lee et al., 2020). Taking care of our digestive system is vital to overall well-being.



- ★ Share or research healthy eating options with students. Comparing and contrasting fast food and healthier food options can be a good reflective writing activity.

Practice Gratitude

Being grateful for both small and big things can be beneficial in creating a growth mindset and moving past negative thoughts and self-harm.

Gratitude has been shown to be a contributor to increased happiness, health, and other desirable life outcomes and to support a decrease in negative affect and problematic functioning (Emmons et al., 2019).

- ★ Practice gratitude by helping students create a daily practice. Suggest that students take five minutes before they wake up or go to sleep to recall five to ten things for which they are grateful. Use them as discussion starters or as a quick writing exercise at the start or end of class.

Engage in Self-talk

We can be our worst critics. It is up to us if we see the cup as half-full or half-empty. Studies show self-talk is linked to self-awareness, a human attribute that promotes self-reflection and self-regulation (Morin, 1993). Mirror talk is an effective way to practice

self-love and self-talk. Find a mirror and stand in front of it. Tell yourself one good thing that you believe to be true about yourself. Continue adding to the positive qualities you believe about yourself. For some, this might be easy, while for others it can be very difficult. It might be easier for you to compliment others, but not yourself.



- ★ As an icebreaker, try the Rose, Bud, and Thorn activity, where students share accomplishments (Rose), future plans (Bud), or challenging events (Thorn) that demonstrate resilience and support empathy and relatability towards students.

Celebrate Yourself

Dance, laugh, take an art class! Celebrate yourself as much as you can. We are worthy of celebration for breaking patterns that might have been destructive and not beneficial to our growth and well-being. Part of growing as a human being is making mistakes and learning from them. Healing is a lifelong process, and you are taking steps to better yourself every day. So pat yourself on the back for being brave and not following the status quo and building a life for yourself that suits your needs and well-being. Life is too short not to celebrate the wonderfulness of it all. Celebrations can also induce student collaboration, connections, and social supports (Brick et al., 2023).

- ★ Collaborative projects, presentations, and potlucks can be a good way to integrate cultural relevance in the classrooms and to celebrate students' big and small victories.

In conclusion, if trauma has occurred in your life, I invite you to also reflect on your journey and see how far you have come. As educators, we also need to learn to take our well-being as a form of professional development. The way we feel and treat ourselves has a ripple effect on our classrooms, on our interactions with students, and on building healthy rapport, and it models behavior that supports student success in and out of the classroom. ■

References are available in the appendix.



Dual Language Learners in Transitional Kindergarten

California's UTK Landscape

California's [Universal Transitional Kindergarten](#) (UTK) multi-year expansion is a historic investment to expand access to early learning programs for every 4-year-old in the state. Alongside other early learning and care programs in the mixed-delivery Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) system, TK aims to provide young learners with the foundational experiences they need to thrive as they enter kindergarten and beyond.

The expansion of TK offers a timely opportunity to reimagine how California can better support its youngest and most vulnerable learners—especially dual language learners (DLLs) who make up [nearly 60% of children from birth to age five](#). These children, with their rich linguistic and cultural assets, represent a [vital segment of our student population](#). Centering their needs isn't just a matter of educational equity; it's also a crucial investment for the [future of California](#). In the wake of a federal administration that continues to attack public education and diversity, equity, and inclusion and threatens immigrant communities across the country, California's efforts to build welcoming and safe schools for every child are more important than ever.

The state faces both a pressing challenge and a unique opportunity, addressing the [growing teacher shortage](#) while expanding access to high-quality bilingual pro-



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grams. With a rising population of DLLs, there is an urgent need to strengthen the bilingual teacher pipeline and equip educators to create inclusive, culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms. [Creating school environments](#) where children see their home languages and cultures reflected and affirmed is vital for fostering [emotional safety, a strong sense of identity](#), and long-term academic and social success. The expansion of TK serves as a strategic opportunity to support the development of bilingualism and biliteracy from the earliest years and foster a diverse educator workforce prepared to meet the needs of all students.

The following section showcases the impactful work taking place across California school districts—from university partnerships that support bilingual TK educators to the growth of dual language immersion (DLI) programs, and the creation of inclusive, welcoming environments for all children.

Inspiring Practices Across California

Strengthening the TK Teacher Workforce: Tangible Approaches to Recruiting Racially, Linguistically Diverse, and Qualified TK Teachers

California, like the rest of the country, faces [a teacher shortage](#), which has grown since the pandemic. In the 2022-23 school year, there were [36% fewer new teacher credentials to teach TK](#) and [15% fewer bilingual authorizations issued](#). This decline is especially troubling as the state nears full expansion of TK to include all four-year-olds. In the 2025-26 school year alone, more than 300,000 children are likely to enroll in TK, and California will need between 11,900 and 15,600 additional TK lead teachers [to meet the demand](#).

Some school districts have stepped up to prioritize the recruitment and retention of a qualified and bilingual TK lead teacher workforce. These districts are providing valuable insights into strategies that other communities can use, as well as identifying ways that continual state support will be crucial in ensuring TK expansion truly meets the needs of California students.

Currently, to become a TK lead teacher, candidates must hold a bachelor's degree, have 24 units of credits in or related to early childhood education, and possess a teaching credential, such as the PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction or Multiple Subject credential. Adding the [bilingual authorization](#) to either credential

option would be ideal when serving the diverse learners of California.

Fresno Unified, the state's third-largest school district, [serves over 70,000 students, 20% of whom are identified as English learner students](#). To meet the needs of multilingual students, Fresno Unified partners with California State University, Fresno, where strong teacher preparation programs, coupled with bilingual authorization certification, already exist. With financial assistance from the [Teacher Residency Grant Program](#), the district is able to leverage various pathways for new TK lead teachers and professional development opportunities for current Fresno Unified educators.

Redwood City School District (RCSD) also had innovative approaches to expanding its TK program from 3 to 16 classrooms in just three years. To address the urgent need for qualified teachers, the district recruited bilingual candidates from diverse sources, including local families and international educators. Many had some qualifications but needed financial support to complete their credentials. RCSD secured Early Education Teacher Development (EETD) and Universal Pre-kindergarten Planning & Implementation (UPK P&I) grants to help cover tuition costs—supporting both new teacher candidates and veteran kindergarten teachers seeking to deepen their early childhood expertise.

Utilizing Transitional Kindergarten (TK) Expansion to Grow Bilingual Programs

The first five years of a child's life are critical for cognitive, social, and emotional development, laying the groundwork for their future success. This is especially true for young DLLs. Dual language learners (DLLs) are defined as children whose first language is a language other than English or children who are developing two or more languages, one of which may be English.

During this fundamental period, early language development plays a vital role in building the foundational skills necessary for biliteracy. Research shows that a strong foundation in a child's home language not only supports English acquisition but also enhances proficiency in both languages. In this context, TK expansion offers a timely opportunity to ensure that children develop fluency in both their home language and English when it matters most.

The Delhi Unified School District (DUSD) has emerged as a model district due to its strategic approach to the development and implementation of high-quality bilingual education. By strategically expanding its DLI program, DUSD demonstrates how TK can be leveraged to support DLLs from the start of their educational journey. Through thoughtful planning, strong community and educator collaboration, and a deep commitment to research-based practices, DUSD has created a model that not only fosters bilingualism and biliteracy but also builds strong partnerships with families and educators.

Key features of DUSD's approach include a restructured DLI model developed by a dedicated task force, integration of SEALs ([Sobrato Early Academic Language](#)) comprehensive approach in all TK classrooms, and sustained professional development supported by a teacher on special assignment (TOSA). The district's transition to a 50/50 language instruction model reflects its responsiveness to student needs, particularly for monolingual Spanish speakers. Additionally, DUSD places a strong emphasis on family engagement through orientations and commitment-building practices that help caregivers understand the long-term benefits of bilingual education. With growing enrollment and enthusiastic participation from teachers and families alike, DUSD is setting a powerful example of how TK can serve as a foundation for equitable, inclusive, and linguistically rich learning environments.

How LAUSD is Equipping Early Educators to Create Welcoming Schools for All Children

California is home to the largest number of DLLs ages birth to five in the nation, with over 1.5 million children learning multiple languages at the same time. As Executive Orders continue to threaten immigrant communities across the country, and President Trump designates English [as the official language](#) in the United States, California must remain steadfast in fostering welcoming and safe schools for every child. We must recognize the diversity of home languages and cultures as valuable assets that strengthen our state.

One way to do this is by equipping TK teachers, instructional aides, and their school site principals with the tools they need to provide developmentally appropriate and culturally and linguistically affirming

practices that recognize children's home languages and cultures as strengths.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) serves as an example through its comprehensive efforts to support high-quality, culturally responsive TK implementation. The district's Early Childhood Education (ECE) Division offers extensive professional development—engaging nearly 10,000 educators and staff—to align learning from preschool through third grade. These trainings unite TK teachers, instructional aides, preschool educators, and school leaders to implement evidence-based SEAL ([Sobrato Early Academic Language](#)) strategies and Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices (CLRP), fostering collaboration and shared learning.

In partnership with the Multilingual Multicultural Education Department, the Early Childhood Education Division at LAUSD is integrating the updated [Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations \(PT-KLF\)](#), which emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion, and developing aligned resources that help educators create classrooms affirming students' cultural and linguistic identities. As California moves toward UTK, LAUSD's work highlights the importance of building safe, welcoming, and developmentally appropriate environments that counter exclusionary policies and celebrate the rich languages and cultures children bring into their learning.

To read the full version of the blog series and access related resources, please visit bit.ly/4jC3sNg. ■





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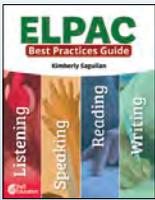
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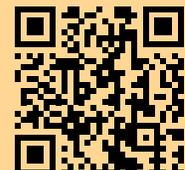
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Dual language immersion (DLI) programs have become a cornerstone of culturally responsive education in the United States, offering students the opportunity to develop bilingualism, biliteracy, academic success, and cross-cultural understanding. As these programs continue to grow, they are often promoted as beacons of equity, serving multilingual learners and helping to bridge linguistic and cultural divides. However, despite their inclusive intentions, DLI programs frequently overlook a crucial population: students with special needs. This underrepresentation is not the result of student capacity, but rather of persistent systemic structures, policies, and beliefs that marginalize learners whose needs do not align with traditional educational models. According to the Center for Applied Linguistics (2023), only 12% of DLI programs report actively recruiting students with special needs. This statistic reflects more than a simple oversight; it underscores the urgent need to critically examine and reimagine how access and equity are defined and implemented in multilingual learning spaces.

Historical and Structural Barriers

Many Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams recommend English-only placements for students with special needs, operating from the assumption that immersion programs are too academically or linguistically demanding. This recommendation is often based on outdated and deficit-based perspectives rather than evidence. In fact, research has consistently shown that bilingualism can benefit students with diverse learning profiles, including those with speech and language delays or learning disabilities (Kohnert, 2010; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Rather than posing additional challenges, immersion settings can offer cognitive, linguistic, and socioemotional benefits when designed with inclusive support in place.

Opening the Doors Wider: Expanding Access to Dual Language Immersion for Students with Special Needs



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Schools, therefore, have a unique opportunity to strengthen their infrastructure to fully realize this potential. By expanding the pool of bilingual special educators, adopting more robust co-teaching models, and fostering stronger collaboration between general and special education staff, schools can move toward more integrated services in DLI contexts. Additionally, reimagining program design to emphasize inclusivity—rather than narrowly

focusing on perceived academic readiness through criteria such as early literacy benchmarks or prior language exposure—can open doors for students with special needs, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, ensuring that all learners benefit from dual language education.

Legal Foundations and Gaps in Enforcement

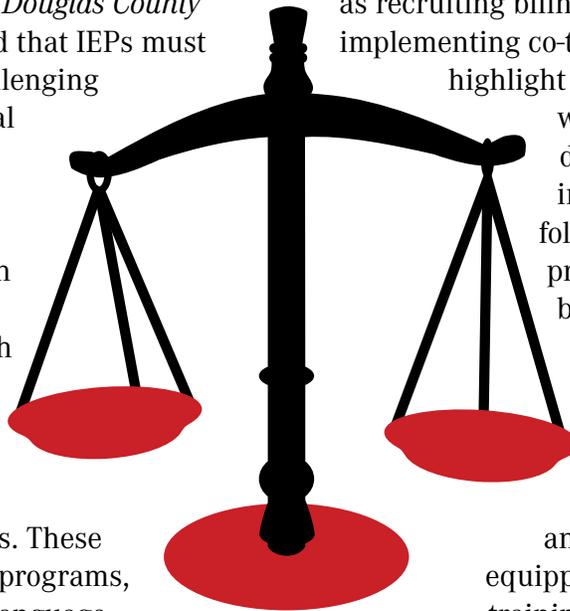
Federal legislation provides a robust framework for educational inclusion. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that students with special needs be offered a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The Supreme Court’s decision in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (2017) reinforced that IEPs must be *appropriately ambitious*, challenging schools to move beyond minimal compliance. In theory, this supports student participation in immersion settings when appropriate. In addition, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protect students from discrimination based on disability and ensure that all learners have equal access to school programs. These protections extend to language programs, and when applied within dual language immersion (DLI) contexts, provide a strong foundation for inclusive practice.

Landmark decisions such as *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) further affirm the obligation of schools to provide meaningful language access. While this case primarily addressed the needs of English learners, its implications also support students who are dual-identified as multilingual learners and students with special needs. Although explicit legal mandates requiring inclusion in DLI programs are limited, this very flexibility allows schools and districts to lead with innovation, transparency, and equity—setting powerful precedents for how all students can thrive in multilingual educational environments.

The Role of Policy and Practice

At the state level, initiatives like California’s Proposition 58 have sparked significant growth in

multilingual programs, creating a strong foundation for expanding access. Building on this momentum, states have an opportunity to embed inclusive practices that ensure students with special needs are fully supported in DLI settings. Providing clear guidance and sustainable funding for integrated services would help schools design programs that meet the needs of all learners. In addition, collecting and reporting enrollment and achievement data disaggregated by disability status would not only increase transparency but also highlight examples of success, offering valuable models for replication and continuous improvement across districts. Some districts have embraced promising practices, such as recruiting bilingual paraprofessionals and implementing co-teaching models. These efforts



highlight the powerful potential of inclusion when systems are intentionally designed to support it, serving as inspiring examples for others to follow. With greater awareness and preparation, more programs can build on these innovations to ensure dual-identified students are fully supported. Providing teachers with ongoing professional learning in differentiating instruction across both language and ability spectrums, along with equipping special educators with training in immersion strategies and second language acquisition, can further strengthen the capacity of schools to create equitable, inclusive dual language immersion environments.

Inclusive Program Design and Leadership

Creating inclusive DLI programs requires a shift from individual accommodation to systemic transformation. This begins with leadership that is equity-driven, culturally responsive, and grounded in relational trust. As Bryk and Schneider (2002) note, relational trust is foundational to sustainable school improvement. School leaders must engage families, staff, and community partners in co-constructing inclusive visions for DLI that reflect the strengths and aspirations of all learners.

Professional development must also evolve. Teachers in DLI programs need sustained, job-embedded training that bridges bilingual education, special

education, and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017). Rather than isolated workshops, effective professional learning should include coaching cycles, collaborative lesson design, and opportunities to observe inclusive instruction in action. When educators are supported in expanding their pedagogical repertoires, they are better equipped to meet the needs of diverse learners. Additionally, instructional practices should move beyond accommodation to full participation. This includes implementing Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018), integrating multimodal instruction, and utilizing project-based and culturally relevant approaches that value the identities and experiences of students with special needs. As Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) argue, learning emerges from participation in culturally organized activity. Therefore, inclusion must be rooted not only in access but in belonging.

Equity-Driven Data Practices

Data plays a critical role in illuminating inequities and driving improvement. However, traditional data practices often reinforce deficit narratives—focusing on what students cannot do rather than what systems must change. Schools should adopt equity-driven approaches that include disaggregated data on DLI enrollment, IEP participation, and academic outcomes for students with special needs. Qualitative tools, such as empathy interviews and student work analysis, can complement quantitative data to create a more comprehensive picture of inclusion (Orange & Isken, 2021). Principals and district leaders must facilitate data inquiries that center on equity questions: Who is being served by our DLI program? Who is missing? What systemic barriers contribute to these patterns? Engaging educators, families, and students in collaborative data reflection creates shared accountability and empowers communities to advocate for inclusive solutions.

Family Engagement as Equity Practice

Too often, families of students with special needs—particularly those from linguistically and racially diverse backgrounds—are discouraged from pursuing DLI opportunities. They may be told that “immersion is not appropriate” for their child or that English-only settings will better support their learning. These messages not only violate families’ legal rights under IDEA and Section 504, but they also perpetuate

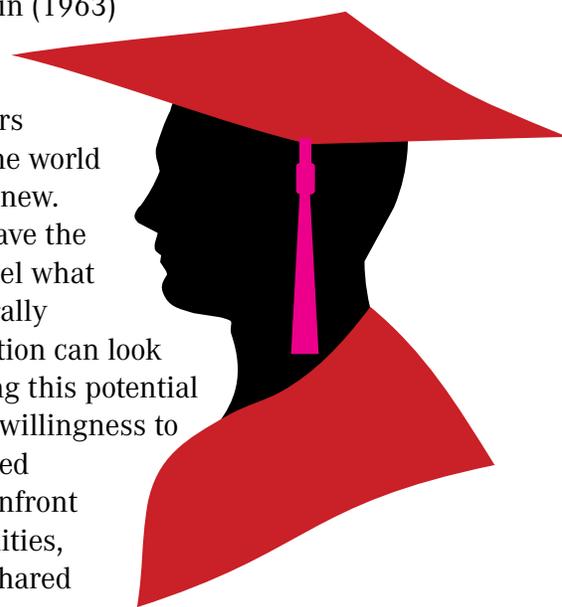
harmful narratives about what students with special needs can achieve.

Transformational leadership reframes family engagement as a justice practice. Schools should host inclusive orientation sessions, offer multilingual IEP workshops, and translate all materials related to DLI programs to ensure accessibility for all students. Empathy interviews and family panels can create space for caregivers to share their experiences and co-design more responsive services. When families are positioned as partners, not just participants, school communities become more inclusive and accountable.

Moving Toward Systemic Change

Creating equitable access to DLI for students with special needs is not an isolated initiative—it requires systemic alignment. This includes revising enrollment policies, fostering cross-departmental collaboration, restructuring staffing models, and aligning resources with inclusive goals. It also requires reimagining inclusion not as a gesture of charity, but as a reflection of the core mission of public education.

As James Baldwin (1963) reminds us, education must empower learners to understand the world and imagine it anew. DLI programs have the potential to model what inclusive, culturally affirming education can look like. But realizing this potential depends on our willingness to question inherited assumptions, confront structural inequities, and commit to shared transformation.



By opening the doors wider, we not only expand access—we expand the definition of what it means to belong, to achieve, and to thrive in multilingual learning communities. ■

References are available in the appendix.



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Early Childhood 101: Supporting Our Youngest Dual Language Learners

By now, you probably know that the early years are the most important years in a child’s developmental trajectory. By the age of five, a child’s brain is about 90% developed—meaning that between birth and kindergarten entry, children’s brains are, in essence, expanding sponges. Research has shown that early bilingual language exposure during this critical period is optimal for dual language development and dual language mastery.¹ In addition to immediate benefits for young children, studies indicate that the return on investment in preschool hovers around \$10, meaning that for every dollar spent in early childhood education, we save \$10 in future remediation, special education, and other services.²

Given what we know, one would expect the field of early childhood education to be valued and supported to ensure our youngest children, specifically our dual

language learners, are successful in school and later in life. Yet, the early childhood education system in the United States, and in California, significantly lacks resources, making it challenging to provide developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate opportunities for children under the age of five, particularly those from multilingual families.

California is home to the nation’s largest population of multilingual learners. Around 60 % of children under age six are from homes in which languages other than English are spoken. These children bring invaluable linguistic and cultural assets to the classroom. However, systemic barriers often impede their access to high-quality education and the opportunities it affords. An estimated 30–50% of children entering kindergarten as dual language learners will not acquire the necessary English skills

needed for academic participation after six years or more of instruction.³ Addressing barriers is essential to ensuring the success of both multilingual learners and the educators who serve them.

Research highlights the critical role of early childhood education in fostering multilingual learners' language acquisition, bilingualism, and cognitive development, laying a foundation for long-term academic success. Yet, despite these benefits, multilingual learners enroll in early education programs at lower rates than their peers, a disparity compounded by socioeconomic challenges.

California's Early Childhood Education System

To ensure all young children have access to high-quality early childhood education experiences, we must first unpack the system and understand where we, as a state, can do better.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten

California's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) initiative is a cornerstone of the state's efforts to deliver equitable, high-quality early education to its diverse population, particularly its growing number of multilingual learners. UPK is an umbrella term for the mixed-delivery approach to offering some form of early childhood education program to every child in California, yet there is no singular UPK program.

UPK is implemented through a mixed delivery system providing pre-kindergarten services for children 3-5 years of age through Transitional Kindergarten, California State Preschool Program (CSPP), Head Start, family child care, and various private programs. This system does not necessarily provide funding to the various programs through which it is delivered. California's Early Childhood Education (ECE) system is piecemeal at best, with a variety of programs, providers, and local education agencies delivering care and education to families in a multitude of settings.

California Department of Education State Pre-K programs

In 2023-24, 48% of the state's 4-year-olds were served by state-funded Pre-K programs such as Transitional Kindergarten and California State Preschool. In the same year, only 10% of 3-year-olds were served.

Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

Transitional Kindergarten is part of the K-12 public school system and is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. Originally launched in 2010 to meet the needs of children who were no longer eligible for kindergarten due to the change in kindergarten entry age and to ensure K-12 teachers retained employment, the program reached full implementation during the 2025-26 school year, with the capacity to serve every child who turns four by September 1st. This means that some children entering TK in California will be 3 years old when they enter the mostly part-day program.

California State Preschool Program (CSPP)

CSPP is an age and developmentally appropriate program designed to facilitate the transition to kindergarten for 3- and 4-year-old children in educational development, health services, social services, nutritional services, parent education, and parent participation. Enrollment in the typically part-day program is based on income using the [State Schedule of Income Ceilings](#). To qualify, a family of four must earn less than \$122,000 per year. CSPP programs are run through local education agencies, community-based organizations, and, in some cases, Head Start programs.

California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Programs

CDSS administers the General Child Care Program (CCTR), Children with Severe Disabilities Program (CHAN), and the Family Child Care Education Home Networks (CFCC) Program. To operate these programs, the state contracts directly with child care centers and [Family Child Care Home Education Networks](#) for a fixed number of child care slots. Title 5-contracted programs must meet Title 5 and Title 22 regulations.

General Child Care and Development (CCTR)

General Child Care and Development Programs, including CCTR and Family Child Care Home Education Networks, are state and federally funded programs that use centers and family child care home networks operated or administered by either public or private agencies and local educational agencies. These contractors provide child development services for children from birth through 12 years of age, as well as

older children with exceptional needs. As of January 2025, approximately 25,000 children under the age of five were receiving care through CCTR, with 5,000 of these children being cared for in a licensed family child care home.

Migrant Child Care and Development Programs (CMIG):

Migrant child care and development programs use centers and family child care home networks operated or administered by either public or private agencies and local educational agencies to meet the needs of migrant children and their families. In 2025, over 700 children from birth to age five participated in CMIG programs.

Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start, founded in 1965, is a federally funded early childhood education program that provides comprehensive services, including education, health, nutrition, and family support to children aged 0-5, their families, and pregnant women from low-income backgrounds. Children from birth to age five who are from families with incomes below the federal poverty guidelines are eligible for Head Start services. A family of four making less than \$32,000 per year can qualify for Head Start (3-5 year olds) or Early Head Start (0-3 year olds) services.

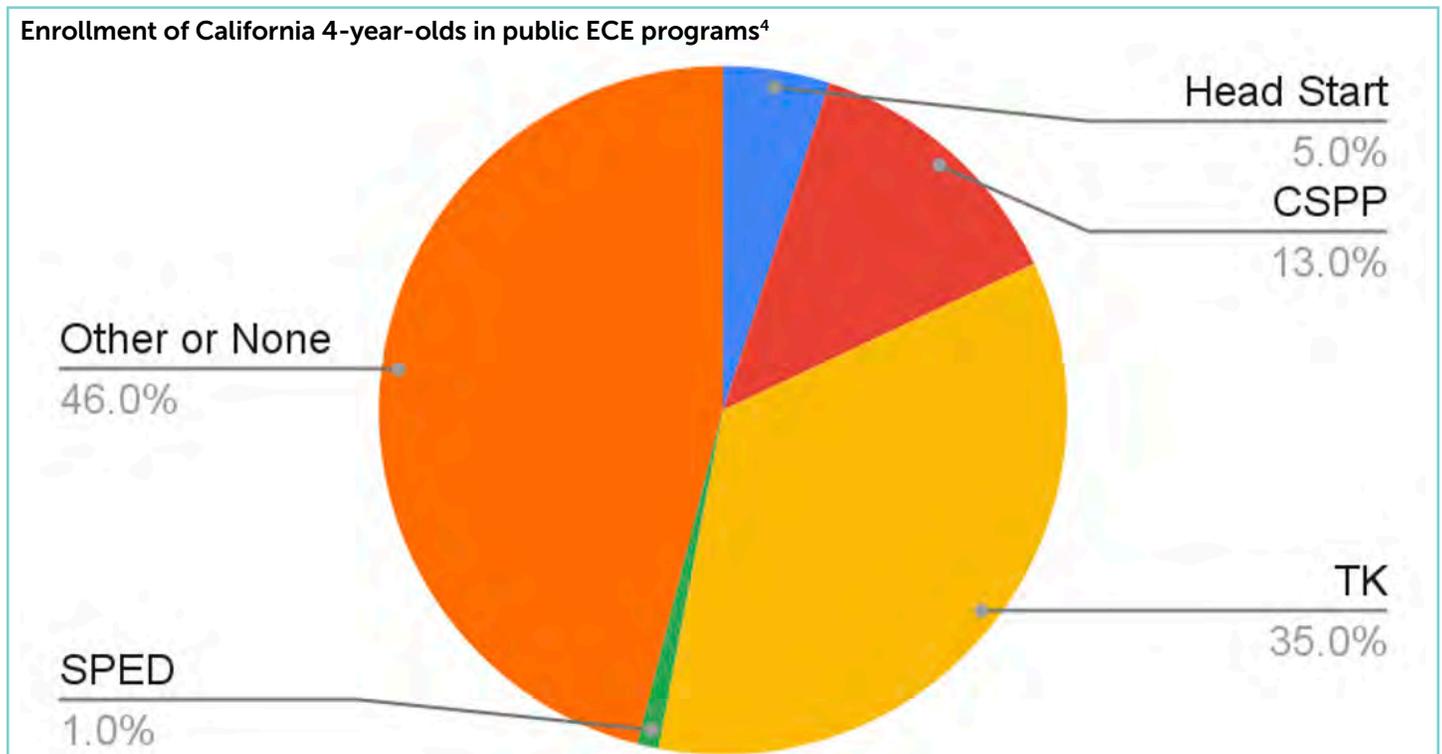
Local entities can design the program to best meet the needs of the children and families they serve while maintaining high standards aligned to the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Services are delivered through a variety of strategies, including part-day and full-day center-based preschool programs, home visiting, family child care programs, parent education, health services, and more. In 2023-24, 5% of 4-year-olds and 7% of 3-year-olds in California were served in a Head Start program.

Private Early Care and Education Programs

So, where are the rest of our young children prior to starting public school? 81% of 3-year-olds and 46% of 4-year-olds in California are cared for in private early care and education programs such as licensed family child care, private center-based programs, faith-based programs, or are in other care arrangements.⁵ These programs are not monitored by state preschool, Head Start, or UPK state entities, although they must meet Title 22 licensing regulations. They operate using their own approaches, curricula, guidance, and oversight. Many of the programs accept child care subsidies and/or are funded through General Child Care and Development (CCTR) state dollars as described above.

License-Exempt programs: Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care

License-Exempt care includes programs such as



part-time, city-run preschool programs, park and recreation center programs, library programs, or parent cooperative preschools. These programs are also not monitored by a state or federal agency and are not licensed.

Family, Friend, or Neighbor (FFN) Care is another kind of license-exempt care provided in the child’s or childcare provider’s home by a person who is a relative, friend, or neighbor. This type of care is not required to be licensed by the State of California. Families who choose this type of care often know and trust the caregiver and may use a child care subsidy to cover the expense.

Many immigrant families opt for this type of care arrangement for various reasons. These caregivers, most often grandmothers, are deeply valued by parents, some of whom consider this type of care to be ideal. According to a 2022 study by the [Center for the Study of Child Care Workforce](#), parents who identify as immigrants relied somewhat more often on FFN caregivers than parents who indicated being born in the United States: 53% of immigrant parents used FFN care for their children under age three and 50% used it for children ages three to five, compared to 37% and 42% of U.S.-born parents, respectively.¹

What can we do?

To ensure every dual language learner entering California public schools has an equitable opportunity to succeed in the early grades and beyond, we must make greater efforts to support all children and families before they get to public school by:

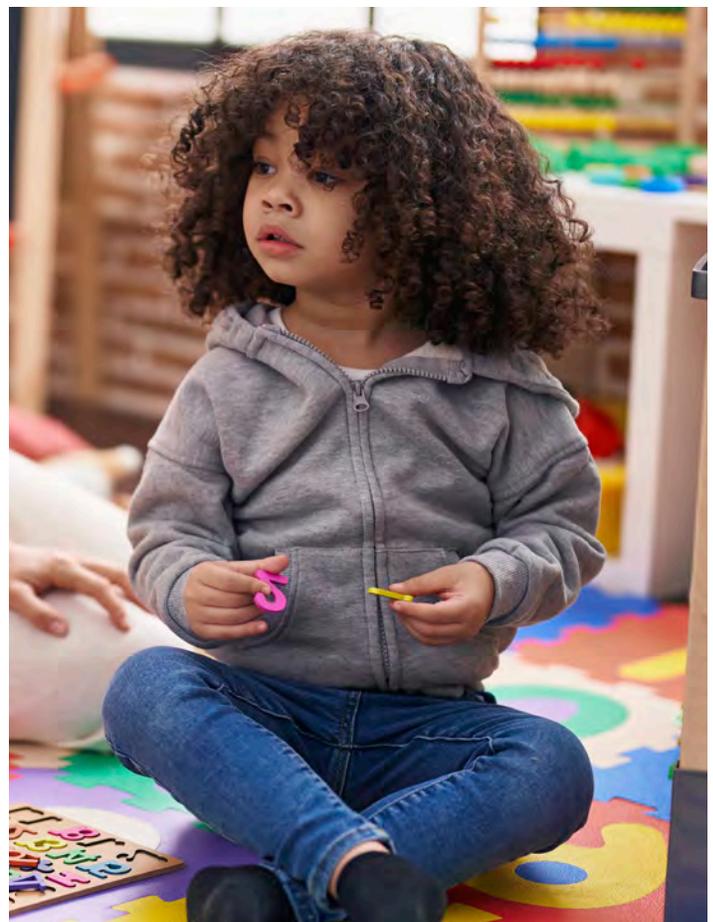
- Elevating the essential contributions of early childhood educators, particularly their roles in fostering the development of dual language learners during their formative years.
- Engaging effectively with a diverse range of mixed-delivery providers to tap into their vast knowledge and expertise.
- Compensating early childhood education professionals adequately for the critical services they provide, with a particular emphasis on bilingual educators
- Increasing access to quality ECE programs for multilingual families—particularly in child care deserts across our state.

- Implementing a birth-to-3rd-grade continuum that intentionally includes mixed-delivery ECE providers and supports all families by responding to their unique needs, including linguistically and culturally appropriate transition practices.
- Expanding dual language and multilingualism-related professional development opportunities to all early childhood educators.
- Integrating professional development focused on dual language development and multilingual families into all ECE and teacher preparation programs.
- Ensuring all children, regardless of care environment, receive the support they need to develop their home language successfully.

High-quality, culturally and linguistically appropriate early childhood education, regardless of the care setting, is critical for the success of all children, especially dual language learners, now and in the future. It’s time we act like it.

For more information, contact erin@caltog.org ■

Notes are available in the appendix.



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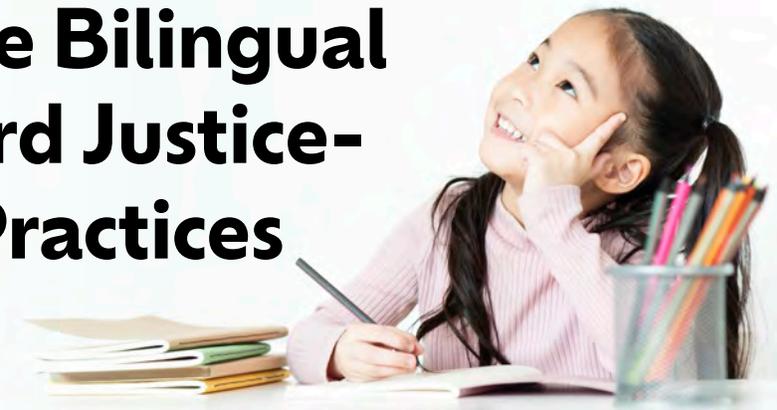


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Rethinking the Term 'English Speakers' in Dual Language Bilingual Education: Toward Justice- Oriented Naming Practices



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Background: Why Naming Matters

“Your English is perfect! But where are you really from?” This question, all too familiar to Asian Americans and other minoritized groups, captures the complex and often uncomfortable reality experienced by those who immigrated to the United States at a young age or grew up in immigrant families. Equally familiar is the moment of self-conscious apology when these individuals engage with their ethnic or linguistic communities: “Sorry... I only know how to say ‘hello’ and ‘thank you’ in Korean.” I have heard this confession countless times, often spoken with a mixture of shame, regret, and longing. This dual burden—a sense of exclusion from dominant society and embarrassment within one’s own community—should not be seen as a personal shortcoming. Rather, it is a phenomenon of broader societal forces and patterns. Specifically, these are the outcomes of English-only ideologies and assimilationist policies that have historically erased the languages of immigrant students and their families in the United States.

Naming conventions in education carry both implicit and explicit power. For example, when students were labeled as “Limited English Proficient,” the term often

led teachers to lower their expectations, which in turn affected how students were taught and how they perceived themselves. Fortunately, these students, once labeled “Limited English Proficient,” are now called “English learners” or “emergent bilinguals”—a meaningful shift from deficit-based thinking to an assets-based mindset. Likewise, the terms “English speakers” (with related labels such as “English-only” or “English-dominant” used in some school districts) and “partner language speakers,” which are commonly used in dual language bilingual education (DLBE), are not neutral. These labels affect enrollment criteria, expectations for language proficiency, the allocation of educational support, and, most importantly, the formation of student identities.

As Confucius taught, understanding the world begins with the rectification of names (正名): the act of naming things rightly is the foundation of justice, clarity, and ethical governance. Given this context, this article specifically raises questions about the use of “English-dominant” or “English-only” (EO) labels in DLBE to describe a particular group of students—those whose families once spoke a partner language but, over time, became English-dominant due to assimilationist forces. Unlike students from monolingual

English-speaking households, these students often come from families with immigrant histories and a legacy of language shift, which is important to recognize in educational settings.

The Urgency Behind This Inquiry: Justice and Equity

Three key motivations underlie this inquiry: a) responding to a shifting sociopolitical landscape that threatens educational equity, b) advancing restorative justice for marginalized heritage languages, and c) strengthening pedagogical support for students engaged in reclaiming their linguistic heritage. First, it responds to the recent executive order designating English as the national official language (The White House, 2025)—a decision with profound implications for linguistic equity. Second, it calls for restorative justice for families whose heritage languages—once treated as “forbidden languages” (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010) under assimilationist policies in the United States—have been marginalized or lost due to systemic oppression. Third, it highlights the pedagogical imperative to provide appropriate instructional support for students who are actively reclaiming these languages through participation in DLBE programs. With these motivations in mind—and in pursuit of language justice—I argue that we must reimagine how we name and understand students navigating multiple cultural and linguistic identities.

The Problem With the Term “English Speakers”

In light of these motivations, I raise critical questions about the use of an overly simplistic binary in DLBE programs—labeling students as either “English (dominant) speakers” or “partner-language (dominant) speakers.” This oversimplified classification misrepresents the diverse experiences of those placed into the ‘English dominant’ category, especially when we examine who these students are:

- A child from a family where English is the primary language, yet one or both parents speak the partner language of

the DLBE program (e.g., a biracial Korean student whose mother is of Korean descent and father is of Latinx descent; the family speaks English).

- A child of a former partner-language-speaking parent who was raised in English due to assimilation pressures and social stigma (e.g., a Korean American student whose parents migrated to the United States at a young age and now only speak English).
- A child who maintains strong cultural and ethnic ties to non-English-speaking communities and is enrolled in a DLBE program to become multilingual (e.g., a Japanese American student enrolled in a Korean DLBE program, learning Korean, English, and Japanese).

Lumping all of these students together erases their unique backgrounds and obscures the historical and social violence that contributed to their communities’ language loss. According to Johan Galtung (1969), structural violence operates subtly but pervasively, shaping systems, practices, and outcomes that marginalize groups without overt aggression. In DLBE classrooms, the use of oversimplified labels that disregard students’ unique backgrounds and histories may risk perpetuating longstanding forms of violence present in the United States. In my observations of Korean-English DLBE programs, I have encountered many students categorized as “English-dominant” or “English-only (EO)” speakers who are themselves diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, language, and immigration histories. Notably, many of their parents deliberately enrolled them in these programs to help them reconnect with their heritage, a possibility denied or never available to earlier generations. When we refer to these students as simply “English speakers,” we erase both their familial aspirations and their cultural realities.

Toward Restorative Naming: Heritage Language Reclaimers

To address this, I propose a more just and accurate term that reflects the increasing diversity among English-dominant students in DLBE—applicable to both one-way and two-way immersion programs: *Heritage Language Reclaimers*. This term differentiates these students from others typically grouped under the “English-dominant” label and recognizes those whose families historically spoke non-English languages



but became English-dominant due to systemic and societal assimilation pressures. More importantly, it affirms these students' and their families' active efforts to reclaim those languages, shifting the narrative from one of linguistic deficiency to one of agency, resilience, and cultural recovery.

This shift is more than symbolic. It allows DLBE educators and programs to design intentional and differentiated resources that honor students' and their families' lived experiences. Rather than assuming these learners are merely English-dominant, we can recognize their unique backgrounds within a broader history of language assimilation and oppression in the United States. We can also foster environments that affirm identity, nurture cultural pride, and support linguistic development in both English and the partner language. Borrowing from Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of "borderlands," these students represent linguistic and cultural bridges, embodying generational histories of displacement and survival. To name them rightly is to honor the experiences of those who have navigated these intergenerational borderlands. By redefining these students as Heritage Language Reclaimers, we make space in DLBE classrooms for more intentional instruction, meaningful identity development, and authentic cultural connection.

Pedagogical and Practical Implications

Adopting the term *Heritage Language Reclaimers* also holds meaningful instructional and pedagogical significance.

- **Reflective Practices:** Encourage students to explore and share their linguistic and familial histories, fostering metalinguistic awareness and personal connection to language learning.
- **Translanguaging:** Support students in utilizing their full linguistic repertoires, recognizing that



reclaiming a language is a nonlinear, dynamic process shaped by emotions, memories, and community.

- **Identity Texts and Storytelling:** Engage students in projects that position them as cultural contributors, allowing them to author and affirm their linguistic identities.

Most importantly, DLBE educators must avoid perpetuating shame or deficit-based thinking. Students should not feel deficient simply because they do not yet speak their heritage language fluently. Instead, their transnational sensibilities, bicultural experiences, and courageous agency in reclaiming their language should be celebrated as assets to their learning and identity development.

Conclusion: Naming as a Path to Justice

Naming is never a neutral act; it reflects and reinforces particular values, ideologies, and power structures in society. In educational contexts, the labels we assign to students can shape their experiences, identities, self-perceptions, and opportunities for growth. The term "English-dominant students in DLBE," when used uncritically, can obscure students' cultural and linguistic trajectories, perpetuating assimilationist narratives and failing to account for the complex realities of students whose families have experienced language loss. By embracing the term *Heritage Language Reclaimers*, we do more than introduce a new label—we shift our perspective and participate in the intergenerational work of restoring what has been lost: language, identity, and cultural belonging. We can also honor their families' efforts to reclaim what was once theirs and make space for more inclusive, justice-oriented programs. This reframing encourages educators to view students not through a deficit lens, but through a lens of resilience and possibility. Ultimately, naming is a crucial first step toward the positive outcomes we, as multilingual educators, seek to achieve in DLBE programs. When we choose names that reflect students' histories, identities, and aspirations, we take a meaningful step toward building more equity-driven and justice-oriented learning environments. In doing so, we create classrooms that not only recognize students for who they are but also support them in becoming who they are meant to be. ■

References are available in the appendix.



EL PODER DE LA FAMILIA: HONORING IDENTITY AND CULTURE ON A JOURNEY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY



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Family engagement is a powerful tool that bridges the gap between home and school, which is fundamental to the success of all students (Hernández & Daoud, 2024). Involving parents in their children's education is a high priority at the federal, state, and local levels (San Diego State University, 2024; Olivos & Ochoa, 2024). It provides the context for establishing a collaboration between the school and the home, benefiting the student's academic and personal well-being (San Diego State University, 2024; Flores & Kyere, 2021). Parent engagement is often conceptualized as participation on school terms that focus on student-specific outcomes, such as test scores and behavior (Olivos & Ochoa, 2024). San Diego State University (2024) argues that even when school leaders have a desire to center equity

in their schools, they often neglect to examine how racism persists in their parent/family engagement strategies, such as immigration status, class, and ethnicity. Hernández and Daoud (2024) found that even teachers shared deficit-oriented ideologies about Latinx families, specifically related to parents' lack of education, home support, and limited language skills. Parent engagement is now understood as being centered on advocacy and parents' needs (Olivos & Ochoa, 2024). When parents are viewed as partners, they are treated with respect, love, and dignity, which enables the development of relationships that foster effective parent-school engagement (Olivos & Ochoa, 2024). School leadership is crucial in establishing and sustaining effective parent/family engagement, which leads to positive benefits for students' educational

outcomes (Flores & Kyere, 2021). Research on family engagement suggests that the most impactful student achievement outcomes are interdependent with family and community-centeredness (San Diego State University, 2024). However, building confidence among families to become active participants in their children's education is crucial to fostering their children's success.

This article describes the findings from a parent engagement project aimed at improving the education of multilingual learners by increasing family engagement through mobile technology workshops. These workshops aimed to provide confidence through the creation of culturally responsive projects where Latinx families told their stories.

The Study

The parent technology workshops were part of a National Professional Development Grant through the U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), Project Childhood Early Literacy for Emergent Bilinguals with Resources and Access to Technology Engagement (CELEBRATE) (2022-2027). Project CELEBRATE partnered with two different districts to improve instructional practices for English learners, focusing on equity, asset-based approaches, empowerment through access to technology, and hands-on integration of technology. The following research questions guided this study:

- How did the digital and literacy projects empower the parent participants?
- How did the digital literacy workshops impact parents' confidence with mobile technology?

Framework

Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) was first introduced to the field of education by Daniel Solórzano (Chávez-Moreno, 2024) and is considered one of the most thoughtful and reflective movements in the field (Valdés & Bender, 2021). LatCrit seeks to resist systemic inequity within Latinx communities by challenging and confronting the barriers that Latinx individuals face (Valdés & Bender, 2021) as the largest racialized group in the U.S. (Chávez-Moreno, 2024). This framework examines Latinx identity and race, highlighting how racism and inequality are constructed and perpetuated, while also recognizing patterns and strategies for challenging existing inequities (Chávez-Moreno, 2024). Focusing on

the misconceptions and deficit ideologies that Latinx families face, this study employs LatCrit to highlight Latinx families' lived experiences through engagement in culturally relevant technological projects, allowing them to share counter-narratives of their willingness to support their children's academics at home.

Context and Participants

The parent technology project was facilitated in collaboration with two partner districts in Southern California, involving parents whose children were enrolled in a dual immersion program. The participants resided in diverse communities with high Latinx and Spanish-speaking populations. Their child's classroom teachers referred the parent participants following an eligibility criterion created by the team of teacher trainers, which included the selection of 15 Spanish-speaking families that would benefit from technology literacy workshops to support their student's journey towards biliteracy. Upon receiving the interest lists for recruitment, the trainers called each family to explain the workshops, their purpose, and the commitments. The families who agreed to participate were a diverse group of mothers and fathers, whose educational backgrounds ranged from elementary to high school. The families spoke Spanish and were literate in their native language. We celebrated the completion of our technology workshop series with 20 participants in the Spring of 2025.

Project Description

The project consisted of a total of six sessions for families; however, for the purposes of this paper, Table 1 outlines four key sessions.



Session	Topics	Activities
1	Basic iPad Elements	Trainers introduce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features of iPad and technology use • Educational applications for iPads • Google Drive & Gmail Account
2	"Cuadros de familia" Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families read aloud "Cuadros de familia" and make connections • Trainer models and guides families with templates (paper/digital) • Families import photographs from iPads or internet to insert into Google Slides • Parents involve families in creation of a Google slide about their family and share
3	Family Recipe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families read aloud "¡Qué montón de tamales!" and make connections • Families have conversations about the recipes they want to share • Trainer models and guides families with templates (paper/digital) • Families import photographs from iPads or internet to insert into Google Docs • Parents involve families in creation of a recipe and share
4	<i>Sobremesa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer facilitates a <i>Sobremesa</i> (table talks) about the stories behind their recipes • Families present their final recipe
5	Celebration-Closure	Families were invited to share their completed projects and they received certificates of completion

Table 1 Technology Workshops

Data Collection and Analysis

Pre/Post Surveys

Pre- and post-surveys were collected from 20 parent participants (n = 20/23) in the Spring of 2025. The surveys used a Likert scale questionnaire that included demographic data, experiences with technology at home, engagement with their children's education using technology, including internet safety, and communication with teachers. Two open-ended questions were added to the surveys: 1) Please provide an example of how the Digital Literacy Workshops for Parents improved your understanding of how to use the iPad. 2) Please provide an example of how the Digital Literacy Workshops for Parents impacted technology use with your family/children.

Group interviews

A group interview was conducted after the six sessions were completed. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Parent participants responded to questions about their experiences engaging in the technology workshops, their confidence in using technology for educational purposes, and the value of the knowledge gained. Sample questions included: What value did interacting with technology through the iPad or the workshops bring you as parents? How well did the projects connect with your native language and culture? How confident do you feel when presenting or sharing your projects with others?

Artifacts

The parent participants completed two main cultural projects. The first one is a Google Slides presentation focusing on their family story. After engaging in a literacy activity with the book "Cuadros de familia" by Carmen Lomas Garza, the participants created their own digital presentations narrating their family stories. The second project was a family recipe activity where parent participants first engaged in a literacy activity using "¡Qué montón de tamales!" by Gary Soto. After the literacy activity, the families were prompted to write their favorite home recipe and discuss the story of the special dish. Not only did the two cultural projects tell unheard stories from our participants, but they also gave the participants a voice to share their culture, traditions, and heritage.

Measures Collected

Data were triangulated using artifacts, pre- and post-survey responses, and interview responses to merge relevant categories into themes. The themes identified across the collected data included overcoming fears of technology, family involvement, and a renewed emphasis on family values.

Findings

The pre- and post-surveys indicated an increase in confidence in technological skills and overall technology use, particularly in utilizing Google

Docs and Slides to create digital projects and in leveraging technology to engage their children in literacy activities. When analyzing the pre- and post-survey responses, we found a statistically significant increase in confidence levels, ranging from 1.93 to 4.21, when creating a presentation in Google Slides. Similarly, we found that the level of confidence when using Google Docs had a significant increase of 2 to 3.93. These findings suggest that six sessions of engagement with technology and literacy activities impacted the participants' confidence in technological skills.

Through the interview responses, we found that families revealed that the most valuable lessons included overcoming the fear of technology by developing a desire to take action for themselves. This was especially true for female participants in a Latinx household, “A mí me enseñó mucho porque nosotras las mujeres no nos damos el espacio para nosotras y yo le dije a mi esposo que yo quiera participar y que tenía que encargarse de los niños para poder hacerlo, que me tocaba a mí darme tiempo.” (Interview Participant) [It taught me a lot because as women we do not give ourselves the space for ourselves, and I told my husband that I wanted to participate, that he had to take care of the kids so I could do it, that it was my turn to take time for myself.”] (Interview Participant).

The next theme found was family involvement in education, as their children had the opportunity to see their parents as learners doing their homework together, which brought a sense of joy and belonging. Many reported enjoying quality time with their children as they often sat down with them to do homework together, “A mí lo que me gustó fue que decíamos, -es hora de hacer tarea- y mis dos hijos y yo nos sentábamos en la mesa para hacer cada quien su tarea, eso nos unió.” (Interview Participant). [What I liked was that we would say, ‘It’s time to do homework’ and my two children and I would sit at the table to do our own homework, and it brought us closer.”] (Interview Participant).

Lastly, a renewal of family values was achieved through the projects created and reading culturally relevant stories, which brought back lost memories and traditions; participants shared that they reconnected with their childhood and past.

“Me gustaron los proyectos porque pude indagar en fotos y pude recorrer mi estado o mis lugares favoritos y me di cuenta de que es una herramienta que tenemos muy a la mano que nos permite conectar con esa parte de nuestra cultura, lugar de origen, comida y nuestra familia”. (Interview Participant). [I liked the projects because I was able to explore photos and revisit my state or my favorite places again. I realized it’s a tool that we have readily available, but it also allows us to connect with that part of our culture, place of origin, food, and our family.”] (Interview Participant).

Discussion

Through these projects, the parent participants not only shared their own stories but also learned how to use technology to virtually visit their homelands by searching for images on the internet. This was especially meaningful for those who have not had the opportunity to visit in many years. Addressing research question **1: How did the digital and literacy projects empower the parent participants?**, the “Cuadros de Familia” project provided a platform for participants to share their counter-stories, dismantling stereotypes often faced by Latinx families who are frequently devalued and labeled as uneducated and disadvantaged. This affirmed the constructs of the Latino Critical Theory, which values their cultural identity and celebrates their bilingualism. The technology workshops fostered a sense of empowerment, allowing them to discover their voice. After six weeks, parents felt confident and empowered because the projects they created were inspiring, personal, and centered on their families, addressing research question **2: How did the digital literacy workshops impact parents’ confidence with mobile technology?** This led to more meaningful engagement by incorporating their cultural ways and funds of knowledge, helping them feel confident to excel. The impact on the field of education is significant, as it promotes an assets-based approach to parent involvement and rejects the existing deficit ideologies surrounding Latinx family engagement.

Future Research

This project provided valuable insights into Latinx parent/family engagement through literacy and technology activities in a small-scale study, indicating that this topic is worth exploring in greater depth.



It opened up an area that has not been widely explored and highlighted the need for further research.

Conclusion

This project demonstrates that when given the opportunity, Latinx families actively engage in and support their children’s academic learning. By providing an environment where parent participants felt welcomed and embraced, they were willing

to commit to and engage in learning activities to support their children and to better themselves. To further empower Latinx families, more workshops, trainings, and activities should be offered in their native language and designed to incorporate their funds of knowledge, amplifying and honoring their voices through their own stories. ■

References are available in the appendix.

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Leading for Equity in Dual Language Immersion:

Building Inclusive Multilingual Communities for Students with Disabilities and Dual-Identified Multilingual Learners



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As dual language immersion (DLI) programs expand nationwide, they are widely celebrated for advancing bilingualism, biliteracy, and cross-cultural competence (IES What Works Clearinghouse, 2022). Yet a closer examination reveals that these transformative spaces often remain inaccessible to students with disabilities and dual-identified multilingual learners (ELs with IEPs/504 plans) (Center for Applied Linguistics/National Dual Language Forum, 2022). The very students DLI programs were designed to empower are frequently marginalized due to exclusionary structures, deficit beliefs, and siloed systems of support. Addressing this injustice requires a fundamental shift in how educational leaders operate, one that centers on relational trust, equity-driven data practices, and inclusive pedagogy.

This article explores how site-based leadership, informed by sociocultural theory and culturally sustaining pedagogy, can challenge prevailing assumptions and build inclusive DLI learning communities. Drawing on leadership reflections, coaching cycles, and equity-inquiry projects, it offers actionable insights for principals, teacher leaders, and program designers committed to ensuring that every student—regardless of language or ability—has the opportunity to thrive in multilingual classrooms (Paris & Alim, 2017; Orange & Isken, 2021).

Relational Trust as the Foundation for Inclusive Learning

Trust is not a vague ideal in education—it is a measurable and essential precondition for meaningful

collaboration and change. Bryk and Schneider (2002) define relational trust as the mutual respect, personal regard, and belief in the competence of others to fulfill their responsibilities. For leaders seeking to promote inclusion in DLI programs, relational trust is both the starting point and the glue that binds teams together through complex, adaptive change.

Relational trust facilitates honest dialogue among general education teachers, special educators, and language specialists—groups that have historically operated in silos. In one equity-focused community of practice, our team of Mandarin immersion teachers engaged in co-analysis of student work and questioned assumptions about language proficiency, neurodiversity, and academic readiness. By jointly reflecting on video data, lesson delivery, and formative assessments, the team recognized that multilingual learners with disabilities are not “behind” but instead bring multiple ways of knowing that traditional metrics often overlook.

Trust also extended to our partnerships with families. We worked to humanize IEP meetings by positioning caregivers as experts on their children’s learning. We held multilingual information sessions that explained the value of DLI for students with disabilities and clarified their rights under IDEA and Section 504. Building trust across differences—across languages, cultures, and professional boundaries—made it possible to co-construct support plans that were responsive, inclusive, and affirming.

Data as a Mirror: Using Equity-Driven Practices to Illuminate Access Gaps

While relational trust fosters collaboration, data makes inequities visible. Yet traditional approaches to data analysis often reduce students to scores and reinforce deficit narratives. Equity-driven leadership demands more nuanced tools and mindsets—ones that honor the complexity of multilingual learners with disabilities. As part of our inquiry into academic disparities, our leadership team examined DLI enrollment and student outcomes disaggregated

by race, home language, IEP status, and socioeconomic background. We discovered that students with IEPs were significantly underrepresented in our DLI program.

Furthermore, internal data revealed that these students often experienced fragmented support and were disproportionately pulled out of immersion settings for specialized services.

These findings shifted how we engaged with data. Instead of asking, “Why aren’t these students succeeding?” we asked, “How are our systems underserving them?” Inspired by the work of Orange and Isken (2021), we used reciprocal learning partnerships to surface educators’ questions, beliefs, and

insights about differentiation, inclusion, and access. We complemented quantitative data with empathy interviews, collecting perspectives from caregivers and students about their experiences navigating language learning and special education. These narratives deepened our understanding and helped disrupt assumptions about students’ capacities to thrive in multilingual classrooms.

Through this inquiry, we co-developed new progress-monitoring tools that better captured growth in language development, social-emotional skills, and engagement—not just test performance. As a result, students with disabilities in our DLI program were no longer viewed through a lens of limitation but instead through their potential as emerging bilinguals and valuable classroom contributors.

Professional Learning That Bridges Silos

One of the most persistent barriers to inclusion in DLI programs is the separation between general education, bilingual education, and special education. Teachers often express uncertainty about how to modify instruction for dual-identified students, while many special educators lack training in immersion pedagogy or Mandarin language proficiency.



To address this, our site developed a yearlong professional learning plan focused on three areas: culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017), Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018), and co-teaching for inclusion. Our professional learning community (PLC) model facilitated peer-led workshops, collaborative lesson planning, and video study protocols. These activities empowered teachers to experiment with differentiated grouping, visual scaffolds, and project-based learning strategies that honored students' linguistic and cognitive strengths.

By coaching through a sociocultural lens (Rogoff, 2003), we emphasized that learning occurs through participation in culturally organized activities. Rather than pulling students out for remediation, we created opportunities for multiple forms of classroom participation. Teachers began using academic conversation protocols, gesture-rich storytelling, and visual literacy tools to support comprehension across language and ability levels. These shifts reframed the classroom as a multilingual, multimodal community of learners.

Importantly, these practices were sustained by leadership support. We ensured that collaborative time was protected, materials were accessible in both English and Mandarin, and evaluation cycles honored both student growth and teacher reflection. Leadership for equity is not about mandates—it is about removing obstacles and fostering the conditions for inclusive innovation.

Vision, Policy, and the Principal's Role

Principals and site leaders play a critical role in institutionalizing inclusive practices. At our school, we revised our mission to explicitly affirm our commitment to equity for all learners in multilingual contexts. We communicated this vision regularly in newsletters, staff meetings, and family events. Beyond words, the vision translated into concrete practices, including a special education lens in DLI recruitment efforts, inviting IEP team members into language planning meetings, and revising our master schedule to support push-in rather than pull-out services.

We proposed that DLI programs report enrollment by disability category and that admissions criteria be reexamined for bias against students with language

or learning differences. While these efforts are ongoing, they represent a shift from reactive support to proactive inclusion.

As a leadership team, we adopted the motto “Nothing about us without us”—committing to elevating the voices of students, families, and teachers in shaping what inclusive DLI should look like. Leadership, in this sense, becomes an act of solidarity—working with communities to reimagine who gets to be seen as a full participant in bilingual learning.

Conclusion: Leading Toward Belonging

Inclusive leadership in DLI settings demands more than technical fixes; it requires moral clarity, collaborative courage, and the willingness to challenge long-standing inequities. By centering relational trust, engaging in equity-driven inquiry, and redesigning systems to welcome all learners, educational leaders can transform DLI programs into models of multilingual justice.

For multilingual learners with disabilities, inclusion goes beyond access—it is about fostering a genuine sense of belonging. The true purpose of education is to help individuals make sense of the world and to equip them to transform it. By expanding opportunities and removing systemic obstacles in our DLI programs, we create learning environments where every student—regardless of their language background, ability, or identity—is recognized, supported, and empowered to thrive as a valued and integral part of the school community. ■

References are available in the appendix.



Developing and Sustaining a *Comunidad* for Future Bilingual Teachers: Reflexiones y Compromisos



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Introduction

There continues to be a need for teachers in states across the nation (Murphy et al., 2003), especially teachers of color and bilingual teachers (Hernández, 2024; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). As one of the most linguistically diverse states in the nation, with current progressive language policies, the bilingual teacher shortage in California is directly correlated with the sustainability of dual language programs (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Latine PK-12 students benefit by being in classrooms with educators who reflect their background, culture, and language (Briceño et al., 2018). Yet, statistics of differences between students' and teachers' racio-ethnic backgrounds persist. The current federal administration's anti-immigrant agenda seeks to advance English-only policies in civic and public spheres, going as far as declaring English as the national language via executive order. However, California's multilingual learner advocates, with CABE at the forefront, remain steadfast in their convictions, supported by California's policies (e.g., the English Learner Roadmap) that these federal orders do not impact the rights

of California's English learners or their educational opportunities (for more information, [see here](#)).

As bilingual teacher educators in the Cali-Baja region, we, too, remain strong in our convictions, commitments, and advocacy work to facilitate a pathway to the bilingual teacher credential program at our Institution of Higher Education (IHE) for future Spanish-speaking bilingual teacher candidates. We know that pathways are more successful when they explicitly seek to address the harm that bilingual immigrant communities have historically faced by providing culturally and linguistically responsive (Gay, 2000), humanizing (Freire, 2007; Paris & Winn, 2014), and transformative spaces and practices along the way. This article reports on a five-year federally-funded Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) Title V grant that specifically addressed the bilingual teacher shortage by targeting the pathway to a bilingual credential program for community college students in our region. We start by describing the context and goals of the project, providing examples of the professional development that served as a mechanism to create a robust community of future



bilingual teachers in our region. We conclude by communicating our commitments to sustaining the spirit of the project now that the grant has ended.

The demand for well-prepared, culturally responsive, bilingual educators for California’s multilingual students has never been more urgent. The DEBER project—*Developing Effective Bilingual Educators with Resources/Desarrollando Educadores Bilingües Efectivos con Recursos*—responded to this need through an intentional social justice approach to teacher preparation. DEBER was an inter-institutional collaboration between San Diego State University (SDSU), Southwestern College (SWC), San Diego Mesa College (SDMC), and San Diego City College (SDCC), designed to increase the transfer rates from 2-year to 4-year IHEs for Latines pursuing elementary and secondary teaching credentials with a bilingual (Spanish/English) added authorization. DEBER’s vision was driven by an institutional commitment from SDSU to improve transfer rates for local community college students. DEBER’s mission was to strengthen articulation between community colleges, undergraduate pathways, and bilingual credential programs to ensure a seamless and supportive transition for Latine students pursuing careers in education.

We co-designed the DEBER project with Dr. Karen Cadiero-Kaplan and colleagues in 2017, co-directed the program at SDSU from 2019 to 2025, and continue to guide the project’s implementation, research, and sustainability efforts as part of

our broader commitment to preparing bilingual and binational teachers in the Cali-Baja region (Maldonado et al., 2025a; Maldonado et al., 2025b). Designed for bilingual Latine students transferring from local community colleges, DEBER is more than a recruitment initiative; it is a comprehensive support system grounded in cultural affirmation, relational trust (*comunidad*), and professional preparation. This article spotlights DEBER’s structure, guiding principles, practices, and lessons learned, with the goal of sharing sustainability strategies for IHE faculty and administrators committed to building sustainable pathways for bilingual teachers. Below, we provide the context for our region and describe the project’s goals. We also describe examples of the professional development that served as a mechanism to create a robust *comunidad* of future bilingual teachers in our region and communicate our commitments to sustaining the spirit of the project without federal funding.

Commitment to Civil Rights

Across California, there is a widening gap between the number of students identified as multilingual learners and the availability of credentialed bilingual educators prepared to teach in dual language and multilingual programs (Hernández, 2024). The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) reports a persistent shortage of bilingual teachers, particularly in regions that serve high numbers of Latine, Indigenous, and immigrant students. While efforts such as *Global California*



2030 and Proposition 58 have renewed public and policy support for multilingual education, the teacher preparation infrastructure has struggled to keep pace with this growing demand. The urgency is particularly pronounced in communities where bilingualism and biculturalism are community norms, but where access to higher education pathways remains inequitable. Many aspiring bilingual educators begin their academic journeys at community colleges, navigating complex transfer processes while balancing work, family, and dynamic bilingualism (Maldonado et al., 2025a). For students who are the first in their families to pursue college or teacher preparation, the barriers can feel insurmountable.

Preparing bilingual teachers is not just an equity strategy—it is a commitment to civil rights (Alfaro, 2018; Ochoa, 2016; Ochoa & Alfaro, 2024). Students deserve to see themselves reflected in their teachers—not only linguistically, but culturally and ideologically (Alfaro et al., 2018). As one DEBER Scholar noted during a workshop, “*Mis estudiantes necesitan ver que su idioma y su historia importan en la escuela*” (My students need to see that their language and their history are important in school). Preparing bilingual educators, therefore, requires a commitment to educational equity, linguistic justice, and cultural sustenance. Projects like DEBER are designed to build the academic and interpersonal scaffolding needed to support community college and university students who aspire to become bilingual teachers—especially those whose *conocimientos*, *compromisos*, and

competencias are rooted in the very communities they will one day serve (Alfaro et al., 2018; Wickert, 2023).

Project Description

DEBER is a project of SDSU’s *Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education* and is supported by the *Center for Equity and Biliteracy Education Research*. DEBER addresses systemic barriers by building intentional bilingual teacher preparation pathways from local community colleges into SDSU’s bilingual credential programs. DEBER specifically serves students enrolled at three community colleges that reflect the region’s linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity. DEBER Scholars are first-generation college students, Spanish-English bilinguals, and individuals who identify as Latine, Chicana, Mexican, or Indigenous. DEBER affirms students’ identities not as obstacles to overcome, but as powerful foundations for teaching in multilingual classrooms. Key components of the DEBER bilingual teacher preparation model include:

- Structured advising and transfer support that guide students through university admissions and credential pathways.
- Culturally and linguistically relevant professional development, including workshops on translanguaging, biliteracy, and educational equity.
- Community-building events that foster *confianza*, peer mentorship, and collective purpose.
- Financial assistance, including stipends, to reduce economic barriers.



- Mentorship from faculty and practicing bilingual educators, many of whom share students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In addition to academic and interpersonal support, DEBER intentionally cultivates students’ socioemotional stability (Lozano-Soto et al., 2024). Faculty and program leaders recognize that many DEBER Scholars bring lived experiences with marginalization, language discrimination, and school systems that did not reflect their full humanity. Through the program’s structure and relationships, participants begin to reframe their cultural knowledge as professional expertise. As one scholar put it, *“Ahora entiendo que mi bilingüismo es una fortaleza profesional, no algo que debo esconder”* (Now I understand that my bilingualism is a professional strength, not something I need to hide). By scaffolding both the academic and interpersonal dimensions of bilingual teacher preparation, DEBER positions its scholars to become not only credentialed educators but also community-rooted change agents (Wickert, 2023).

DEBER’s Professional Development

Culturally and linguistically responsive/sustaining programming approaches are essential for recruiting and retaining future bilingual teachers. DEBER’s professional development component facilitated a robust network of future bilingual

teachers at various levels of the pathway to the teacher credential program, largely due to its commitment to developing the following:

- *Strong sense of linguistic and cultural identity.*
We recognize and have experienced the linguistic and cultural harm done to individuals and communities from racialized immigrant backgrounds due to historical and current xenophobic, racist, and English-only policies in the United States. To redress and repair some of this harm, we collectively created spaces that affirm and normalize bilingual language practices and diverse cultural ways of being. Scholars participated in events such as DLE’s annual Multilingual Forum, Voice Your Language, which brings together hundreds of educators and community members to discuss critical issues that impact bilingual education broadly speaking.
- *Clarity around sociopolitical factors that impact education and one’s own ideological awareness.*
We continue to develop our own ideological clarity surrounding issues of education and how they intersect with systems of oppression, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, class, immigration, and disability, and share transparently and vulnerably our learning and growth. Scholars participated in professional development that featured current bilingual teachers, teacher educators, and researchers to hear how individuals in the field navigate political realities. Issues such as intersectionality, the history of bilingual education in the U.S., and Ethnic Studies in California are just a few examples of the professional development workshops offered to support scholars’ development of ideological clarity.

“Ahora entiendo que mi bilingüismo es una fortaleza profesional, no algo que debo esconder.”



- *Research-based pedagogical tools that are linguistically affirming and sustaining.* We believe that research and theory alone are insufficient in bilingual teacher preparation, and that pedagogical tools grounded in research and equity-minded are essential. DEBER Scholars attend a Project GLAD® (Guided Language Acquisition Design) awareness workshop, where they learn about the research that underpins best practices for multilingual learners and have the opportunity to experience and practice high-leverage teaching and learning strategies.
- *Voice and advocacy.* We are committed to our collective development of voice and advocacy. DEBER Scholars participate in programming that utilizes *testimonios* as a topic and method. Guided by project leaders who share their own stories, scholars share oral and written *testimonios* tied to their families' experiences with immigration, education, and beyond. Culturally-responsive writing support is also provided to help prepare scholars for the courses and exams in the bilingual teacher education program.

Lessons Learned and Sustainability Strategies

We have learned several lessons that offer guidance to community colleges and universities seeking to strengthen and sustain their bilingual teacher preparation pathways. These insights underscore the importance of designing and implementing transfer pathways that are culturally and relationally responsive.

Relationships over recruitment. DEBER demonstrated that early *confianza*—trust and connection—between community college students, faculty, and advisors was foundational. Student recruitment is most effective when grounded in relationships built before students transfer to bilingual teacher preparation programs.

Identity-affirming wraparound supports. DEBER's success lies in combining logistical and academic advising support with cultural validation, mentorship, and safe spaces where students can process and reframe their experiences as future bilingual educators.

Stipends are value statements. Stipends, even modest ones, signaled to DEBER Scholars that their participation—and future as bilingual educators—was valued. Financial support helped mitigate family responsibilities and work-study conflicts.

Intentional and community-rooted mentorship. DEBER Scholars consistently communicate that peer and faculty mentors are transformational. DEBER mentors often share students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and model success and solidarity as educators.

For projects like DEBER to thrive in the long term, they must be embedded in institutional policies, budgeting, and cross-campus collaboration. As federal funding support comes to a close, we offer a few sustainability strategies for bilingual teacher preparation faculty and administrators seeking inter-institutional partnerships



across community colleges and universities. While DEBER Scholars will no longer receive stipends to support them with their educational program, we believe that this project had an incredibly positive impact on the lives of everyone involved and recognize that we have a *deber* (duty) to reimagine what could be offered in the grant's place. The resources provided to scholars included not only financial support, but also the opportunity to be a part of a *comunidad* (community of practice). To sustain the spirit of a robust future bilingual teacher community that includes our Cali-Baja regions' local community college students, we have articulated our *compromisos* (commitments):

Give priority invitations and hold spots for scholars at community events. Free events, such as DLE's *Voice Your Language* Forum, will include a scholar breakout session serving as a reunion and networking space for current scholars on the path to the bilingual credential program, current students in the bilingual credential program, and alumni who are teaching in schools. The local county office of education's annual summit on Latine issues and data in the region charges a small fee to participate to cover the lunch. Because the summit brings together Latine parents, PK-12 educators, future teachers, and higher education leaders to discuss the county's Latine data (e.g., number of bilingual programs, number of Latine high school graduates, etc.), we will seek funding to spon-

sor scholar participation to further their development as future bilingual educators.

Access to the Resource Library. A repository of powerful events and pláticas from the grant's implementation years will be made available to future scholars. These include recordings from virtual panel discussions, author and researcher presentations, as well as community reflections and shared learning.

Annual Book Club. Future bilingual teachers can stay connected through discussions of literature that amplifies our collective linguistic and cultural voices, shares examples of resistance and empowerment, and provides guidance on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be change agents in schools and classrooms (Alfaro, 2018).

DEBER Club. The DEBER Club is student-run and supported by the department chair to create a multi-generational mentoring space for scholars. Current bilingual teacher candidates who participate in the grant project lead the club at our university. They host Quarterly Virtual *Cafecitos* to keep future bilingual teachers at local community colleges engaged and connected to the bilingual teacher pathway.

Counterstorytelling Opportunities. Future bilingual teachers in the DEBER Club will participate in social media campaigns and podcast platforms to share



their *testimonios* with a larger audience. The goal is for their stories to be heard, validated, and celebrated.

Conclusion

DEBER is much more than a project—it is a collective responsibility for what bilingual teacher preparation can become when civil rights, *comunidad*, cultural responsiveness, and *compromisos* are prioritized. By building intentional preparation pathways from community college to credentialing, DEBER confirms that the next generation of bilingual educators is already here: in our classrooms, our neighborhoods, and our community colleges—bringing with them the language, experience, and *conocimientos* (knowledge) that our schools’ multilingual learners need most. Community colleges and universities are required to play an active role in partnering to develop effective bilingual educators who are not only prepared with teaching practices, but also culturally grounded and socially conscious. Supporting these future bilingual teachers requires more than academic coursework; it calls for relational trust, financial support, institutional alignment, and the sustained disruption of deficit narratives that continue to shape how multilingual students—and future educators—are perceived. If California is to meet its promise of educational equity, linguistic justice, and cultural sustainability for all, then we must invest ideologically, programmatically, and financially in preparing bilingual teachers who

reflect the multilingual communities they serve. Programs like DEBER offer an example of an inter-institutional professional development model of what is possible when Latine students are valued as *colegas* in development. Many of our future bilingual teachers have experienced subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999), and cultural and linguistic erasure remains a risk due to current political realities. Because we understand that lives and livelihoods are at stake, we commit to continuing the spirit of our culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining programming and outreach to local community college students. We are grateful to the community of scholars (future bilingual teachers) and leaders (faculty and staff at all participating institutions) who made the DEBER project possible. Our collective work will continue to have a positive impact on the future bilingual teacher community and the PK-12 schools and communities our scholars choose to serve for years to come.

Acknowledgments

The DEBER program was supported through funding from the U.S. Department of Education [P031S190108]. We especially thank the DEBER Scholars whose *conocimientos*, *compromisos*, and *competencias* guide this work. ■

References and author bios are available in the appendix.

Productive Struggle and Professional Growth:



Reflections from the UC Davis and LAUSD iELD Math Project Partnership



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Los Angeles Unified School District

Over the last several years, educators from UC Davis, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and the Multilingual Multicultural Education Department (MMED) at LAUSD have collaborated to support multilingual learners in mathematics classrooms through a design-based research (DBR) model. This National Science Foundation-funded project—*Building Students' Academic Language in Math through Integrated English Language Development*—has transformed not only instructional practices but also the professional identities of those involved. The project involved close collaboration with Multilingual Multicultural Academic Language Coaches (MMALCs) and 51 elementary teachers in grades 3–5 across ten schools. Over the course of the project, 52 classrooms participated, impacting approximately 1,240 students. Our shared journey has underscored the power of collaboration, teacher agency, and culturally and linguistically responsive instruction in driving lasting, systemic change.

This article outlines our joint efforts to design, implement, and reflect on integrated English Language Development (iELD) strategies that support students' mathematical thinking, language development, and cultural identity. We share insights on how this research-practice partnership has cultivated professional growth, improved student engagement, and strengthened the instructional ecosystem across participating LAUSD schools. Insights were collected through a 75-minute

plática (talk/chat) (see Jiménez-Silva & López, 2024) among design team members, which was recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed.

A Collaborative Vision for Change

Our project began with a vision to develop iELD math instruction affirming students' full linguistic and cultural repertoires. Rather than imposing a rigid program, we adopted a design-based research (DBRC, 2003) approach, wherein we worked collaboratively to address three instructional pillars that align with the California English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework and district instructional priorities. The project's design team convened with practitioners for a real-time exchange of ideas.

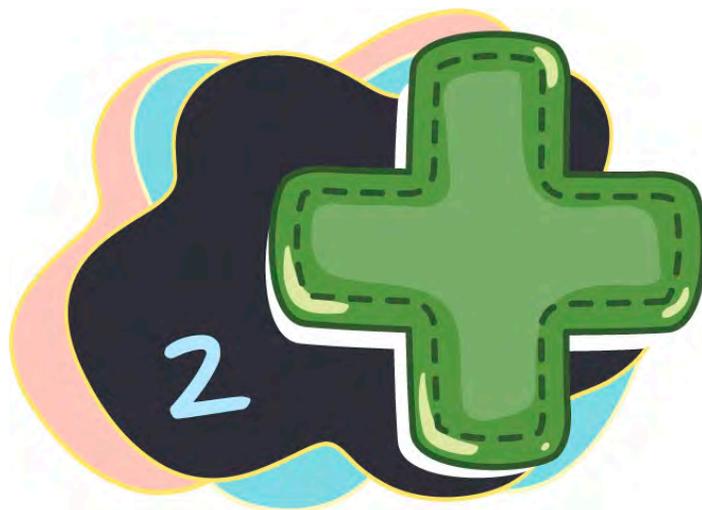
Teachers, coaches, and researchers worked together in iterative cycles of planning, teaching, reflection, and redesign. The project was led by UC Davis (UCD) Professors Tony Albano and Margarita Jiménez-Silva, MMED's Executive Director, Lydia Acosta Stephens, Administrator of English Learner Services, Dr. José Posada, and UTK-12 Coordinator Carla Gutiérrez.

Our design team, responsible for designing and facilitating professional learning, consisted of MMED UTK-12 English Learner Instruction Specialist Hilda Yudess, Education Consultant Suzanne Abdelrahim, UCD's Research Fellow Rachel Restani, Director of Educational Research and Evaluation Robin Martin, and Professor Rebecca Ambrose. The team's expertise spanned multiple disciplines, including mathematics, ELD, multilingual education, teacher education, design-based research, and educational measurement. Across teams, many members had multiple years of UTK-12 classroom experience.

The project design was grounded in three instructional pillars:

1. Attention to Language – valuing translanguaging and discourse-rich math instruction;
2. Attention to Mathematical Thinking – deepening student understanding through cognitively guided instruction (CGI); and
3. Cultural Responsiveness – connecting instruction to students' lived experiences and cultural practices.

The implementation and content of our professional development (PD) for teachers, coaches, and administrators complemented LAUSD's Theory of Action, which addresses Academic Excellence, Joy and



Wellness, Engagement and Collaboration, Operational Effectiveness, and Investing in Staff (<https://mmed.lausd.org>). From the onset of our collaboration, our efforts centered on student success, teacher voice, and building on MMED's instructional efforts. As Rachel reflected, “We weren't just coming in with a top-down idea, but instead we were really trying to integrate what was already being used.”

Design-Based Research in Action

Unlike traditional PD models that often deliver “one-and-done” workshops, our approach cultivated continuous teacher learning. Monthly sessions employed a PDSAR (Plan, Do, Study, Act, and Reflect) approach, supported by a “Triple Track Agenda,” which engaged educators as learners, contributors, and designers of their own practice. Teachers reflected on their own math identities, tested new instructional strategies in their classrooms, analyzed student artifacts with colleagues, and planned next instructional steps.

The gift of time to engage in this process was a unique aspect of this work. Crucially, the sessions provided teachers with time to reflect on their practice. Hilda explained, “I think that really supported a lot of the work because it gave them [teachers and coaches] time to look at the work, talk about the work, and anticipate the next steps. That's a missing component in most PD.”

According to Suzanne, “Having [district coaches and teachers] in the classrooms also helped keep the work grounded, realistic, and doable. Hearing feedback from teachers—what worked, what didn't—helped us shift and make real-time adjustments.”

Centering Teacher Agency

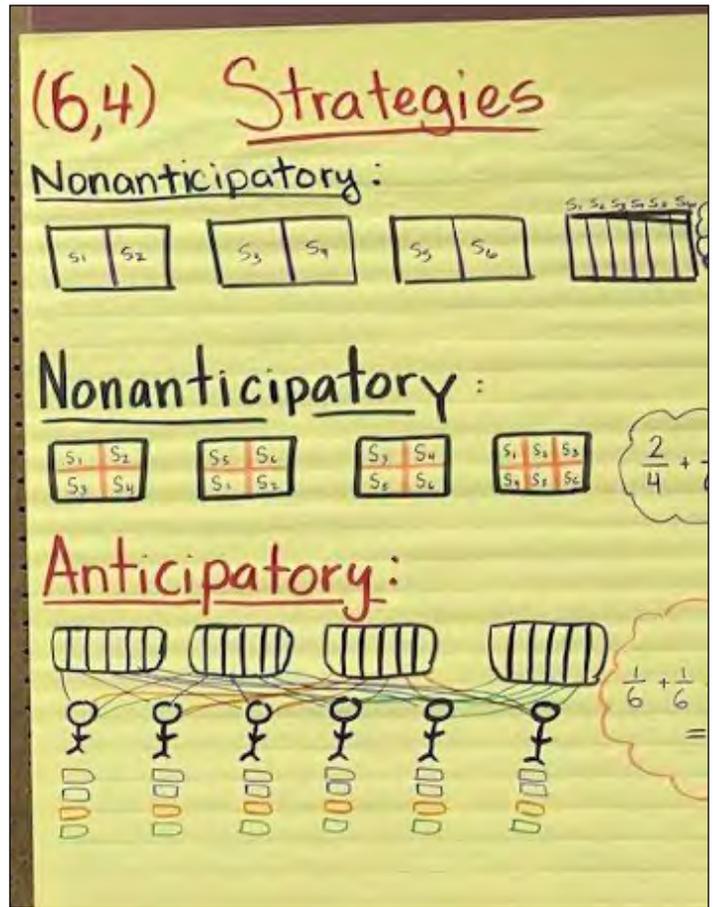
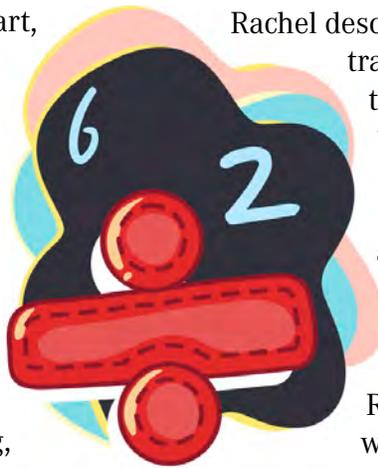
Across the project, we centered the teacher’s voice. Rather than treat educators as passive recipients of (“sit and get”) PD, we invited them to co-construct knowledge. This meant that teachers identified the scaffolds their students needed, adjusted instructional tools based on classroom experiences, and reflected on the impact of these adjustments. Robin emphasized, “It took a while for teachers to position themselves as contributors. But once they did, it created space for reflection, risk-taking, and connecting with research in meaningful ways.”

Monthly PD sessions included dedicated time for teachers and coaches to reflect on their identities as doers of math, how to promote positive math identities and growth mindsets in the classroom, and to reflect on the outcomes of these efforts collectively. This focus on math identity development extended beyond the teachers, coaches, and classrooms—shaping also how language experts on the design team saw themselves as mathematicians.

As Hilda described, “I was so fearful about math that I hesitated even when I taught it... that’s why I went by the book. But going through the process... really helped me understand that I’m okay with who I am and with my own math identity. It was so helpful in making those personal connections about my family and the math that I’ve lived through and I’m still living through with my mother as a seamstress and my father as a shipbuilder back in Cuba... and how math was always around me, but I never perceived it in that way... So I think that realization of I’m not a math person... I really started to erase that from my own being.”

Suzanne echoed these shifts: “At the start, I said, ‘I’m not a math person.’ Being a part of this work has really changed that. It is so important to be conscious and careful about how we talk about our relationships with math, and how we portray our capabilities around math to our students... how are we promoting positive math identity?”

Such changes in mindset, grounded in personal reflection and shared learning, were the core of the project’s impact.



This poster, created by one of the school teams, shows how they anticipate the different ways their students might solve an equal sharing problem.

Math and Language: Negotiating Tensions, Finding Synergies

Working at the intersection of mathematics and language development revealed productive tensions. For example, collaborators held different assumptions about the role of sentence frames or the sequencing of peer discussions. Rather than avoid these differences, we embraced what one colleague called a “road of roses and a little bit of stones.”

Rachel described a long-standing question about translanguaging that was finally clarified through collaborative conversation: “I realized I was asking the wrong question... but I had been waiting years to get clarification. The more we talk about it, the more I learn.” Her experience highlighted the value of sustained, collaborative dialogue.

Rebecca offered, “I continue to grapple with what kind of language supports can be flexible enough so that students are expressing

their own [mathematical] ideas.” She noted the challenge of creating a structure supporting student talk without overprescribing it—a tension shared by many in the field.

Some tensions also arose when aligning our work with district practices. As Margarita reflected, “the research on translanguaging has evolved over the years. District policies and practices are still evolving. We needed to be flexible and negotiate how translanguaging would be used by multilingual students.”

These moments of grappling—across roles, perspectives, and systems—were signs of growth. They illustrated the real work of collaboration: confronting complexity, holding space for uncertainty, and building shared understanding through dialogue.

Benefits of University-School District Collaboration

The success of this partnership stemmed from mutual respect, trust, and shared goals. MMED brought deep knowledge of district priorities, initiatives, and the needs of multilingual learners, while UCD contributed expertise in mathematics education, language development, and research methodology. Through this established trust emerged our shared thinking about the four key practices needed to ground our present and future work:

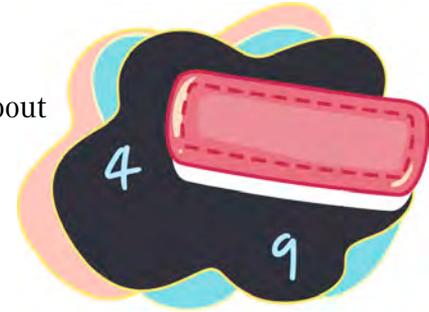
Contextualized PD: Providing teachers with time and space to plan, reflect, and refine instructional practices within the realities of their school sites.

Sustainable Change: Cultivating teacher leaders who can mentor colleagues and embed integrated ELD and math instruction practices beyond broadly.

Instructional Coherence: Aligning with LAUSD’s academic discourse goals and CGI-based math curriculum, rather than layering new strategies onto existing initiatives.

Enhanced Student Engagement: Providing wait time and space for students to use their full linguistic repertoires to explain their mathematical thinking. Students became more engaged and comfortable asking questions when they were unclear about their peers’ mathematical explanations.

Tony stated, “I’ve learned about the importance of seeing it as a relationship, having trust between you and the participants, and Hilda and the district administrators. It’s a collaborative effort. I’ve learned a lot about the importance of that.” Rebecca added, “For me, it’s been that process of developing trust and navigating our different expertise and how to offer it. And with humility, recognizing that every context is so different. The LA context is complicated. I continue to be impressed and inspired by what the teachers were able to accomplish given COVID and the pressures they’re up against every single day ... I see the videos, just their [students’] willingness to try and follow what they’re being asked to do, and then the different ways that the teachers chose to attempt this.”



Lessons Learned

The project was not without challenges. Teacher turnover, shifting district mandates, and the COVID-19 pandemic required adaptation. Some

A student solves an equal share problem using manipulatives and drawings in preparation for a peer-to-peer discussion.



schools experienced staff changes, making it difficult to maintain continuity. PD sessions had to be rescheduled or held virtually.

Despite the challenges, design team members found the experience to be very meaningful. Tony reflected, “This has been a great experience for me... I’ve never worked so closely with the design of a PD. We often don’t even call it PD because it’s such a collaborative partnership.”

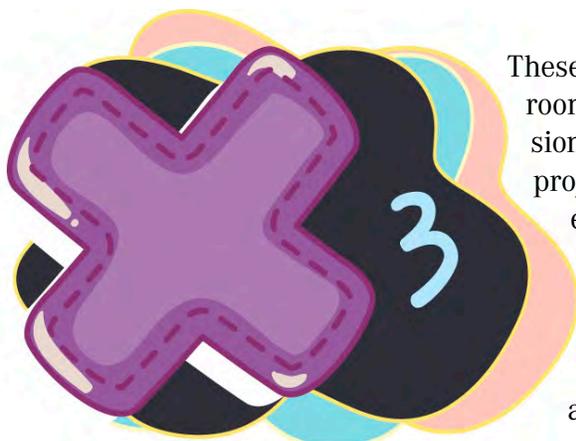
Margarita added, “I came in with some ideas...but the collaborative process has taught me so much about what today’s classrooms look like, what teachers are juggling everyday, and how to value each other’s expertise.”

These candid reflections underscore how challenges also created space for growth. Tony noted, “So many interventions never make it into practice. But here, we built it as we went—to ensure feasibility and buy-in. That’s what made it work.”

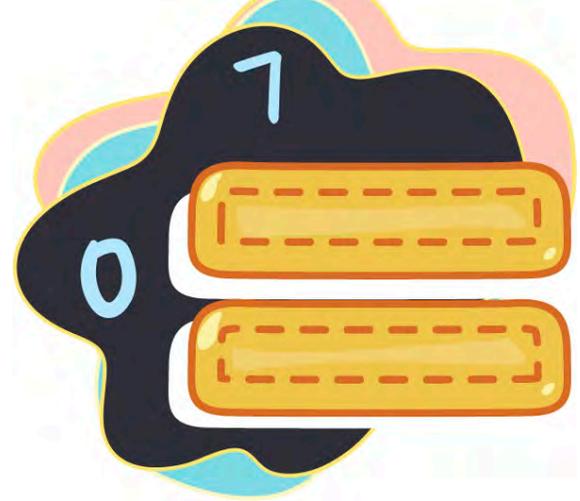
The project’s success stemmed from its iterative, partnership-centered approach. By embracing flexibility, fostering collaboration, and committing to shared learning, the team successfully navigated uncertainty and drove meaningful change.

Elevating Student Voices

Perhaps the most powerful outcome of our partnership has been the increased visibility of multilingual students’ mathematical thinking. By using tools such as language identity portraits, math interview protocols, and peer-to-peer conversations, teachers uncovered the varying modalities and depths of student understanding that traditional assessments often overlook.



These classroom-based decisions reflect the project’s broader ethos: to create space for students—and teachers, coaches, administrators,



and researchers—to grow through inquiry, reflection, and shared dialogue. By centering the voices and experiences of multilingual students, we began to reconsider what it looks like for all learners to engage deeply in mathematical thinking.

Final Reflections

As the project comes to a close, our team is left with a sense of gratitude and momentum. We have built a professional community grounded in critical friendship, vulnerability, and a shared commitment to multilingual learners.

When asked for words to describe the experience, our team offered the following: “meaningful,” “fulfilling,” “appreciative,” “grateful,” and “productive struggle.”

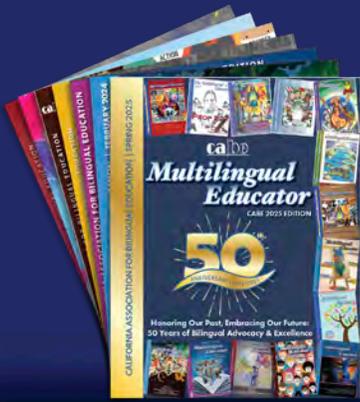
Together, these words capture the spirit of our work—grounded in mutual learning and guided by a belief in the capacity of students and teachers to grow.

Hilda put it best: “Yes, there were bumps along the way. But we built a synergy. We centered the students. And in the process, we grew as educators, as colleagues, and as people.”

Explore our [Digital Binder](#), a collection of resources from our iELD Math project. It features tools to support instruction on fractions, language development, and peer conversations that deepen mathematical understanding.

This manuscript is a collaborative product of the University of California, Davis, and the Los Angeles Unified School District. No portion of this work may be reproduced, distributed, or used without the consent of the authors.

References are available in the appendix.



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Coaching for Multilingual Excellence

Margarita Calderón, Ph.D.

Note

Instructional strategies and coaching tools are in Calderón, M.E. (2025a), *Coaching for Multilingual Excellence: Strategies for Vocabulary, Reading, and Writing Across the Disciplines*. You can find a webinar video at: <https://www.corwin.com/events/webinars/coaching-for-multilingual-excellence>.

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Harnessing the Power of Translanguaging Through CABE's Ongoing Job-Embedded Coaching

María Larios-Horton, Ed.D. and Esmeralda Espericueta, Ed.D.

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**Teaching Non-Fiction/ Expository/ Informational Text:
The Role of Deliberate Mediation/Scaffolding as a Sociocultural Practice
in Developing Scientific Knowledge and Academic Language in L1 and L2**

Bárbara Flores, Ph.D. and Esteban Díaz, Ed.D.

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Dr. Flores is a pioneering Latina scholar, activist, and leader, as well as a teacher educator, children's literature writer, and international expert in the areas of literacy and biliteracy development, teaching/learning based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theoretical framework, professional staff development, bilingual education, and critical pedagogy. Not only has she published her work in professional journals, books, and chapters, but she is also a sought-after keynote speaker throughout the Americas. She has been a professor since 1980 and recently retired in September 2019. She is currently a Professor Emerita at California State University, San Bernardino.

Dr. Flores holds and has held a number of leadership positions. Most recently, she was appointed by California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tony Thurmond, to be a Co-Chair of his statewide Literacy & Biliteracy Initiative. She was also appointed to serve on the Biden-Harris National Education Committee, where she developed and made recommendations on education policy. She also co-chaired the National Education Diversity Subcommittee.

She has been a member of the San Bernardino City School Board since 2008, serving as Vice President and President. She was reelected in 2013 and 2017, with her term ending in November 2022. Currently, she is the Past President of the California Latino School Boards Association, serving from 2018 to 2022. She also served as President of CLSBA from 2014 to 2018 and as Vice President from 2010 to 2014.

She is currently serving on the Executive Board of the California Association for Bilingual Education, where she has held the positions of CAFE President (2021-2023) and Immediate Past President (2023-2024). She has served on the CAFE Board of Directors as the Higher Education & Secondary Director, the Community Affairs Director, and the Finance Director from 2024 to 2025 and from 2025 to 2027. Additionally, she served as the past President of the National Association for Bilingual Education from 2006 to 2007.

Esterban Díaz, Ed.D.

Dr. Esteban Díaz is Professor Emeritus at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). At CSUSB, he has taught classes on Vygotsky's sociocultural factors that impact the optimal educational development of bilingual Latino children. He has also taught classes on Language and Cognition.

Esteban was a member of Michael Cole's Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (LCHC) at the University of California, San Diego, and participated in several projects based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. He co-conducted two important studies with Luis Moll. One was an examination of classroom practices that promote bilingualism and biliteracy in the classroom.

They also conducted a community-based ethnography of a Latino barrio south of San Diego and organized community-based professional development for teachers of the community's bilingual students to incorporate ethnographic findings into classroom lessons. Luis later expanded aspects of this approach in his Funds of Knowledge work.

Dr. Díaz has worked with Dr. Bárbara Flores on the application of Vygotskian theory in examining and using literacy practices that promote biliteracy with Latino students. They have presented this research throughout the U.S. and the Americas.

He is considered an authority and practitioner of research with bilingual students based on the Vygotskian theoretical framework. He received his Doctorate in Human Development from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



WRITE at 35:
A Legacy of Teacher Growth and Student Voice, A Future of Shared Purpose
Julie Goldman, Ed.D.

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**Reaching Higher:
Ensuring Sustained Success for Reclassified Fluent English Proficient Students (RFEPs)**
Manuel Buenrostro, M.A. and Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Ph.D.

Notes

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³See Note 1

⁴California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics 2023-24 California Statewide Research File. Downloaded April 30, 2025, from <https://bit.ly/43UGyfb>

⁵See Note 4



Neurodivergent Multilingual Learners: Using UDL to Ensure Equitable Access

Alejandra Arce, Ed.D.

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**Conocimiento, confianza y comunidad:
A Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Family Engagement Program**
Cristina Alfaro, Ph.D., Velia Huerta, M.A., and Saúl I. Maldonado, Ph.D.

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**Empowering Multilingual Learners:
AI-Assisted Goal-Setting Conferences in Mandarin Dual Immersion Classrooms**
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Ms. Yiyuan (Tiffany) Zhang is a Chinese-American leader in bilingual education and AI-enhanced language instruction. She holds advanced degrees in education and TESOL, as well as credentials in Mandarin immersion pedagogy and educational technology. As Assistant Principal of Mandarin Instruction at Irvine International Academy, she spearheads the integration of AI-driven tools—such as adaptive learning platforms and generative AI—into K-12 dual immersion curricula. In her roles as President of CAFE Mandarin (Chapter 28) and CAFE Professional Learning Specialist, Ms. Zhang designs and delivers professional development workshops on culturally responsive AI applications, teacher coaching frameworks for technology integration, and asset-based instructional strategies.

A frequent presenter at international conferences, she shares research on AI's role in fostering equitable language acquisition, including topics such as translanguaging with AI translation tools, the ethical use of AI in marginalized communities, and gamified Mandarin learning powered by machine learning. Her work bridges global classrooms, having collaborated with educators in China, Kenya, and Mexico to adapt AI resources for linguistically diverse contexts. Ms. Zhang's advocacy centers on empowering teachers to harness AI as a partner in sustaining heritage languages and redefining 21st-century bilingual education.



**El cine como aula bilingüe:
Un puente entre dos mundos**
Ethan Price

Translation

Cinema as a Bilingual Classroom: A Bridge Between Two Worlds (English Translation)

Ethan Price
University of California, Irvine, HABLA Lab

Spanish has always been—and continues to be—much more than just a language in my home: it is the thread that weaves together generations and memories. While I was growing up in California, surrounded by a predominantly English-speaking majority, my mother clung to our language as an act of love, resistance, and pride. Through cinema, I discovered not only captivating stories, but also my bicultural identity—one that translates the world in more than one language.

From an early age, Spanish-language cinema was more than just entertainment. It was, unknowingly, a natural way to learn while having fun. I recall that initially, my father—who speaks only English—had doubts about my mother speaking to us exclusively in Spanish and French. He worried that it might delay my learning of English or cause difficulties in school. It was a common, well-intentioned fear, but it was mistaken. Very soon, he saw that not only did I acquire fluency in all three languages, but I also developed more advanced linguistic skills than many of my monolingual peers. Recent studies from the University of California, Irvine, such as those led by Dr. Elizabeth Peña and her team at the Human Abilities in Bilingual Language Acquisition (HABLA) Lab, show that children exposed to multiple languages do not suffer from language disorders, but rather develop strong linguistic abilities in each language. Moreover, learning several languages simultaneously enhances cognitive flexibility, memory, and problem-solving skills.

In my case, each language has offered me not just words, but distinct ways of thinking. I have learned that no matter the problem, there are always at least three ways to approach it. English, my everyday tool, gives me structure and clarity. Spanish, which I use at home, connects me with emotion and intimacy; it is passion and belonging. French invites me to depth, elegance, and nuance. Each language not only allows me to communicate with the world, but also offers a different way to think, to feel, and to understand. Speaking more than one language has not divided me; it has multiplied me.

It all started in the living room, in front of the TV, curled up on the couch. Watching Disney DVDs in Spanish was a tradition that not only brought us together but also kept the language we spoke at home alive. That was how my mom learned English, and how I was refining my grammar and vocabulary without realizing it. Classics like *The Lion King*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Aladdin* were among our favorites, but it was *Cars* and *Harry Potter* that truly left a lasting impression on me. Although they were created in English, watching them in Spanish gave them a different energy—they spoke like us, and that changed everything.

Each story reinforced a connection to what is ours that no textbook could have achieved. *Cars* taught me, in my language, that friendship and humility are worth more than any trophy. With *Harry Potter*,

the magic felt closer, more mine. I have still not seen those movies in English, and although I could, I think they would lose something. In Spanish, they were not just translations: they were part of how I learned to see the world.

My mother's efforts to preserve our traditions through cinema helped me to preserve, expand, and appreciate my vocabulary. In a multicultural environment like mine, this connection has been essential. It has given me a unique perspective and a multicultural identity that enriches my daily life. Cinema, beyond entertainment, has allowed me to unite my origins and my identity, connecting two worlds and creating a space where I could be myself, without needing to translate.

I know I am not the only one who learned more from movies than from books. Cinema, with its ability to evoke emotions and tell universal stories in our language, has been key to preserving my heritage and connecting with my roots. It is something that not only defines me but also connects me with others who also grew up between two cultures. Although as a child I did not understand why I had to study grammar, read, and write, today I am deeply grateful to be able to communicate with my family, who do not speak English, and to connect with strangers who share the same language. Thanks to Spanish-language cinema, I have been able to grow up with a strong Hispanic identity, something I carry proudly in my daily life.

Bilingualism connects me every week at the artisan market where I work, a vibrant space of cultural exchange that reflects California's linguistic diversity. There, attending to tourists, local families, and vendors like me becomes more than just a transaction: it is a human experience. Speaking to someone in their language—whether Spanish, English, or French—not only facilitates a sale, but also sparks smiles, memories, and an immediate sense of trust. Often, the simple act of greeting with a "Welcome" or spontaneously switching languages during a conversation (code-switching) can completely transform the tone of the interaction. I have seen how a familiar word in their language can light up a customer's face. But it also happens to me the other way around: when I am the buyer in different contexts, and someone spontaneously switches to my language, I feel that I belong, that I am seen. Bilingualism, then, is not just a functional tool; it is a way to build real bridges between people. That skill—knowing when and how to switch codes with empathy—is not taught in books: it is lived, heard, and learned in daily contact. That is power, and also a sense of belonging.

Although grammar overwhelmed me as a child, bilingual education provided me with tools that extend beyond rules: I learned to think critically, write clearly, and excel academically in more than one language. I scored a 5 on the AP Spanish exam in ninth grade, earned the State Seal of Biliteracy, and am on track to obtain the French equivalent at the end of this academic year. I also received an honorable mention and a scholarship in the 2024 John Locke Essay Competition, as well as first prize in prose from *Albricias*, the magazine of the Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica. None of this would have been possible without the bilingual education that began, simply, with a dubbed movie at home. For me, bilingualism is not just a skill; it is a way to see the world with greater depth and empathy.

Since my first year of high school, I have been working as a research assistant (RA) in the HABLA Lab, part of the School of Education at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). My participation, as a 17-year-old trilingual student, has been made possible thanks to the generosity of a team that has allowed me to learn and contribute to tasks such as data coding, as well as participate in some studies as a subject. This dual experience—as both observer and observed—has offered me a unique perspective on language acquisition processes, both from inside the lab and from personal experience.

I have observed how techniques like "*scaffolding*"—temporary structures that provide students with strategic support as they progress—make learning flow naturally, both in the classroom and in informal contexts. What researchers describe as "*meaningful input*"—comprehensible and contextualized

exposure to language—I experienced by hearing dialogues in my mother tongue that spoke to both my heart and intellect. It was an experience that allowed me to integrate what I was learning naturally, something similar to what is known as “*translanguaging*,” where elements of different languages are combined to enrich comprehension and expression. This vision has prepared me to be a reflective educator in the future—someone who not only teaches, but also listens, adapts, and learns with their students. I want to be the kind of educator who builds spaces where each student’s linguistic identity is celebrated as a strength, not treated as a barrier. My personal experience reflects what so many Hispanic families live every day: the struggle to preserve our mother tongue in an environment that sometimes silences it. It is also an example of the kind of rich, emotional, and spontaneous bilingual education that CABE champions: one that begins at home, is strengthened in the community, and extends into the future.

Beyond the lab, I also participate in *Tertulias*, an initiative led by my mentor Reinaldo Cabrera Pérez at the UCI School of Education, dedicated to promoting bilingualism and linguistic equity. Inspired by the model of informal talks, these gatherings invite students, teachers, and scholars to explore how language intertwines with identity, power, and educational opportunities. Being part of *Tertulias* has allowed me to see the value of my trilingual experience reflected in a collective context of learning and action.

Today, I understand that what seemed like a simple pastime was, in reality, a powerful form of bilingual education at home. That living room in front of the television was my first classroom, where I learned to think, feel, and dream in two languages. Thanks to those experiences, I not only preserve the language of my roots; I live it and carry it with me in every conversation, every text I write, every bond I build. My story, like that of many other bilingual students, demonstrates that language is not just a means of communication; it is also a connection, a memory, and a possibility.

Every word in Spanish that I pronounce is an affirmation of who I am and where I come from. And as long as there is a screen, a voice, and a child listening to their mother tongue with attention and pride, bilingual education will remain alive—not only in classrooms, but in homes like mine. As a future educator, I know that language not only preserves our past but also opens doors to what lies ahead, at home, in the classroom, and in every conversation, I have in three languages.

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Ethan Price is 17 years old and currently a high school junior at Corona Del Mar High School. He serves as a research assistant (RA) in linguistics at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), and in vascular surgery at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Born in California, his native language is Spanish, which he speaks at home along with English and French. Ethan volunteers teaching ESL, reading, and math to elementary school students in all three languages. He is passionate about water polo, reading, and community engagement.



Bridging Hearts and Heritage:
Social Emotional Lotería as a Culturally Grounded Approach to Social-Emotional Learning
Anna D. Heinbuch, Ed.D., PPS

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**The Elephant in The Room:
Preservice Teacher Spanish Proficiency**
Ana Hernández, Ed.D.

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My Personal Healing Teaching With Trauma-Informed Practices in a Multilingual Classroom

A.G. Guzmán, M.A.

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**Opening the Doors Wider:
Expanding Access to Dual Language Immersion for Students With Special Needs**
Celine Chang, Ph.D.

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**Early Childhood 101:
Supporting California's Youngest Dual Language Learners**
Erin Freschi, M.A.

Notes

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**Rethinking the Term 'English Speakers' in Dual Language Bilingual Education:
Toward Justice-Oriented Naming Practices**

Jongyeon Ee, Ph.D.

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**El poder de la familia:
Honoring Identity and Culture on a Journey Through Technology**
Alma Sánchez

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**Leading for Equity:
Building Inclusive Multilingual Learning Communities
Through Relational Trust and Data-Driven Action**

Benson Kwok, Ed.D.

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**Developing and Sustaining a Comunidad for Future Bilingual Teachers:
Reflexiones y Compromisos**

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**Productive Struggle and Professional Growth:
Reflections from the UC Davis and LAUSD iELD Math Project Partnership**

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