

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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April 2019, Vol. 40, No. 2

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I SAY

Angélica Infante-Green

Rhode Island commissioner of elementary and secondary education appointee and deputy commissioner of New York State Education Department's Office of P-12 Instructional Support



"[We need to focus on]

looking at our kids as solutions and not as the problem. I

many times hear principals or superintendents say, 'If I didn't have this type of child in my system, I would be doing great.'

And my response to that is, 'You do have that child, so let's make sure that your system *is* great, because it's supposed to be

great for all kids.' "

Source: www.wbur.org/edify/2018/01/25/commissioner-finalist-infante-green

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HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

No matter our role, multilingual students are our students

More than 4.8 million students come to U.S. schools with a home language other than English. These students speak over 400 different languages and contribute an astounding diversity of life experiences to our classrooms.

Although California, Alaska, and the southwestern states are home to the most English learners, the five U.S. districts with the highest percentage of multilingual students include two in New Jersey. A Learning Forward member recently told us that 74 different languages are spoken in her Connecticut district.

No matter where we live or what role we play in education, multilingual students are our students. This is the case not just in the U.S., but also in Canada, Europe, and many other countries.

In this issue of *The Learning Professional*, experts call on all of us to work more intentionally and inclusively to meet English learners' needs. They remind us to learn *from* them and *with* them, not just teach *to* them.

A common theme shared by authors in this issue is the importance of collective responsibility for ensuring English learners' success. Featured experts highlight research showing that students learn best when language and content instruction are intertwined and instruction is made accessible to all students within mainstream classrooms.

They caution against using texts that are either dumbed down in



content or grade-inappropriate because they are intended for younger native speakers. They highlight the importance of inclusive hiring and training and supportive leadership.

The issue includes tools to help you evaluate whether your instructional materials are meeting English learners' needs (p. 62); reflection questions to help you consider your assumptions and biases about language and learning (p. 77); and recommended research you can use to improve your staff's knowledge, teaching, and assessment practices (p. 22).

A note about terminology: We have chosen to be consistent with the U.S. Department of Education's use of the term English learners. However, some authors in this issue explain

their reasons for using different terms, including multilingual students and emergent bilinguals.

Experts in the field use a variety of terms to refer to students who come to school more proficient in languages other than English, and many factors go into these decisions. Chief among them, in most cases, is the importance of valuing students' rich experiences, cultures, and funds of knowledge. Emphasizing students' assets is a perspective Learning Forward and this issue's authors share.

As equity is central to our mission at Learning Forward, meeting English learners' needs is a topic of ongoing importance that will not be confined to this issue of *The Learning Professional*. In upcoming issues, you will continue to see articles about how professional learning can support the teaching and learning of English learners.

A recent study shows teachers believe neither they nor their instructional materials are doing enough for students learning English. And less than a quarter of K-12 educators have engaged in professional learning focused on English learners in the past three years. Let's work together to help close that gap and make great teaching and learning accessible to everyone.

•
Suzanne Bouffard (suzanne.bouffard@learningforward.org) is editor of *The Learning Professional*. ■

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VOICES

SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

“When educators use terms like ‘my kids’ or ‘your kids’ to describe English learners, language is used to divide instead of build shared responsibility and accountability. ... [Students] benefit more from a shared model where every educator asks, ‘What am I doing to bridge the gap so that all of “our kids,” including English learner students, feel included at school and can perform to their potential?’ ”

— Sarah Ottow, p. **8**



WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Sarah B. Ottow

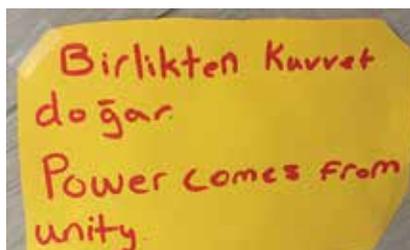
Take a schoolwide approach to supporting English learners

As a professional learning specialist focused on English learners, I often hear concerns like this one from Bridget, an English learner teacher: “My colleagues in general education classrooms say they care about our school’s English learners, but when it comes to teaching them well, with high standards and the right kinds of supports, we fall short. Our school requires a lot of professional development workshops on supporting English learners, yet I just don’t see effective strategies happening schoolwide. I know we need to do better for our kids. I just think we don’t all know how to get there.”

Many educators are underprepared to reach and teach English learners, despite the best of intentions. Far too often, the responsibility for supporting English learners falls into the lap of those already specialized and mobilized to meet these students’ needs — the English learner department.

While there may be a wider sense of urgency to address English learners’ underperformance issues, there may not be a shared sense of responsibility across the entire school. This attitude is reflected in the exclusive language many teachers use to talk about students. When educators use terms like “my kids” or “your kids” to describe English learners, language is used to divide instead of build shared responsibility and accountability.

To expect English learners’ needs to be met solely through specialists is



At Winchester High School in Massachusetts, teacher Laura Shanahan uses students’ home languages on notes posted in the classroom. This one is in Turkish.

neither a comprehensive nor sustainable solution. English learners may, in fact, spend more of their time in general education classrooms, and therefore they benefit more from a shared model where *every* educator asks, “What am I doing to bridge the gap so that all of ‘our kids’, including English learner students, feel included at school and can perform to their potential?”

My team and I at Confianza support schools and districts through customized professional learning partnerships that take a needs-specific, systemwide learning approach to build knowledge and capacity among school leadership, coaches, and teacher teams. Because we know that professional development is not an event but a habit of mind, we encourage schools to focus on schoolwide practices for both instruction and educator collaboration with our support.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MINDSET

In our work consulting with schools, we help educators respond proactively and with an equity-based lens to the

English learners in their communities. All too often, what I see when I begin working with schools is a deficit-focused perspective that views English learners as problems to be solved.

This resembles the attitudes I faced as a general education teacher and an English learner specialist over a decade ago, suggesting that changes in teaching practice have not kept pace with the growth of knowledge about how best to teach English learners.

Rather than problems to be solved, English learners present opportunities to change school culture and systems to be more culturally and linguistically responsive to everyone. Rather than focusing on the fact that English learners are not fully proficient in English, we should see the rich assets our linguistically diverse students and families bring.

For example, when I was a teacher for a group of students from over 40 language groups, each taught me invaluable lessons about resilience. One 5th-grade student shared with me her journey from central Mexico to Wisconsin through an autobiography project.

Just two years before we met, she, her younger sister, and her mother were guided across the Rio Grande on a tire when they didn’t know how to swim. In our language experience story project, she wrote, “I felt scared and happy at the same time. I was scared because people had died trying to pass to Texas. I was happy because I was

going to see my dad.”

English learners are windows into the world while also being mirrors for schools to examine and change their own practices. The imperative to see the opportunity for changing not just the narrative of what school can be for linguistically diverse students but what the systems and conditions for professional learning can be — and should be — is not just critical, it’s a moral responsibility.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CULTURE

When my team and I conduct a needs assessment with a school, we ask about the professional learning culture and systems like professional learning communities for teachers and leaders to continuously learn together and practice through inquiry-based cycles. When those conditions are not yet in place, we work together to build them because teachers need time, space, and tools to work together under conditions of ongoing practice and reflection on student outcomes.

In particular, we work to build communities of practice, which provide the most effective opportunity for schoolwide learning. Communities of practice give teachers and leaders practice in research-based instructional strategies along with time for reflection and feedback.

In these communities, we focus on these areas:

- **Family and student engagement**, including social and emotional learning and opportunities for deep learning that engages students’ interests, cultures, and learning styles;

EQUITY FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

Equity for English learners should be the goal of every educator so that every leader, teacher, and support staff:

- **Models respect** for diverse groups and **exhibits curiosity** for ongoing improvement in his or her own development to meet all learners’ needs.
 - **Uses inclusive language** like “our students” and “What can we do?” so that there is more cohesion and more collaboration.
 - **Reframes deficit language** like “those students don’t know English” to “our English learners are learning English, which is a complex process that we can help accelerate.”
 - **Intentionally seeks ways to work together** to focus on schoolwide priority instructional practices that boost academic language development for English learners and all students.
 - **Celebrates** growth in students and in teams, not just proficiency, so that the culture of the school recognizes risk-taking and incremental steps towards goals.
- **Curriculum and instruction** so that all teachers plan, teach, and assess with a language lens for college- and career-ready standards;
 - **Data and assessment**, emphasizing multiple measures of growth and ownership of learning;

- **Collaboration**, including teacher leadership and co-teaching to build and sustain communities of practice;
- **Leadership and evaluation** focused on specific teacher actions that impact student efficacy and academic performance;
- **Dual language, biliteracy, and multilingual learning environments** that allow students to use their entire linguistic repertoire and that honor and celebrate diversity of language, culture, race, religion, and perspective; and
- **Anti-bias education**, because language education cannot be separated from inequities and social justice.

LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Leadership that has an eye on equity for all students is essential for enabling such professional learning and shifting school culture to meet English learners’ needs. In schools that respond proactively and respectfully to a growing English learner population, I typically find a strong leader at the helm who promotes student-centered, teacher-driven professional learning that is embedded and aligned to a clear vision.

Strong leadership begins with a clear vision of what effective instruction looks, sounds, and feels like in the leader’s school community. When I get to know a school, I interview the school leader and we conduct learning walks together so that I can understand the current vision of equitable instruction.

When that vision is lacking, one place to start is considering identified student needs and how they can be

integrated across classrooms to benefit all students. For instance, if the English learner student subgroup needs to accelerate writing development, all teachers can focus on common writing practices that bridge students' oracy to literacy. Leaders can encourage such schoolwide practices by supporting professional learning communities. (See an example here: www.teachingchannel.org/video/writing-in-math-ells.)

I also look for whether leaders have established a culture of inquiry within the school and whether leaders model risk-taking, in the form of actively asking questions, trying new practices, openly reflecting on learning, and continuously engaging in action cycles.

If we want collaborative, constructivist relationships between teachers and students to thrive, this has to begin with reciprocal power relations among all learners, including leaders, teachers, students, and families. Acknowledging that we don't have all the answers is an important place to start.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

With strong leadership and professional learning in place, teachers can focus on improving instruction tailored to their students. Effective instructional practices that are responsive to English learners include:

- **Moving away from a monolingual lens to a multilingual lens.** Leaders and teachers can honor students' diversity by acknowledging what they have in common and putting themselves in students' shoes. This is especially important when the diversity of our student populations doesn't match the staff in the school. For example, learning to speak greetings in the languages that students and their families represent models an asset-based, global perspective that all schools

RESOURCES

- *The Language Lens for Content Classrooms: A Guide for K-12 Educators of Academic and English Language Learners:* <https://bit.ly/2S3mE9y>.
- Identifying our Circle of Influence as Change Agents of Equity, Language and Literacy: <https://bit.ly/2GrkNdB>.
- Strong Connections Built on Confianza Between Home & School for English Learners: <https://bit.ly/2TL8XOw>.
- We are Academic Language Learners (ALLs): <https://bit.ly/2ByAULu>.

should strive for.

- **Empowering students** by understanding language development and teaching with a language lens. This means that the deeper features of language in any content area are made explicit, interactive, and supported through language-rich scaffolds.
- **Becoming student-centered** by supporting students to assess their own growth and celebrate their own story of learning language and content.
- **Clearly stating the learning objectives** for units of study to guide all students but especially to demystify expectations for students whose language and culture are not matched to the school's.

MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY

For these practices to be effective, the whole school community must take shared responsibility for making them consistent across classrooms. Consider what happens when they are not.

Bridget, the teacher we met at the beginning of this article, has worked hard and thoughtfully to set clear,

student-centered learning targets that integrate academic language and content in her beginning English learner classroom. Students reflect on their purpose for learning daily and show their growth through their learning journals, projects, and digital portfolios.

To enable academic conversations among her diverse students, she provides structured protocols, along with visual and graphic scaffolds and opportunities to share personal experiences and make relevant connections. As a result, students actively engage in their own learning through plentiful reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

But when the students leave Bridget's classroom and spend the rest of the day in a general education classroom, these supports are inconsistent and checking for understanding isn't common practice. The English learner students who were so engaged in Bridget's classroom rarely speak or write, and they go from feeling empowered to disenfranchised.

Imagine what would happen if Bridget had the opportunity to work with the general education teacher to provide tips about what works well for their shared students. What if they were able to co-plan and co-teach? Even when such collaboration is not feasible, other strategies can help bridge the gap. An instructional coach could be the conduit for sharing practices across classrooms, like language scaffolds and authentic assessment.

When we break down the silos, it becomes clear that educators have more in common than not, and it is possible to work together in strategic ways to build a shared knowledge base and a shared set of strategies that works for our own diverse student populations.

•
Sarah Ottow (sarah@ellconfianza.com) is founder and director at Confianza. ■



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WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Belinda Bustos Flores and Lorena Claeys

Bilingual teacher workforce starts with English learner students

As university bilingual educators raised in Spanish-speaking homes, we have been asked by colleagues: How did you become so successful? That question represents an all-too-common deficit perspective on students who are learning two or more languages (Lucas, Villegas, & Martin, 2015). On the contrary, our stories illustrate how bilingual and bicultural experiences are assets for students and teachers.

This counter narrative is also prominent in the careers of the Latino women and men we have recruited, prepared, and retained as bilingual teachers through the Academy for Teacher Excellence Research Center at the University of Texas at San Antonio (Flores, Clark, Claeys, & Villareal, 2007).

One effort within the research center has been a grow-your-own approach inspired by our schooling and research experiences. Teachers in this program have demonstrated a long-term commitment and retention to the profession (Quezada & Ruiz, 2017; Flores, Claeys, & Gist, 2018; Gist, Bianco, & Lynn, 2019; Valenzuela, 2016).

We have led initiatives to tap into the human capital within our Latino bilingual communities to increase the pipeline of bilingual and bicultural teachers. Bilingual education teachers are in high demand across the country, and many school districts offer their bilingual education



Belinda Bustos Flores, left, and Lorena Claeys

teachers extra incentives. Yet there is a critical shortage of bilingual educators nationally.

The lack of well-prepared bilingual educators often leaves schools unable to meet the needs of English learners. We believe the solution to this quandary lies in tapping the potential within our bilingual populations, including high school students and teacher assistants.

In our positions as university faculty, we have collaborated with area community colleges to create a seamless transition for bilingual teacher candidates from high school to community college to the university through the creation of Teacher

Academy Learning Communities.

As a result of our work, we have created a research model to address the teacher shortage areas and diversify the teacher workforce (Flores et al., 2007).

BILINGUAL TEACHERS' ASSETS

An ever-increasing linguistically diverse demographic shift demonstrates the need for well-prepared bilingual teachers (Flores, 2017). Our and others' research tells us that bilinguals who decide to become teachers make a difference in their students' lives and impact the school community.

They have firsthand knowledge of the process of becoming bilingual and

OUR STORIES, OUR STRENGTHS

BELINDA BUSTOS FLORES

I was raised in a bilingual-bicultural home in Texas, but I was more Spanish-dominant as a young child. My childhood was filled with rich cultural and linguistic experiences at home, school, and the community. I still remember all the cuentos (stories) my Mamá Julia (grandmother) shared with me, how she helped me read in Spanish, and later how those stories furthered my understanding of English stories at school.

I have always been proud of my Mexican-American history and heritage, and these experiences shaped who I am today, my commitment to bilingualism, and my view of the world. My bilingual and bicultural skills have helped me become a successful student, teacher, counselor, university professor and researcher, and now an associate dean.

LORENA CLAEYS

I grew up speaking only Spanish across the Rio Grande in a border town in Mexico. In high school, I learned to speak English with limited support from an English as a Second Language (ESL) class.

In this sink-or-swim approach, I sometimes struggled and felt invisible because I sat quietly and was excluded or just went unnoticed since teachers did not possess the knowledge and skills to work with English/bilingual learners. But because I had strong academic and language skills in Spanish, I succeeded in school and went to college. I became a bilingual/ESL teacher because I wanted to work with children like myself, and I later used these skills to become a bilingual/dual language coordinator and a university administrator and researcher.

can use that knowledge to help learners become bilingual. Also, they have a deep understanding of the culture and knowledge of the community, which they can leverage to make connections and make learning meaningful for students.

We also know that teachers who are recruited from and trained in the communities where they live are more

likely to be retained in the profession as compared to teachers who don't have ties with the community (Quezada & Ruiz, 2017; Valenzuela, 2016). Bilingual learners who become bilingual teachers can later serve in other capacities such as school counselors, principals, or superintendents, thereby making the whole system more multicultural and multilingual.

We have been inspired to develop the pipeline of bilingual teachers by our own personal experiences, as we explain at left. We believe that our assets are not unique, and we know that many bilingual students have much to offer as teachers. Here are lessons we've learned along the way.

START EARLY

Preparing future bilingual teachers begins long before students choose a career path. To strengthen your pre-K-12 bilingual learners' capacity to become future bilingual teachers, ensure they have educational opportunities to engage in reading, listening, speaking, and writing in both their native language and English.

This can be accomplished by providing courses in both languages across the pre-K-12 curriculum and engaging bilingual learners in community events in which they practice their skills. For example, students can participate in community walks or cultural events in which they listen to the different languages spoken by the people in the community and then follow up by having students research the history of these practices.

It is also important that all pre-K-12 students learn to expand their perspective and understand others' ways of thinking and acting. They should have opportunities to interact with others who are different from them, read books written by authors from

diverse cultures, and develop scripts as counternarratives to negative statements about a group of people. It is important that students understand that such stereotypes must be interrogated and interrupted, rather than simply accepting these views as truths.

Recruiting. To address bilingual teacher shortages, recruit candidates from current bilingual learners. University and school districts must work collaboratively to create a college-going culture within the school focused on a pathway to prepare bilingual teachers.

It is imperative to identify and support middle and high school students with the interest and potential to become bilingual teachers. Hold information and orientation sessions for bilingual learners and their parents about the shortage of teachers and districts' demands for bilingual teachers. Offer dual credit courses and seminars focused on a teacher preparation degree pathway through a university-school partnership. As a result, high school bilingual students can matriculate with a boost of confidence into the university having completed college coursework.

Retention. Beyond recruiting bilingual candidates, we need to provide support structures with a plan of action to counter gatekeeping mechanisms (e.g. coursework, financial, high-stakes testing). To ensure retention in college, learning communities can support candidates in coursework that is challenging and assist them in passing state-mandated teacher exams (Flores et al., 2007). School districts can provide financial support by hiring bilingual candidates as teacher assistants. These types of support structures ensure that candidates remain in college and complete their degree and certification requirements.

RECOGNIZE CULTURAL WEALTH

To become culturally efficacious



ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP AN ASSET-FOCUSED PERSPECTIVE

Community garden. Take students to a community or family garden to learn about the growing process, the environment, and how people know when to plant and harvest. To promote responsible citizenship, students can create a school garden or assist in the community or family garden and share their produce with others (e.g. food bank).

Business/industry. Have students observe the work at community businesses like bakeries, auto mechanic shops, flower shops, tailors, or dressmaking shops. Ask them to reflect on how these activities teach literacy, mathematical, and scientific concepts.

Family interviews. Have students explore their cultural identity, traditions, cultural practices, and language through interviews with parents, grandparents, and other family members. Have students trace their journey from their home country on a map to learn about geography.

Volunteering. Help learners become active in the community by volunteering for civic or religious events, collecting canned goods for the food bank, reading at the library's reading hour, visiting senior centers, or tutoring after school.

Journaling/blogging/multimedia. Activities in which learners write and reflect on their community experiences can assist them in developing critical literacy skills. These experiences make learners think about their role within the community and how they are making a difference in people's lives.

Future bilingual teachers clubs. Provide resources and support to establish a Bilingual Education Student Organization (BESO) chapter at your school. Connect with your local university's BESO members and invite them to participate in your chapter activities.

bilingual teachers, candidates and teachers must recognize the community's cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and the funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006) as potential pedagogical tools.

It might seem as if this perspective would come naturally to bilingual bicultural students, but it may not. In particular, those who have not

experienced a strengths-focused approach in their own education may need opportunities to develop critical consciousness in which they explore and interrogate their own educational experiences.

Having a deep understanding of the community's cultural wealth will help bilingual candidates and teachers acquire the efficacy to use these as

pedagogical tools that help learners connect what they learn at home with school learning. See the box on p. 14 for examples of activities and strategies that can help develop this lens.

RESEARCH MODEL

Over the past 15 years, the Academy for Teacher Excellence has been intentional in recruiting Latino bilingual teachers by tapping into school districts, community colleges, and midcareer changers.

Viewing the holistic development of teacher candidates as an iterative continuous process, the academy has used a sociocultural transformative framework to support their personal, academic, and professional needs (Flores, Claeys, & Wallis, 2006).

The Teacher Academy Learning Community serves as a support mechanism (e.g. career transition coaching, lending textbooks, mobile devices, seminars, service learning, and tutoring) to ensure candidates stay in the program, graduate, and obtain teacher certification/licensure.

As candidates transition from clinical practice into the teaching profession, they engage in a community of practice with induction mentors, participate in online forums, and read about culturally efficacious praxis (Flores et al., 2018). Thus, rather than seeing an ending point, we consider teacher development as iterative and continuous in which teachers refine their knowledge and practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the benefits of bilingualism, school districts need to strive for all learners to have the opportunity to become bilingual and bicultural. Further, by partnering with universities, school districts could work on capacity building, investing in their human capital such as bilingual learners to become bilingual teachers through

grow-your-own residency models.

Residency models offer teacher candidates clinically rich experiences, including enhanced professional development on culturally and linguistically efficacious pedagogy for candidates and practicing teachers. Within professional learning communities, bilingual teacher candidates and practicing teachers can engage in critical dialogue and reflection about the efficacy and fidelity of the school district's bilingual model, instructional practices, and impact on bilingual students.

Further, providing job-embedded learning in which district or university educators model, co-teach, and plan can enhance culturally and linguistic efficacious practices. Attending to teacher candidates' and practicing teachers' ongoing development as a continuous process ensures best practices and a commitment to the profession.

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BEING FORWARD

Leigh Wall

Let's ensure that equity includes English learners

Learning Forward has always been committed to educational equity, and we recently affirmed and strengthened this commitment by prioritizing equity in our mission statement.

Making equity part of our mission means more than putting words on paper. It means weaving it into our daily work of consulting with districts, leading conferences and networks, producing field-shaping publications, and working with educators and students. It also means examining our personal and organizational beliefs about the concept of equity.

Because we are each shaped by our unique experiences as well as collective ones, it is not surprising that we do not all have identical definitions of equity. As educators, we have a shared understanding that equity relates to fairness and our moral and professional obligation to ensure that all students succeed, excel, and reach their fullest potential in education and life.

Equity must be specifically focused on eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps across racial groups, as well as for every student group that may be underserved in our schools, including students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners.

Our organization is focused on success, equity, and excellence for all students and teachers. We encourage all members of the Learning Forward staff and community — including you, our



readers — to explore the imperative for equity at a personal and professional level and in ways that are meaningful to you and the students you serve and represent.

Therefore, it is important to explore honestly and openly the opportunities that are accessible — or not — for specific populations of students and professionals. In this issue, we focus on English learners and the role of professional learning in ensuring that educators have the capacity to enable them to achieve at equally high levels.

As is often the case when examining equity in student performance, when English learners lag behind their peers, it generally has less to do with abilities and more to do with educational experiences and opportunities. The responsibility for their success belongs to all of us.

Our work with, and for, English learners must focus, fundamentally, on excellent teaching and learning, even as we are helping students develop their English language skills. Our goal in equitable achievement should not be centered on remediation, but rather high-quality, high-level teaching and learning.

Learning Forward board members and staff are deeply invested in the difficult but vital work of examining and discussing race, class, privilege, and opportunity. This includes but is not limited to engaging in the Courageous Conversation framework with the help of their expert facilitators. (See our equity-focused October 2018 issue of *The Learning Professional* for more on this approach.)

As you explore this issue's strategies, tools, and advice, we urge you to remember that this work requires resources and support, not just for students but also for the educators who can help them unlock their potential. Equity in education, including for English learners, should be part of our advocacy for professional learning funding and legislation. It should also be a key component in our strategic planning.

Ensuring equity and excellence must be part of our consciousness as we target broad goals to improve access, opportunity, and excellence for all students.

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Leigh Wall is president of Learning Forward. ■



CALL TO ACTION

Stephanie Hirsh

How learning shaped my leadership

Knowing this will be my last opportunity to write this column as Learning Forward's executive director, I want to share a few insights on habits I've found valuable as a leader. Not surprisingly, they are built on a foundation of continuous learning.

ESTABLISH YOUR EXPERTISE

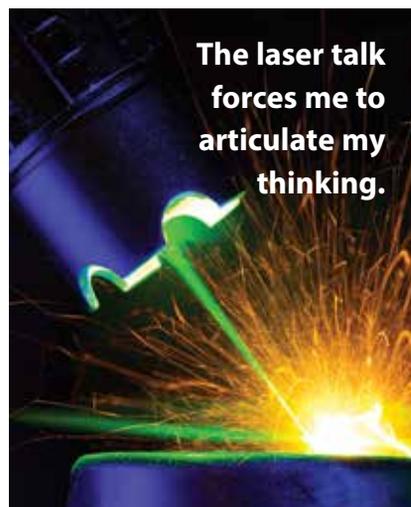
As educators, we are often expected to know a lot about many things, but there is also value in developing an area of expertise. Deep expertise in one subject is where you set yourself apart and where people are more likely to trust, seek, and engage you in important issues and work.

Setting aside time to read and learn every day is essential to establishing that expertise. This reading and reflection ensures you don't miss important findings that have substantive implications for your agenda. One example of change that can result from this is Learning Forward's recent commitment to curriculum-focused professional learning.

To strengthen your point of view, pay attention to the research base as well as new trends. And to reduce the chance of developing blind spots or missing opportunities, read what both fans and critics have to say.

HAVE YOUR LASER TALK READY

One of the most important tools I have acquired is the laser talk — a brief, compelling statement that outlines a problem and solution, concluding with



a request for action. The format guides my speeches, facilitation of learning experiences, and writing.

The laser talk forces me to articulate my thinking. It requires me to delineate a clear problem, substantiate it with facts, and present a realistic solution. The concluding call to action is most effective when it is something listeners recognize within their sphere of responsibility and influence. This helps all of us work together to accomplish collective goals and address the needs of the field.

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH AMAZING PEOPLE

One of the most rewarding aspects of my career has been the relationships I have developed with people who have motivated me to learn and grow.

At my very first conference, I met Madeline Hunter and Susan Loucks-

Horsley, both of whom presented in ways that inspired me to think about the kind of professional learning leader I wanted to be.

Under the tutelage of Dennis Sparks, executive director emeritus, I deepened my knowledge base and honed my skills. He often challenged my thinking, and, over time, I learned the value of being open to all points of view. This relationship was key to embedding this value in the Learning Forward staff norms.

While there are many others who supported my growth, in particular I want to acknowledge Gerald Ponder, Hayes Mizell, Joellen Killion, and Shirley Hord. Each helped me become a better communicator, leader, and person.

In addition, Learning Forward's international advisors, trustees, and staff have been valuable colleagues over the years.

GREAT THINGS TO COME

Any success you attribute to me is also due to the great people who have shared my commitment to you and the field.

I expect great things from my successor, and I expect great things from all of you as well. Educators and students are depending on you.

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Stephanie Hirsh (stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org) is executive director of Learning Forward. ■

WHAT IT TAKES TO BUILD A STRONG PRINCIPAL PIPELINE

Beginning in August 2011, six urban districts received funding from The Wallace



Nicholas Pelzer



Mikel Royal



Tricia McManus



Yinka Alege

Foundation to participate in the Principal Pipeline Initiative, an effort to strengthen novice principals' capabilities. Over a five-year period, the districts were expected to address at least four components of a strong pipeline: standards for what principals need to know and do; preservice training; hiring processes; and evaluation and support. At the 2018 Learning Forward Annual Conference, leaders from two of those districts — Denver, Colorado, and Hillsborough County, Florida — joined Wallace Foundation Senior Program Officer **Nicholas Pelzer** to share what they learned about strengthening school leadership pipelines. This article includes highlights of that session and a follow-up conversation.

Mikel Royal is director of school leadership, preparation, and development for Denver Public Schools. **Tricia McManus** is assistant superintendent of leadership, professional development, and school transformation for Hillsborough County Public Schools, and **Yinka Alege** is deputy director of the Achievement Schools learning network in the district.

Q What was the impetus for focusing on the principal pipeline?

Nicholas Pelzer: Around 2000, when The Wallace Foundation started focusing on leadership, it wasn't really on the national agenda. It was considered a tertiary issue. Through the first 10 years of our work on the topic, we were asking questions like, "Does leadership matter, and if so, in what way?" and "How do you develop effective school leaders?" We started seeing an emerging body of evidence that leadership matters. For example, Kenneth Leithwood and his colleagues found that principals' influence on student achievement is second only to that of classroom instruction. We learned a lot about what elements contributed to developing effective school leaders, but we didn't have proof of concept that effective leadership could be developed at scale, across an entire district, and make a difference for students.

The Principal Pipeline Initiative was an attempt to challenge urban districts who already had some of the leadership components in place or in mind to do it cohesively and at scale. The foundation provided a framework for the main components that districts needed to put in place but gave districts complete freedom in how to do that.

Q: What was your starting point in strengthening the principal pipeline?

Mikel Royal: In Denver, we started with identifying and defining competencies that an effective school leader in Denver Public Schools should have. When we looked at our existing standards and expectations, we saw that our evaluation system led to evaluations that mostly checked off a box. Every two or three years, school leaders would get rated as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. [That wasn't very useful because] you could be a very strong principal and get the same evaluation as someone who was just adequate, and you got no feedback. We worked with the state and the district to [change that and to] define the attributes and competencies of leaders. That became the core of our whole pipeline, including a rubric for leaders' growth and development.

In rolling out the framework and the rubric, we leveraged learning from a recent revamp of the Colorado teacher evaluation system. That system, too, had gone from a binary evaluation system to a more detailed one. From the reaction to those changes, we knew it was important that we took

our time and paid attention to how we communicated about it. For example, we stopped using the word “evaluation” and began referring to it as a growth and performance system, and we labeled the performance bands in a way that emphasizes growth. We made sure we were messaging that principals would not necessarily be rated effective in all competencies right away, and that it is OK to be in the “approaching” band.

Tricia McManus: [In Hillsborough County] we also started by creating a set of core competencies for leadership. We needed to define what it means to be a good leader and the specific competencies needed in the roles of principals, assistant principals, and others. A strong pipeline has to have alignment across components. We had many of the components in place, but we had to integrate them in an aligned way. We spent the whole first year on the competency work. With that in place, we focused on finding teachers in our buildings who showed [emerging] signs of those skills in their classrooms or in teacher leadership roles. Everything now is connected to the core competencies.

Pelzer: In fact, all six of the districts decided to start with leader standards or competencies, which isn’t surprising. The districts saw them as the foundation. All the components matter, but you have to get this part right for the others to be aligned and effective. Standards are also relatively inexpensive and quick, compared to other components of the pipeline, because they don’t require hiring new people or investing in new structures.

Q: Once you had defined the competencies, how did you support leaders in developing them?

McManus: We knew we wanted to support and strengthen local university programs because in Florida, you have

DISTRICTS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE PRINCIPAL PIPELINE INITIATIVE

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina
- Denver Public Schools, Colorado
- Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia
- Hillsborough County Public Schools, Florida
- New York City Department of Education, New York
- Prince George’s County Public Schools, Maryland

to get an education leadership degree [to become a principal]. We also knew we needed to start earlier in the pipeline and better prepare assistant principals. So we created a Future Leaders Academy to develop teachers into assistant principals. We worked with principals to tap teachers in their schools, who could then apply for the academy.

When an assistant principal position would open up, we would then have qualified candidates lined up. If an academy graduate hadn’t gotten an assistant principal job within five years, we gave them competency-based feedback and required them to go back through the selection process before they could continue interviewing. Gathering current data allowed us to adjust program curriculum and find additional ways to support future leaders to ensure readiness for the role.

Royal: We were aligning competencies and expectations with the university curriculum, but we had an epiphany that it is rare that coming out of a university program you are prepared to lead a school. Universities do a really good job with foundational skills and preparing for entry-level leadership, but at best, our partnerships were preparing assistant principals. The principalship

is a much more complicated role, and leaders needed to be developed significantly more by the district.

As we were launching the standards, we developed a principal residency program. It is basically a full-time internship supervised by the building principal as well as the district program. Initially, we had 16 or 17 positions a year, and schools could apply to host the residents. The residents’ salaries were between 50% and 75% funded by the Wallace grant and the remainder came from the school’s budget.

[We later learned that] our mistake was not fully funding the residencies because some principals saw the residency as an opportunity to get an assistant principal for their building without having to pay a full salary. We were well into it when we realized we didn’t always have the best principals [supervising the residencies]. It was hard to turn that boat around, but we had to shift.

Q: How do you ensure that sitting principals are providing the support future principals need?

Royal: Effective principals may or may not be great mentors. We had to determine what makes a good mentor and, in some cases, we had to build the capacity of principal supervisors to be good mentors. So our next step [after designing the principal residency] was to design a mentor training program. Elements of our existing framework were helpful. Eventually we started an assistant principal mentoring program as well.

Yinka Alege: One of the leadership competencies for our principals is developing people. Principal supervisors have to help principals recognize their role in mentoring future leaders and model for them what it looks like to be a coach/mentor so they, in turn, provide that level of support to their assistant principals. You can only do so

much telling and training. For assistant principals to grow, they need job-embedded professional development each day and their principal to understand what it looks like in their school, so we go in and model that.

McManus: As we are growing and better understanding what leadership is, we're beginning to realize that the approach to the work should look the same at all levels. We want principals to be collaborative leaders and engage in coaching, so we interact with them in the manner we want them to lead. [District staff] don't tell them how to run their schools. We ask them questions to reflect on their practice and then ask them to do the same with their assistant principals and teachers.

Q: What did you learn about the process that could be useful to other districts building pipelines?

Alege: I was a principal when this work began, and as a site-based administrator, we were part of the whole process of developing the pipeline. Being part of the design is what helped us have ownership. When principals and assistant principals do not have input into the process, they feel like something is being done to them. We felt like we were part of something that will help us all.

McManus: Yes, principals were at the table from day one. They were involved in developing the competencies, the rubric for aligning to it, what the academy should look like, principal induction, and assessing candidates. They are an active part of keeping our pipeline alive and continuing to strengthen it.

Pelzer: The community of practice created among these districts is powerful. In the professional learning communities that Wallace organized, districts were constantly meeting and were on a learning journey with each other. Most

RELATED RESOURCES

- **Building a Stronger Principalship Vol 5: The Principal Pipeline Initiative in Action**, <https://bit.ly/2IBINN5>
- **What It Takes to Operate and Maintain Principal Pipelines: Costs and Other Resources**, <https://bit.ly/2T4LOdG>

of the time, districts work individually, but in this initiative they were learning from each other's challenges and struggles and deploying that learning.

Royal: We had created a culture all about growth and development. That growth is what fills our leaders' buckets and motivates them — not the minimal stipend they receive for being mentors, for example. That culture of growth shapes everything. Even our standards that we started with continue to grow and be refined. We have increased their rigor as our leaders started getting higher marks on the evaluations because if the standards become stagnant, they lose their value. They need to keep pointing to next steps.

Q: What changes are you seeing as a result of these efforts?

Royal: There has been such a transformation in the district. We started in a place where we were lucky to get positions filled and we were [hiring some people] who may not have been ready because we didn't have a deep bench. As the years and the pipeline development progressed, our problem changed. Now we have a lot of high-quality leaders who are staying in the role longer because they are prepared, so our pool swelled but we have fewer positions to fill. We had to address that by offering other opportunities for continuous growth, like teacher mentoring and a professional learning scholarship program.

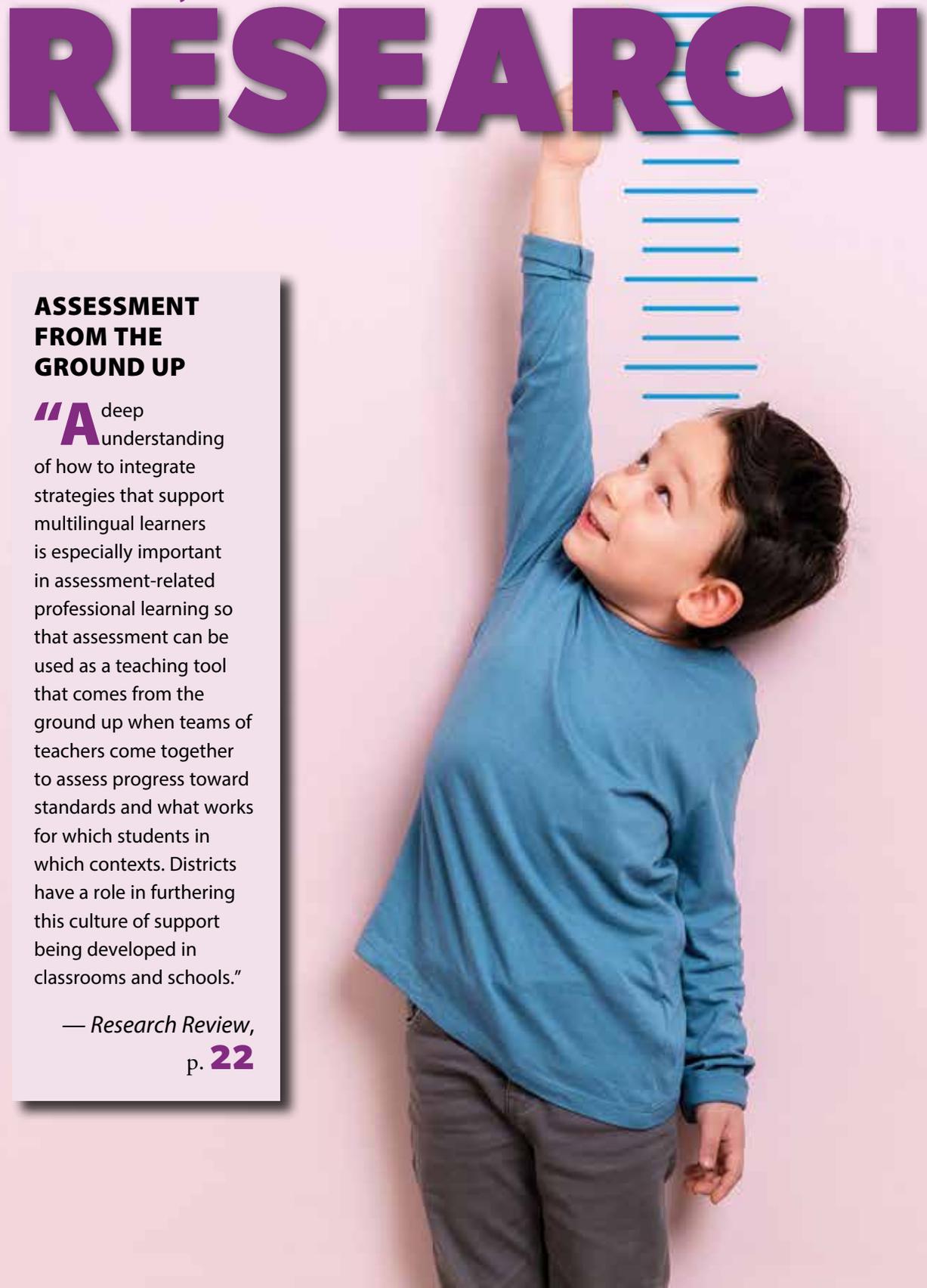
McManus: Our candidate pool is more diverse now than it ever was before. When we ask our principals to recruit in our schools, we've asked them to pay attention to recruiting teachers of color. But since we recruit from our teacher pool, we are only as diverse and as strong as our teachers, so we began working with our teacher recruitment department and with university master's programs to diversify their outreach and support. As a result, we have strengthened our pool of qualified and diverse candidates. Diversity makes us stronger and makes our schools stronger.

Pelzer: When the principal pipeline initiative started, the districts were doing some of the pipeline components, but not always effectively or in a tightly aligned way. The reflection and continuous improvement were missing. For example, job descriptions weren't necessarily aligned with standards and district leaders would send future leaders to graduate programs but then end up retraining them. Now the pipelines are more efficient and the districts are implementing the pipelines in promising ways. Furthermore, in 2017, RAND released a study showing that it costs less than one-half of 1% of a district's annual budget to implement the four components the foundation laid out for principal pipelines. And researchers revisited the districts in 2018, finding that two years after foundation funding had ended, all four components were in place and, in some cases, showing new evidence of effectiveness.

In retrospect, it would be easy to overlook how heavy a lift these changes were for the districts. These are very large districts. There was no guarantee that they would be able to do all of the things we were asking them to do. We saw that they had the potential and the capacity, but the fact that they all implemented all the components of the pipeline is important to recognize. There was a lot to do, and they actually did it. ■

Examine. Study. Understand.

RESEARCH



ASSESSMENT FROM THE GROUND UP

"A deep understanding of how to integrate strategies that support multilingual learners is especially important in assessment-related professional learning so that assessment can be used as a teaching tool that comes from the ground up when teams of teachers come together to assess progress toward standards and what works for which students in which contexts. Districts have a role in furthering this culture of support being developed in classrooms and schools."

— *Research Review*,
p. **22**



RESEARCH REVIEW

Elizabeth Foster

How assessment supports English learners

In 2015, nearly 5 million public school students were identified as English learners, according to the National Center for Education Statistics report, *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018* (de Brey et al., 2019). To serve these students well, educators need professional learning on a range of teaching and learning strategies.

Among the topics where they need support is student assessment. Assessment can provide information about student learning and the effectiveness of classroom strategies, but what are the special considerations when used with English learners?

To better understand the research about how schools and systems



Margo Gottlieb

can support multilingual learners through assessment, we spoke with Margo Gottlieb, an expert in curriculum, instruction, and assessment of language learners and author of more than 90 articles, monographs, handbooks, guides, technical reports, chapters, and assessments. Her latest books include *Assessing Multilingual Learners: A Month-to-Month Guide* (ASCD, 2017), *Language Power: Key Uses for Accessing Content* (with Mariana Castro; Corwin, 2017), and *Assessing English Language Learners: Bridges to*



Educational Equity (Corwin, 2016).

In our conversation, Gottlieb shared a range of insights about the critical nature of assessment as it relates to understanding multilingual learners. (In this column, we use the term “multilingual learner” as she does in her writing to emphasize and focus on the assets of students.) Like other experts highlighted in this issue of *The Learning Professional*, she stresses the importance of recognizing the strengths multilingual students bring to the classroom. As she says, “If you only look through a monolingual lens, you don’t know the whole child.”

ASSESSMENT

Gottlieb has valuable insights about the many uses of assessment and the situations and purposes for which each is most appropriate.

She distinguishes among assessment *as*, *for*, and *of* learning. All three approaches offer entry points into meaningful opportunities for embedded professional learning.

Assessment *as* learning describes an approach where students are at the center, empowered to monitor their own progress in learning. During this process, students interact with each other to develop their own advocacy and agency, facilitated by teachers to define and move toward mutually agreed-upon learning goals.

Gottlieb underscores that, for multilingual learners in particular, educators need to attend to how students can contribute to their own learning in multiple ways by drawing on their own linguistic and cultural experiences, and assessment can be part of this. Integral to assessment as

learning, student and peer assessment provide students opportunities to think about their own learning and progress over time and reflect and discuss learning with their peers.

Assessment *for* learning is associated with formative assessment, the process by which students and teachers plan, gather, and reflect on data related to student learning. “Multilingual learners bring so much to the learning and assessment situation that we as educators need to glean,” she says. Hallmarks of assessment for learning include classroom activities that value multilingual learners’ languages and cultures coupled with concrete, timely, and actionable feedback leading to the improvement of teaching and learning.

Assessment *of* learning is often thought of in relation to traditional large-scale tests that are developed outside the classroom. However, assessment of learning can also be about teachers crafting their own assessments, such as projects at the close of a unit of learning, and designing goals and targets for learning based on conversations among teachers and with students.

This approach promotes agency among teachers because they are collaboratively developing authentic performance assessments that reveal students’ strengths and next steps for learning.

Together, these three approaches can form an assessment system that provides a broad yet balanced view of student learning that, according to Gottlieb, “is both an authentic assessment and an authentic professional learning activity that brings genuine enthusiasm.” With this kind

RESOURCES

Here are resources that support educator learning about assessment and multilingual learners, with comments from Gottlieb.

Basterra, R., Trumbull, E., & Solano-Flores, G. (Eds.) (2011). *Cultural validity in assessment: Addressing linguistic and cultural diversity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., & Wiliam, D. (2004). Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(1), 8-21.

- Discussion of the importance of teacher-student interaction and of educators knowing students well as an aspect of assessment.

Earl, L.M. (2013). *Assessment as learning: Using classroom assessment to maximize student learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

- Focused on assessment as a strategy for daily classroom learning as well as student measurement.

González, N., Moll, L.C., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Highlights how sources of cultural knowledge among families and communities can be brought into the work of schools. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWS0YBpGkkE.

Hornberger, N.H. (2002). Multilingual language policies and the continua of biliteracy: An ecological approach. *Language Policy*, 1(1), 27-51.

- An examination of the impact policies that support multilingualism have had in South Africa and Bolivia, with implications about education in the United States.

García, O., Johnson, S.I., & Seltzer, K. (2016). *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon Publishing.

- Language practices to draw on students’ bilingualism to support their engagement with complex academic texts and advance social justice.

Soltero-González, L., Sparrow, W., Butvilofsky, S., Escamilla, K., & Hopewell, S. (2016). Effects of a paired literacy program on emerging bilingual children’s biliteracy outcomes in third grade. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 48(1), 80-104.

- This longitudinal study examines whether the implementation of a Spanish-English paired literacy approach provides an academic advantage to emerging bilingual students over a sequential literacy approach.

of detailed information, district and other leaders can customize professional learning support to help teachers identify and meet outstanding needs of English learners.

LEVERAGING RESEARCH

Professional learning should also incorporate findings from the latest research, as we state in Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Together with the three forms of assessment described above, this can paint a vivid picture of what students need and what is most likely to be effective.

For example, if assessment identifies a need to encourage deeper content learning, research illuminates ways teachers can incorporate students' language and cultural experiences into instruction, including students' home languages in peer conversations during class to make complex content accessible.

Gottlieb says that classroom strategies might include creating peer groups of multilingual learners with the same home language, as opposed to separating these students from one another, as has typically been done.

If there is more than one language learner in a classroom, they might be paired so that they feel supported and can process or reflect in the language that allows them to do that most effectively, even if the ensuing large-group class discussion is in English. (See the article by Rosita Apodaca and colleagues on p. 37 for more on these strategies.)

The strategy of incorporating home languages into the classroom can also inform assessment processes. Some students may need to demonstrate their learning in their home language. Even if the questions are given in English, other languages can be used for clarification or to gain a deeper understanding.

Gottlieb says the school and district must create a climate where all multilingual learners and their families are welcome and invited, and where professional learning stresses this expectation.

These shifts call for greater attention to how multilingual students are engaging in dialogue with peers and with teachers, Gottlieb points out. But research shows that with such consideration, "student talk increasingly permeates the classroom," she says.

CREATING A CULTURE OF SUPPORT

Fostering educators' learning about teaching multilingual learners requires a culture of support at the school and district levels. Gottlieb says the school and district must create a climate where all multilingual learners and their families are welcome and invited, and where professional learning stresses this expectation.

This starts with classrooms that honor and leverage the multicultural and multilingual knowledge brought by all students. "Students need to see their languages and cultures all around the school every day," Gottlieb says. Teachers and school leaders can support these learners by displaying reading materials that depict multiple languages and cultures and hanging student drawings and posters that represent the schools' cultures and languages.

To make sure such strategies are realized, professional learning can include them as topics for discussion and exploration through shared reading, collaborative conversations, and peer-to-peer observation and coaching.

A deep understanding of how to integrate strategies that support multilingual learners is especially important in assessment-related professional learning so that assessment can be used as a teaching tool that comes from the ground up when teams of teachers come together to assess progress toward standards and what works for which students in which contexts.

Districts have a role in furthering this culture of support being developed in classrooms and schools. Gottlieb suggests that district leaders elevate the status of classroom-level assessments to provide a more inclusive and reflective picture of multilingual learners.

Classroom assessments developed by teachers can provide evidence of student learning via portfolios and performance assessments and turn student learning artifacts into data that can be part of a comprehensive assessment picture along with federal, district, and state accountability requirements. This process places real value on the data that are generated at the classroom level.

Gottlieb says that this comprehensive support is not only good for multilingual learners, but also for all students and educators. "We live in a multicultural world, and we shouldn't deny that. By having students represent multiple languages and cultures, you are gaining a more global view of learning, rather than restricting it to one data source. By tapping all these data sources, you are getting a richer, more comprehensive view of whatever issue is at hand."

LOOKING FORWARD

What new or additional research would add to the field and to educators' understanding of these important issues? Gottlieb suggests more studies about the impact of dual language learning on multilingual students.

It is important to try to understand how language is a mediator that impacts students' access to academic achievement and therefore their mastery of the content.

In addition, since traditional accountability rests on tests in English, it is an ongoing challenge to discern how language might mask the results. Further, she suggests we need to know more about the ways multilingualism can be an asset to learning and classroom cultures and how educator misconceptions of multilingual learners might challenge student learning.

The charge to understand and appreciate multilingual learners and incorporate their assets into classroom and instructional practices carries implications for professional learning at the individual, collaborative, and system levels. The Standards for Professional

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Learning that are particularly relevant to this issue are the **Data standard**, which underscores the importance of a deliberate and sustained focus on examining data generated from the range of possible assessments, and the **Outcomes standard**, which encourages us to consider the skills and knowledge we need to address every student's learning experience and students' equitable access to academic content.

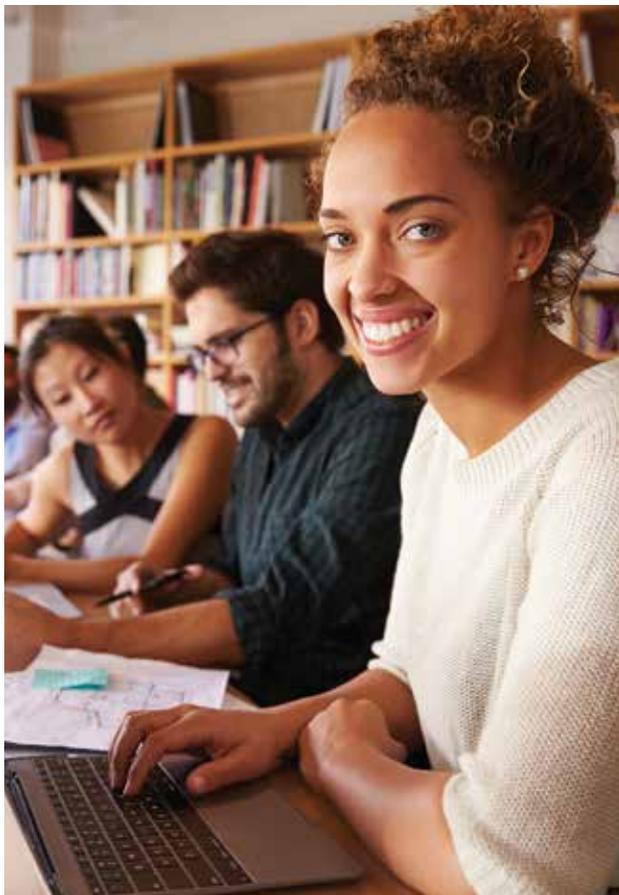
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Elizabeth Foster (elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org) is associate director of standards, research, and strategy at Learning Forward. In each issue of *The Learning Professional*, Foster explores recent research to help practitioners understand the impact of particular professional learning practices on student outcomes. ■



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ESSENTIALS

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

IMPACT

Effective Professional Development for Teachers to Foster Students' Academic Language Proficiency Across the Curriculum:

A Systematic Review

AERA Open, February 8, 2019

This review summarizes features of professional learning that aim to prepare teachers



to improve students' academic language proficiency when teaching subject areas.

The 38 studies reviewed suggest that all of the profiled interventions were effective to some extent. The programs share many characteristics considered important in successful teacher professional learning across different subject areas.

This review supports the idea that professional learning helps change teachers' thinking and practice and benefits students, if certain features are taken into consideration in its design and implementation.

<https://bit.ly/2SKHqjA>

TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

The Instructional Leadership Corps: Entrusting Professional Learning in the Hands of the Profession

Learning Policy Institute,

February 21, 2019

The Instructional Leadership Core (ILC) is a collaborative professional learning project in California founded



on the principle of "teachers teaching teachers." With the support of intensive

professional learning from experts, teachers organize local professional development for other teachers focused on implementing key

instructional shifts required by new standards.

This brief summarizes results and lessons learned from the first four years of the initiative. So far, it has served more than 100,000 California educators and responses have been "overwhelmingly positive."

ILC participants, the administrators who oversee them, and external observers have all noticed changes in teacher practice to reflect the content from the professional learning. The brief includes insights about the necessary conditions and enablers of success.

<https://bit.ly/2NrETFk>

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

Relationships Between Instructional Coaches' Time Use and District- and School-Level Policies and Expectations

American Educational Research

Journal, February 8, 2019

This mixed-methods analysis asks how district- and school-level policies and expectations were

related to coaches' time use.

Coaches accountable to district leaders spent more time working with

teachers on instruction than their school-hired counterparts, who devoted more time to administrative and teaching duties. However, all coaches had limited opportunities to work with teachers in ongoing ways.

The authors conclude, "Regardless of whether a coach is hired full-time or part-time to work at one school or several, district leaders, school administrators, and coaches themselves need to coordinate and negotiate the nature of coaches' work."

<https://bit.ly/2NkFqZG>



SECONDARY TEACHER SUPPORT

Teachers of English Language Learners in Secondary Schools: Gaps in Preparation and Support
The Civil Rights Project, March 2018

This report analyzes data from a survey distributed among secondary teachers in a large urban school district to examine how well-prepared they feel to teach English learners.

Without special preparation, even



good teachers may find it difficult to meet English learners' needs, and many secondary English learner teachers

note that the preparation and support they most want and need is the least available to them.

The study also points out that the resources to assist these teachers may be in greater supply than is apparent.

<https://bit.ly/2DVtLMs>

NATIONAL STATS

Digest of Education Statistics, 2017

National Center for Education Statistics, January 2019

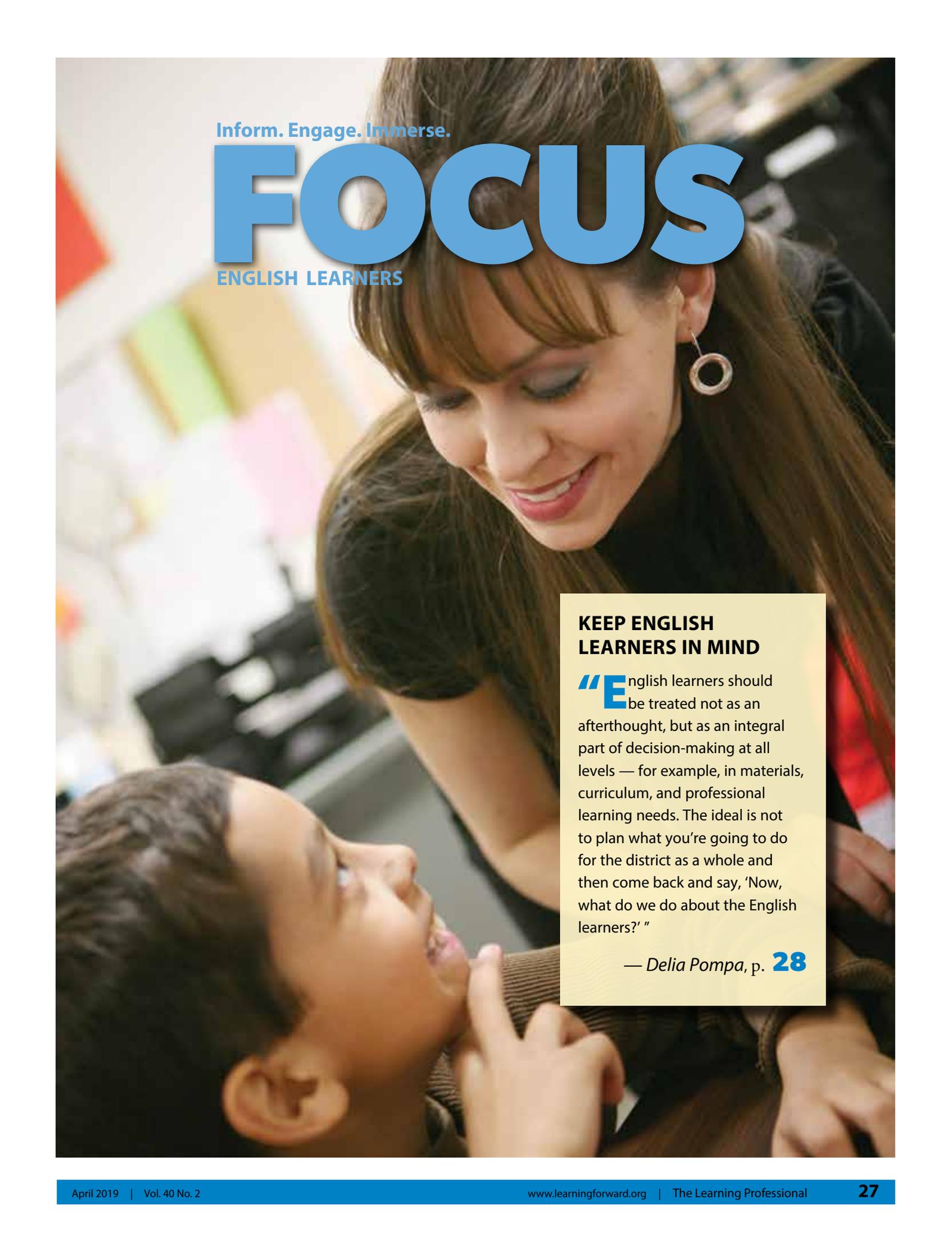
The digest provides a compilation of statistical information covering the broad field of education from prekindergarten through graduate school.

The publication contains data on a variety of topics, including the number of schools and

colleges, teachers, enrollments, and graduates, in addition to educational attainment, finances, and federal funds for education, libraries, and international comparisons.

<https://bit.ly/2NI9kgk>





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FOCUS

ENGLISH LEARNERS

KEEP ENGLISH LEARNERS IN MIND

“English learners should be treated not as an afterthought, but as an integral part of decision-making at all levels — for example, in materials, curriculum, and professional learning needs. The ideal is not to plan what you’re going to do for the district as a whole and then come back and say, ‘Now, what do we do about the English learners?’ ”

— *Delia Pompa*, p. **28**

DELIA POMPA'S distinguished career in education policy has focused on the needs of immigrant students and English learners. She is a senior fellow for education policy at the Migration Policy Institute and was previously senior vice president for programs at the National Council of La Raza (now UnidosUS) and director of education for the Children's Defense Fund.

Pompa has had a long-standing influence on education policy through positions as the director of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs in the U.S. Department of Education, executive director of the National Association for Bilingual Education, and assistant commissioner at the Texas Education Agency.

She began her education career as a bilingual teacher in Texas, later becoming executive director for bilingual and migrant education in the Houston Independent School District.



Delia Pompa

WE NEED TO DO MORE FOR ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS

Q&A with DELIA POMPA

BY SUZANNE BOUFFARD

Q: What do we know today about the needs of English learners that we have not historically addressed in teaching and learning?

A: A lot of what we know today we have known for a long time. It's been more a question of will and resources to do what needs to be done. We know that language and content skills are intertwined and that you support English learners' academic development by supporting their language development. Researchers have been

It's not enough for all staff to have knowledge about English learners and how they learn. Everyone also needs to know their individual role in supporting these students.

saying for a long time that you can't separate the two.

That means that content teachers need to understand how to develop language and language teachers need to know how to integrate and support the content. Districts have long recognized this. When I was a bilingual director in Houston in the 1980s, we started doing cross-training between content teachers and English learner teachers.

But these efforts have been implemented in spurts, and we have not approached this systemically. Part of the problem is that the structure of schooling encourages teachers to become specialists, especially at the secondary level. This has impeded implementation of the research and knowledge about best practice.

Some districts are doing an excellent job, but nationally, it's not consistent. It's really a question of scale. Districts that are [working effectively with English learners] tend to be districts with a large population of English learners. It's harder for districts that have a small number of English learners, or districts where those students are dispersed widely across schools.

Nationally, we are not doing well enough for English learner students, and we need to do more. That includes providing the time, coaching,

structure, and support for teachers and administrators.

Q: How do you build the infrastructure for that professional learning?

A: First of all, the mindset in the district overall is important. English learners should be treated not as an afterthought, but as an integral part of decision-making at all levels — for example, in materials, curriculum, and professional learning needs. The ideal is not to plan what you're going to do for the district as a whole and then come back and say, "Now, what do we do about the English learners?"

Considering their needs should be part of looking holistically at who your learners are and making all decisions, including but not limited to professional learning. For example, as districts are adopting a new curriculum, they should determine how the needs of English learners are addressed through the curriculum. That would include the suitability of curriculum materials for English learners and the professional development needed for teachers of English learners to implement the curriculum.

Next, it's important to think through staff members' specific

professional learning needs. There are unique needs English learners have that aren't met by just good teaching. They do need good teaching, but after a certain point, you have to look at what you do that builds the structure of their language.

It's not enough for all staff to have knowledge about English learners and how they learn. Everyone also needs to know their individual role in supporting these students. Teachers and other staff will have different professional learning needs based on their roles. Teachers will, of course, need support to implement appropriate instruction for English learners, but they may also need support to understand and respond to their unique socioemotional needs.

Counselors may also need information and particular skills to respond to student needs arising from migration-related trauma and family circumstances.

There is a level of professional learning necessary for administrators as well. If principals and assistant superintendents and others don't understand the language development processes that need to occur, it's hard for them to understand the budget needs, time constraints, and other conditions that enable or inhibit staff growth and student learning.

Of course, professional learning efforts should follow what we know about best practices, including the need for sufficient time and ongoing learning, opportunities for practice, and supportive, reflective experiences like coaching.

Q: For many districts, assessing English learners' content knowledge is a challenge, in part because of limited knowledge among teachers and administrators about best practices. How do you recommend they build their understanding and capacity for appropriate assessment methods?

A: A first step is for teachers to understand the unique role of assessment in determining English learners' language abilities in both the native language and English. English learners are a protected class under civil rights laws, and they have a right to be assessed to determine their language status and instructional needs.

Ideally, understanding this will lead to a desire on the part of teachers to learn how assessment can be used to strengthen instruction. The district's role is key to providing teachers an overall understanding of the role of assessment in the instructional process and the specific skills needed to link assessment outcomes to instruction.

Q: Effective professional learning requires resources, as we outline in the Standards for Professional Learning. What resources are available to help schools and districts build capacity for serving English learners?

A: Often states and districts look to the federal level instead of integrating this need into their own budgets. In addition to federal funds, we should be looking to leverage state funds and state policies around teacher pay scales, performance incentives, and other

efforts to improve teaching quality.

At the higher education level, there is also an overreliance on federal funds. Teacher and administrator training programs need to find additional sustainable ways to finance efforts to prepare educators to work with English learners. Advocating for schools of education to embed these skills, especially in geographic areas where there are lots of English learners in local schools, is an important step. We should also be looking to see if accreditation standards for these programs need to be improved.

Q: You mentioned advocacy. What other advocacy efforts could be beneficial?

A: I recommend that we all have English learners top of mind when advocating for professional learning as a whole, rather than thinking of them as a separate population or separate issue.

For example, when you are advocating for increased professional learning time, consider the needs of English learners, including the need for collaboration time among language and content teachers. As another example, when you advocate for teacher salaries, suggest extra funding for teachers who build their skills in working with English learners.

Loan forgiveness is another important benefit to advocate for overall but especially for the benefit of English learners. If we want teachers who are reflective of the populations they serve and therefore well-positioned to connect with them, we need to recognize the barriers to higher education and the teaching profession faced by English learners.

Q: How have recent political and racial tensions affected the needs of English learners or the teachers who work with them?

A: Before you even get to instruction, [the political environment] affects children's lives in ways that can impede learning. For example, in places where there is increased immigration enforcement, kids are feeling the burden of [hostile] rhetoric. Some of them are also experiencing trauma because of their own perilous journeys to this country and the difficult living circumstances they often encounter here [in the U.S.].

It's important to recognize that, in many cases, teachers are the people who are helping these kids the most. We have to give a lot of credit to teachers of English learners because they are attending to children's psychological needs, helping them access health care, ensuring they are getting enough to eat, and more.

Some of these teachers are the most dedicated teachers I've ever seen. That's a good thing that turns into a danger because teachers can't be everything. Sometimes they are the only ones outside the family who understand the kids and their needs, but it's a lot to take on in addition to instructional needs.

Q: Despite these challenges, what are some of the positive trends you are seeing in teaching and learning for English learners?

A: Despite the challenges for both teachers and students, there is growing recognition that English learners come with many strengths, including knowledge of a language other than English and a unique resiliency borne of the many challenges they have already met and conquered.

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Suzanne Bouffard (suzanne.bouffard@learningforward.org) is editor of *The Learning Professional*. ■

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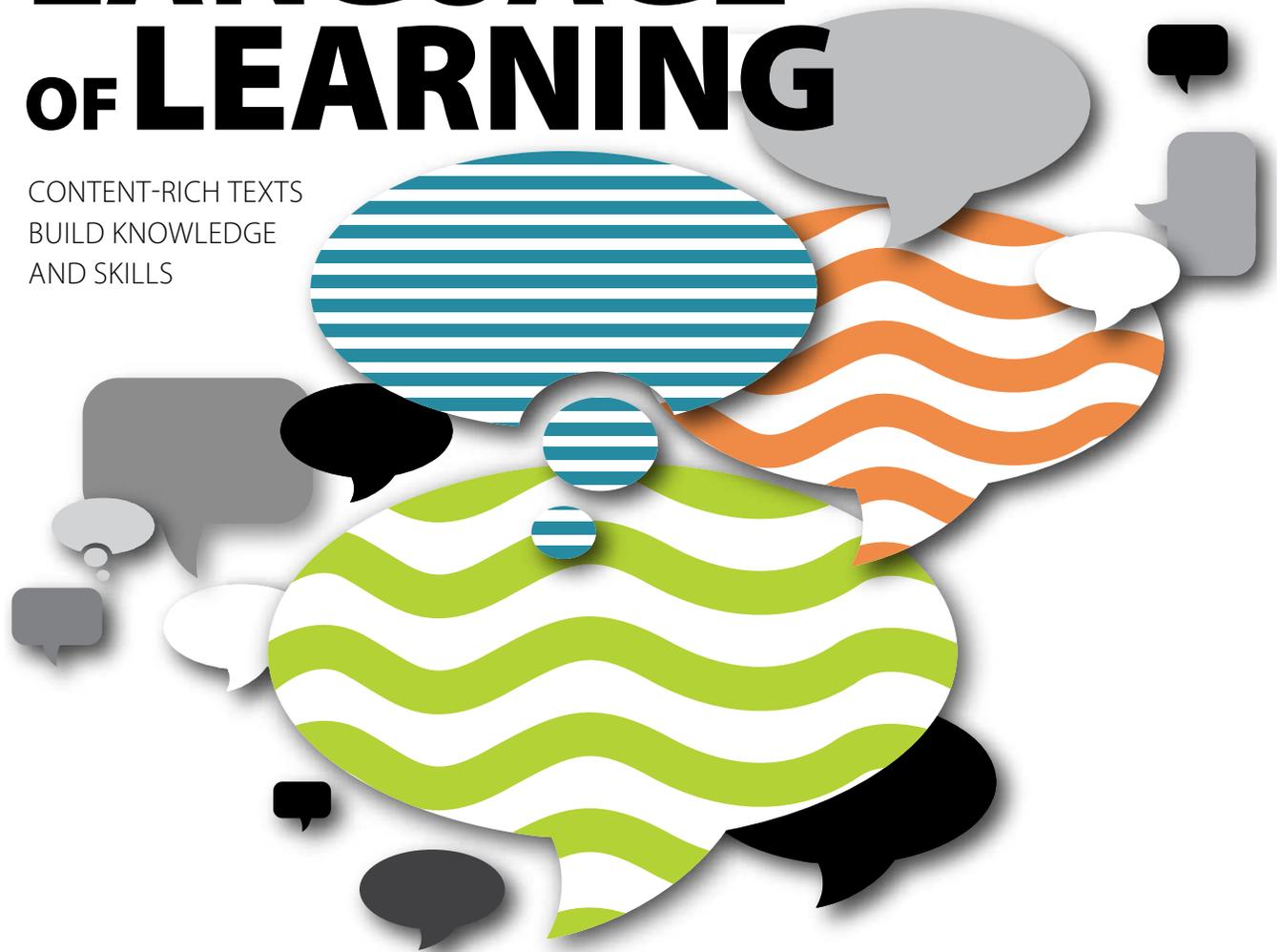
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LANGUAGE OF LEARNING

CONTENT-RICH TEXTS
BUILD KNOWLEDGE
AND SKILLS



BY MARYANN CUCCHIARA

Picture a classroom where two bright, inquisitive 8-year-old girls sit side by side. They both love soccer and math, and they both come from families who value education and have high expectations for their children's futures.

Katie, who was born just down the road and has attended the school since prekindergarten, is one of the strongest students in the class, and her teachers

often give her enrichment work and books to take home.

Maria Elena came to the school six months ago, after her family fled violence in El Salvador. She had no prior exposure to English and is working hard to learn how to speak with her teachers and classmates. But for the first time in her life, she feels disengaged and hopelessly behind her peers academically.

At first, Maria Elena looked

forward to math class, expecting to find it easier to follow numbers than spoken language. But while her classmates learned about multiplication, she was pulled out for English lessons, vocabulary lessons, and reading instruction using texts designed specifically for decoding skills.

During these lessons, she could hear Katie and other classmates in the next room cheering as they played math games on the white board while she

JUICY SENTENCES VERSUS SIMPLIFIED SENTENCES

Juicy sentences use complex, engaging academic language. Simplified sentences lack complexity and often include incomplete content. When they have a steady diet of lackluster, simplified sentences, students do not learn to navigate longer and more embedded sentences and ultimately fail to understand the rich content.

For example, compare these juicy sentences with the multiple simplified sentences it would take to express the same content.

THE REDWOODS

Juicy sentence:

- In the summer, when there is much less rainfall, redwoods have an ingenious way of collecting water: They make their own rain!

(From *Redwoods* by Jason Chin)



PRESIDENT LINCOLN

Juicy sentence:

- As President he might consult with others, but innumerable grave decisions were in the end his own, and with them came a burden of responsibility terrifying in its dimensions.

(From "Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth," in *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* by Richard Hofstadter.)



Simplified sentences:

1. There is less rain in the summer.
2. Redwoods need to collect water.
3. They adapt in a special way.
4. They make their own rain.



Simplified sentences:

1. Sometimes President Lincoln talked to others.
2. President Lincoln made serious decisions.
3. He made those decisions on his own.
4. Those decisions scared him.



read sentences like, "The brown cat sat by the mat."

Maria Elena frequently heard her mother talk about what a great education she was getting in the United States, but she was doubtful.

English learners like Maria Elena are capable of doing the same demanding work and developing the same complex skills as their peers who are native speakers. Indeed, recent education policies have specified that all students should meet common college- and career-ready standards.

Yet many schools use an outdated and ineffective approach to educating

English learners, one that focuses on functional vocabulary and basic skills rather than the complex thinking and communication and literacy skills young people need to thrive in today's world.

Too many students like Maria Elena have missed the chance to fulfill their potential because their teachers — many of them well-intentioned — don't have the knowledge and capacity to serve them effectively.

Seeking to change that trend, beginning in the early 2000s, my colleague Lily Wong Fillmore and I developed an approach to teaching English learners that came to be called

3Ls. 3Ls stands for *learning* as the core instructional focus, with *language* and *literacy* integrated in seamless and purposeful ways that support core academic content rather than replacing it. Learning is the instructional goal; language and literacy are the vehicles to achieve it.

3Ls is a set of processes and tools educators can use to engage English learners — and all students — in college- and career-ready learning. We developed this work in the New York City and Boston public schools, but it has grown to reach other districts and populations.

Recently, we partnered with the Council of the Great City Schools, a national coalition of urban public schools, to create a program of online professional learning courses in using 3Ls. It is designed for educators serving high-needs English learners, but it is applicable to all students, not just English learners and not just those in urban settings. Professional learning for teachers and those who oversee and support them is central to the 3Ls approach.

FOCUS ON ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

The groundwork for 3Ls was laid in 2007, when, as director of research and development for English learners for New York City Public Schools, I set out to raise expectations and improve achievement among English learners in more than 350 public schools in the city.

These schools needed extra support because they had large numbers of students who had quickly learned the basic English skills needed to negotiate everyday life but lacked the reading and writing skills needed to meet grade-level expectations in English language arts and math.

Many of these students, like Maria Elena, had remained in beginner and intermediate level English classes for years, where the instructional model often consisted of drab, dumbed-down texts that were decontextualized and focused on everyday vocabulary and where students were rarely exposed to grade-appropriate content.

At that time, there was more confusion than clarity about how best to address the educational needs of English learners. Many educators hadn't had much training on how to work with these students, and bilingual education wasn't available in many places. Thus, the strategy was to teach English first and content later. In lieu of strategies tailored to English learners, schools used content materials meant

INSTRUCTIONAL SHIFTS IN THE 3LS APPROACH

- From isolated language skills to contextualized instruction.
- From everyday topics to content themes and academic language.
- From pull-out to push-in and co-teaching.
- From simplified to amplified.

Professional learning for teachers and those who oversee and support them is central to the 3Ls approach.

for kindergarteners or 1st graders, no matter how old the English learner was.

But Fillmore's research on the instruction and experiences of these students raised a major red flag. She found that these students experienced stalled progress in language and literacy because of lack of exposure to complex and compelling text. Without a diet of rich and robust content input, English learners' output continued to lag far behind their classmates.

Fillmore's research laid out an alternative path in the form of "juicy texts" — texts that are authentic, rich, and engaging. These texts use academic language, which includes contextual, relevant background information that allows the reader to make sense of the text, even in an unfamiliar topic area.

These juicy texts offer clues about how this academic language works. Using these authentic and amplified texts, learners can advance in learning mature forms of academic language that go far beyond just vocabulary. (See sidebar on p. 35 for more information about specific instructional strategies that leverage the juicy texts.)

With this fortified input and

appropriate support, Fillmore proposed, we would see a different progression — flashes of insight in the output of English learners and all students who needed a more robust and content-based approach to language and literacy (Fillmore & Fillmore, 2013).

BUILD EDUCATOR CAPACITY

Fillmore and I began collaborating to operationalize her research into concrete instructional practices and lesson and unit designs for teachers. What resulted was a learning process not only for educators, but for us about how to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills they need.

We knew that a prescriptive curriculum would not achieve our goals for teachers' understanding or students' learning. Instead, we focused on supporting teachers' instructional vision so they could create lessons using texts, talk, and tasks to examine content, develop knowledge, and uncover learning, all while developing rich and complex academic language. Professional learning had to be at the heart of this approach.

In designing the professional learning, we began with three main instructional principles derived from research:

- **Text, talk, and tasks should be cognitively demanding.**
- **Instruction should provide access, attention, and active engagement.**
- **Students learn from quality texts that are complex, compelling, concise, and connected.**

It is not enough for a text to be complex. Students are more inclined to roll up their sleeves and tackle tough texts if the ideas in them are compelling. We looked for texts written by authors who are not only gifted writers, but also scholarly and passionate about their subjects. These texts create a sense of awe and wonder and invite inquiry and investigation.



6 essential elements of a 3Ls lesson

Teachers learn how to shape 3Ls lessons around a specific topic and an “essential question” — an overarching question about content, such as “Why should we save the rain forest?” that provokes deep thought and discussion (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013). The essential question then drives inquiry into specific topics, such as how animals adapt to environmental changes and how all forms of life influence one another. It is woven throughout these six essential elements of a 3Ls lesson:

1. **Framed motivation:** This step helps students connect with the theme or topic and offers a sneak peek of the upcoming text. It provides a valuable opportunity for introducing and augmenting academic language and literacy, which students will need for writing later in the lesson.
2. **Word play:** Word play is characterized by strategies and activities that are contextualized and interactive. Teachers learn and use word play activities specifically designed to develop and expand academic vocabulary central to the big ideas in the text under discussion. As part of these activities, teachers uncover academic words new to the students and compare and contrast them with the everyday counterparts to those words.
3. **Reading closely:** Teachers work collaboratively with students to zoom in on “juicy sentences” (those with rich content and academic language that students learn to unpack) from the core text that include academic language and relate to the essential question. Teachers’ explicit instruction helps students demystify how and why authors use words, phrases, grammar, figurative language, and other writing devices. A planning tool helps teachers carefully construct close reading activities around text, talk, and tasks.
4. **Juicy sentence work:** Academic vocabulary is often nested in long and complex sentences, so isolated vocabulary instruction by itself will not build students’ understanding. In this phase of the lesson, teachers go into more detail with the same juicy sentence from the previous step. They mine that sentence and help students deconstruct and understand it.
5. **Differentiated tasks:** This work period is a time for students to work as apprentices in becoming critical readers and writers who use the academic language they have been learning in the lesson. Students practice and demonstrate their emerging mastery, and teachers provide feedback and guidance.
6. **Closure and wrap-up:** Students share their learning and their newly developed academic language and literacy skills. Teachers return to the essential question and facilitate students’ sharing of their new understanding of both content and academic language.

Furthermore, all texts inside a unit of study should be connected to one another, so that those introduced later in the unit build on the ideas nested in the texts that came before. Concise yet complete excerpts are then chosen for close reading, during which teachers attend to the big ideas nested inside.

Rather than simply assigning rich texts, teachers need to use instructional moves that demystify academic language found in these complex texts. This attention to language involves rich and robust talk sessions between teacher

and students and among student pairs or groups. They then actively engage students in differentiated tasks to provide pathways to learning at all levels of language and literacy.

LEARNING FROM LAB SITES

As we began putting these principles into a professional learning structure for the New York City schools, we quickly realized we needed a way to test and refine the strategies we were developing. We created 3Ls lab sites where we could work intensively

and refine the strategies in a risk-free and nurturing atmosphere. At the lab sites, we videotaped kindergarten through high school classrooms and used those videos to observe practices we were developing, continue our research, and make changes as needed.

These lab sites gave us a snapshot of how 3Ls work can impact student achievement and teachers’ professional growth. The shift to compelling texts, talk, and tasks re-energized not only the student learners, but also the instructional staff as learners and

researchers themselves. As one principal said, “I could see the change in the way our English language learners were participating in class, hands raised and on the edge of their seats.”

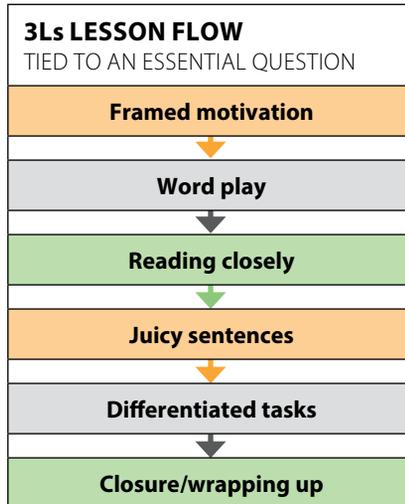
One of the main lessons for us from the lab sites was that professional learning for teachers needed to be scaffolded by support for leaders and systemic infrastructure. We saw that, for the 3Ls approach to take hold and thrive, it needed to be led in each school by informed and caring instructional leaders who supported teachers as they created lessons and units of study that were cognitively demanding and scaffolded to meet the needs of English learners and all learners who are striving in terms of academic language.

Furthermore, changing the paradigm from simplified to amplified texts, from a remedial approach to one that was grade-appropriate and accelerated, would require also educating and supporting superintendents, district staff, and school-based instructional leaders so that everyone would be working from a common understanding of best practices for English learners.

BROADEN THE REACH

The approach that grew out of the lab sites is a three-year, three-pronged approach focused on juicy texts. It includes seminars for district and instructional leaders, teacher training, and laboratories of practice in which to observe, create, replicate, and assess these instructional practices.

To build on success in New York City, Boston, and elsewhere and make the approach accessible to a wider range of educators, we worked with the Council of the Great City Schools to develop a series of five online courses. Educators can complete the courses at their own pace and within a timeframe that works for them and their job



One of the main lessons for us from the lab sites was that professional learning for teachers needed to be scaffolded by support for leaders and systemic infrastructure.

responsibilities.

These are not one-shot courses, but a sustained, multipart program of courses that build on one another to transform teaching practices with practical tools, examples, and practice.

To start, all participants complete a foundations course to build a common understanding of the theory of action and a common vocabulary. Then they choose to follow either an English language arts/English language development pathway or a mathematics pathway. The pathways consist of five courses that walk participants through the essential elements of the 3Ls approach, including the research behind the approach, what the instructional approach should look like, and how to implement it.

Each course includes voices from instructional leaders, teachers, and students. The courses provide in-depth examples of teachers planning,

implementing, and reflecting on the 3Ls approach. Coursework includes reading professional articles, reviewing sample lessons, and using implementation guides and templates for participant’s learning, applying, and reflecting stages.

POSITIVE CHANGES

As I look back and reflect on our work in New York City, Boston, and other large districts, I see many positive changes in schools. More districts are providing models of professional learning that begin with the firm belief that all students, including English learners, have the capacity for rich and robust instruction. Instructional leaders are making structural changes such as co-teaching to enable English learners to learn in classrooms with their native speaker peers.

Above all, English learners like Maria Elena are much less likely to be pulled out of mainstream classrooms for isolated skill instruction with simplified texts. Instead, they are more often sitting side by side with their native speaker classmates, joining in on compelling and complex social studies, science, math, and English language arts lessons and seizing opportunities to learn and grow in promising ways.

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

HOW TEACHERS CAN INCORPORATE STUDENTS' NATIVE LANGUAGE INTO THE CLASSROOM

BY ROSITA APODACA, TABETHA BERNSTEIN-DANIS, AND SARA DEMARTINO

In our professional development work with teachers of English learner students, we have identified eight practices that support English learners' access to complex tasks and text (Apodaca, 2007). Two of these strategies — talk and native language use — are

particularly beneficial for their intellectual, cultural, and economic advantages. With professional learning supports, teachers can become knowledgeable about the benefits of these strategies for students and empowered to use them, even if they are monolingual speakers.

Research shows that English learners are too often denied access to complex tasks that address grade-level standards (Walqui et al., 2010). Teachers have told us they believe lack of English proficiency makes complex work impossible or that they fear frustrating students into withdrawal.

But in our work at the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning, we have seen that it is possible to change this deficit thinking. When teachers see other educators incorporating scaffolds for talk and native language use, they begin to recognize that English learners can engage in high-level tasks successfully even after struggling (Moser et al., 2011). Video and classroom transcripts are excellent tools to engage teachers in this learning and are especially powerful when content-area teachers and English learner teachers view them collaboratively.

BILINGUAL SUPPORT

Teachers sometimes have a misconception that using the native language with English learners is a “crutch” that impedes learning. In fact, meta-analyses show that native language use supports the development of English skills while promoting understanding of new concepts (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, & Christian, 2006; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005). English learners who have access to native language instruction often outpace academically those who do not (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, & Christian, 2006). Native language use allows students to struggle with complex and cognitively demanding text productively and demonstrate their learning. It also reinforces English learners' pride in their cultural identities and empowers them to learn alongside their peers.

Some teachers argue that they can't use this approach because they don't speak their English learners' native

languages. But we have identified several supports that make it possible.

The following four examples demonstrate specific strategies monolingual teachers can use and the professional learning supports needed to enact them. We highlight teacher-student interactions we have witnessed that embody the strategies. The transcript excerpts included are taken from videos that capture real situations from our professional learning work with teachers. Teacher-student interactions have been transcribed verbatim.

1. Co-teaching with a bilingual teacher

One effective strategy is for monolingual teachers to partner with other teachers or staff who speak students' native languages. In the example below, a monolingual literacy coach taught a lesson with a bilingual classroom teacher assisting her. The bilingual teacher translated questions the coach posed to students so those who struggled to understand English could understand and respond.

In this example, English learner students demonstrated that they understood the text the class had read not only literally but also inferentially. They shared valuable insights that may well have been missed if the students had only been given the opportunity to hear questions in English — and they did so in English.

EXAMPLE 1: Co-teaching with a bilingual teacher

Coach: Now that you know what is going on in some parts of the world, what do you think about your own life now? How can you relate that information to ...

Teacher: Can I say that in Spanish? Sabiendo esta información, ¿Cómo nosotros podemos tomar esta

Native language use allows students to struggle with complex and cognitively demanding text productively and demonstrate their learning.

información y relacionarla con nuestra propia vida? How can we connect that?

Student 1: Those kids are having a different life, not like ours. They are, like, working and we are not. We're learning in school and they're, they have to work for money.

Student 2: They're working because they don't do the ... their parents, for the people that they work, they don't pay them that much money, and they have to get food on the table. That's why they have to work. They don't have no choice.

Coach: So this is interesting. I hear, well, it is not fair, they should be learning, but not ... Anna is saying, but they have no choice. Their parents need food on the table.

Student 3: I want to add something to Anna ...

Teacher: Go ahead, Beltron. He is giving you time to talk, thank you, Carlos.

Coach: Remember we are talking about how this relates to your own life.

Teacher: Right. Nuestra vida. ¿Cómo lo que nosotros leimos ahora mismo lo podemos relacionar con nuestra vida. What do you think?

Student 3: They are working because they want to learn and they are paying for the school. And we don't pay for school.

2. Peer support in the native language

In another example during the same lesson, it was a peer rather than an adult who provided the translation. One student (Roger) was unable to

respond in English, so he added to the conversation in Spanish. Another student (Valerie) was asked to interpret for him. See the example below.

Roger was alluding to boycotting companies that use child labor in an effort to get these companies to cease the practice. Other students then built on his idea, suggesting boycotts of products that have high status among the students, such as Nike shoes. The teacher then chimed in to highlight that these ideas were connected to a previously-read text.

In other words, the student who answered in Spanish not only sparked discussion of a more advanced topic but also connected the current text to a previous text. He tackled challenging texts, engaged in productive discussion of them, and furthered everyone's learning.

EXAMPLE 2: Peer support in the native language

Teacher: So they still going to keep working but they need better conditions.

Student 1: Yeah, like they, they, if they get hurt, they gotta like, like, like take care of them. Like pay them more. Oh, if they don't want their child to work, they should pay more so that, their parents ...

Teacher: Roger wants to say something. There you go, Roger.

Student 2: Y si ellos pueden comprar la banana. La compañía no va hacer rica.

Teacher: All right. OK, can someone just say what Roger said, Valerie?

Student 1: He said that if we start buying up the rest of the companies, with Mexican money, so they are going to stop child labor.

Student 3: But they don't only have to stop buying bananas from Ecuador. They have to stop, like, using the shoes that, the Nikes, they have to stop using ...

Teacher: OK, these are things that we learned in other QTA articles.

3. Previewing with an article in the native language

The next example is from a lesson taught by a guest teacher (one of this article's authors) to 8th-grade beginner English learners. These students were not only in the beginning stages of English language acquisition but also had little background knowledge on the topic of the lesson — desegregation during the civil rights era in the southern United States.

To boost background knowledge before the lesson and make the lesson more accessible, the teacher gave the students two Spanish language paragraphs about Ruby Bridges, the first black child to integrate a school in New Orleans, Louisiana. After reading the paragraphs in Spanish, they then discussed in English the famous Norman Rockwell painting of Ruby Bridges on her first day at the school.

During this discussion, in which the teacher motivated students to ask probing questions and unpack challenging ideas, a student asked about the angry mob protesting the integration of the elementary school. See the example at right.

In this exchange, a student asked a series of questions to unpack why the angry protesters weren't arrested. When the teacher encouraged the student to consider reasons why the protesters were allowed to continue, this led to a discussion about the concept of protesting and how concepts such as freedom of speech and freedom of assembly may unfold in the United States.

The previous paragraphs in Spanish had primed the students to think about concepts of racism, desegregation, and how people in the United States protest legally. Such a discussion would often be considered out of reach for beginning English learners, but with the appropriate scaffolding in the native language, even beginning

English learners are frequently able to respond and also facilitate discussion of higher-level concepts and ideas (Fung, Winkinson, & Moore, 2003).

EXAMPLE 3: Previewing with an article in the native language

Teacher: So they were struggling or grappling with this idea of black and white children going to school together. So over here at this table, the young man in green, you wanted to add to this?

Student: No, it's OK.

Teacher: OK, yes?

Student: Why did the government say that the black need to be with the white people in the school? Why did the people want to kill the little girl? Why don't they put the people who do it in jail?

Teacher: So that is a good question. So if there's this angry mob that's threatening this little girl, why weren't those people being put in jail? That's a very good question. Would somebody like to respond to that, what you're thinking? There's this angry mob of people. Yes?

Student: Because the angry mob was ...

Teacher: Protesting?

Student: Protesting, like, so they can't do that, 'cause a bunch of people, and so they're not gonna know who is gonna, who is in the angry mob.

Teacher: Hmm. So maybe if they're protesting but they haven't done anything violent yet, then they can't arrest them? Yeah?

Student: Because they're protesting, 'cause they don't want them to be together, and that — if they're not doing nothing. They're just accusing her, because they just want, they just don't want her to be together with the other kids, the white kids, because they think she's different. She's different from the others.

Teacher: So they're protesting.

They're not actually doing anything physically to hurt Ruby. There's that threat, she has bodyguards, but they haven't actually done anything to hurt her, so maybe that's a reason why they couldn't arrest them.

Student: They want her to get out of the school.

Teacher: They want her to not be in that school. Right. So let's continue reading. Let's go on to the next paragraph.

4. Turn-and-talks in a multilingual classroom

Turn-and-talk among small groups of students who share the same native language can lead to more engagement among students during whole-class discussion of a text. In the example below, high school students with beginning to intermediate English skills from multiple native language groups examined a complex literary text that focused on the experiences of adolescents not unlike themselves. "Cross talk" represents points at which students discussed the teacher's questions within their small groups of same-language peers.

In conversation with us before the lesson, the teacher had said her students were often silent during the English language discussion if they were not given an opportunity to prepare what they would say by testing out their ideas in a small group of same-language peers. But as the example shows, the cross-talk strategy can change that, even when the teacher is not familiar with students' native languages.

EXAMPLE 4: Turn-and-talks in a multilingual classroom

Teacher: Stop right there. What does that mean, "the silent one"?

Student 1: Like he's really quiet.

Student 2: Quiet.

Student 3: Quiet.

When teachers have the time and guidance to prepare lessons that incorporate the native language as an asset rather than a liability, they can create opportunities for English learners to demonstrate their true capability.

Student 1: He just likes to be really quiet, doesn't ever want to answer.

Teacher: OK. Why would Alejandro be the silent one?

Cross talk

Student 1: Maybe he's, like, afraid —

Student 4: Doesn't know the language.

Student 1: Like, afraid to, like, talk.

Teacher: Maybe afraid to talk. What else?

Cross talk

Student 5: Maybe he didn't know English.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

We recognize that how native language is used in the classroom depends on the context and available resources. Professional learning is an essential resource to make these strategies feasible, especially professional learning that allows content-area teachers and English learner specialists to collaborate.

When teachers have the time and guidance to prepare lessons that incorporate the native language as an asset rather than a liability, they can create opportunities for English learners to demonstrate their true capability. We suggest beginning with one or more of the following ways to give access and build teachers' capacity for working with English learners.

- **Text selection**
Rigorous text discussions require challenging texts worthy of conversation. Teachers should have the opportunity to engage collaboratively in identifying and analyzing potential texts for their complexities, considering discussion topics and key vocabulary to teach directly, and determining places in the text where English learners may need additional support. This process equips teachers to plan how and when to use the strategies highlighted in our examples.

- **Developing initial and follow-up questions**

After analyzing a text carefully, teachers in professional learning communities benefit from taking time to prepare questions that will allow English learners to enter into a challenging text in English. Open-ended, text-based questions that encourage students to talk about ideas, characters, and events in a text are a good starting point for conversation.

It is equally important to consider how follow-up questions can push students to provide evidence for their responses, expand on their ideas, or work through possible confusion.

- **Classroom structure and peer-assisted learning**

Teachers in professional learning communities should prepare for the kinds of interactions, including those among peers, that support the strategies described here. It is important to consider one's specific classroom or school, including the different native language groups, levels of English language acquisition, and personality types represented.

Some students and groups may respond better to certain strategies than others. For example, students who tend to be quiet may feel more willing to share their ideas with a partner.

Students who are further along in their English acquisition can help beginning English learners who share their native language.

Dedicated time and collaboration can help teachers consider these factors and meet students' needs. Effective instructional strategies that incorporate talk and native language use require intentional planning, but they are possible for all teachers and they can enable the success of all students.

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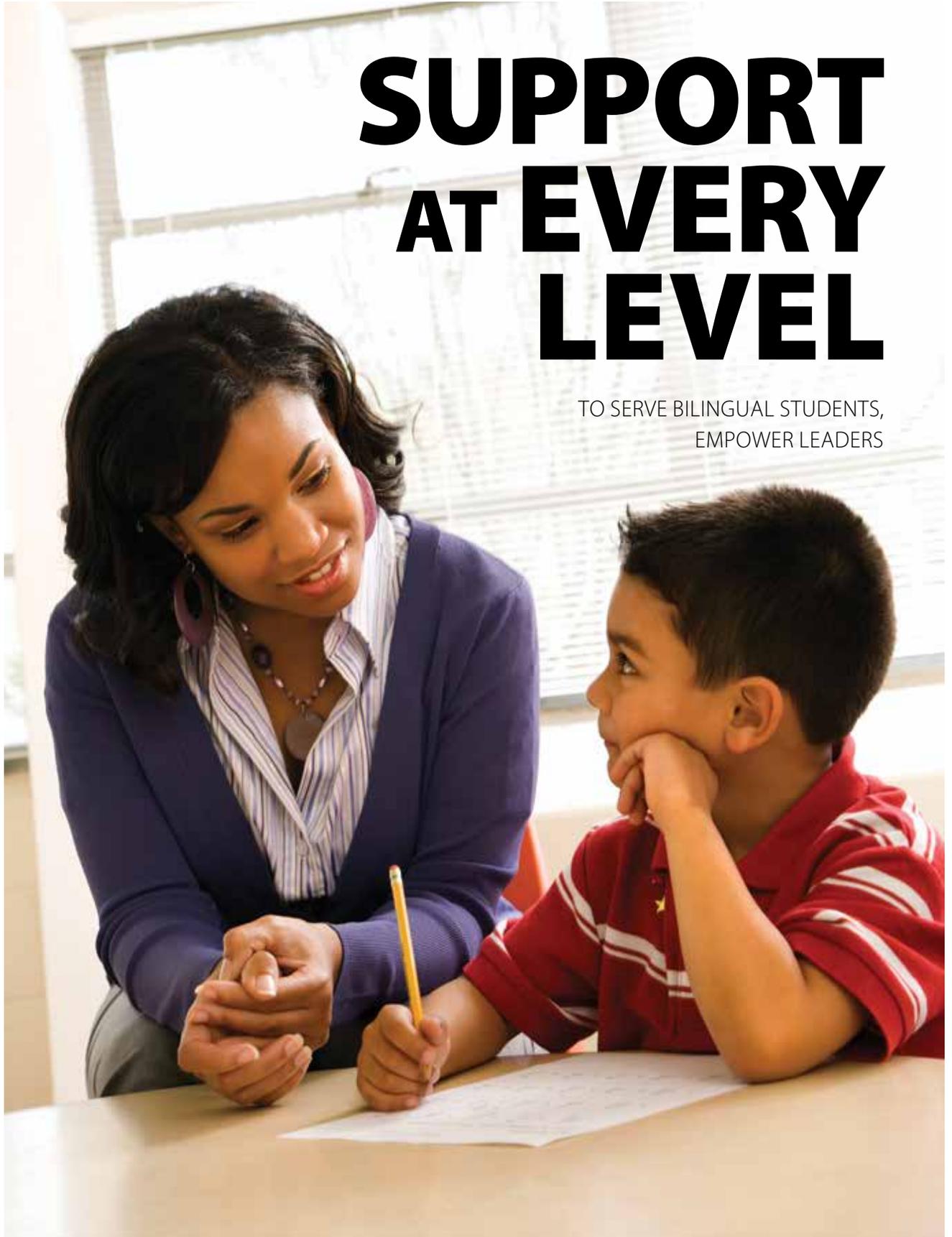
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SUPPORT AT EVERY LEVEL

TO SERVE BILINGUAL STUDENTS,
EMPOWER LEADERS



BY HILDA MALDONADO, IMELDA L. NAVA, AND MARCO A. NAVA

More than half of the world's population is bilingual (Grosjean, 2010). In many countries, bilingualism is embedded within culture and identity (Callahan & Gandara, 2014) and is valued because it facilitates communication among diverse people, presents increased market-based opportunities, and improves the brain's executive functioning capacities (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012).

In the U.S., however, minority multilingual K-12 students' linguistic, social, cultural, and academic assets are often not valued in many communities and institutions, including traditional school settings. Yet for immigrants and those learning English, denying or devaluing the native tongue can have negative impacts on academic outcomes, health, and behavior (Wilson, Ek, & Douglas, 2014).

An acculturation process that focuses exclusively on English as the means to access mainstream society, to the exclusion of valuing the native tongue, can distance K-12 students from their families and culture (Wilson,

How might schools and districts leverage multiple languages as assets rather than deficits? What is the role of leadership, and how is it sustained when ensuring that multiple languages are supported as assets?

Ek, & Douglas, 2014) and is related to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Arbona et al., 2010; Oppedal & Idsoe, 2012).

These research findings have important implications for how schools serve emergent bilingual students. We use the term "emergent bilinguals" because it acknowledges the language that students already know and is more asset-focused than other terms (Garcia, 2009).

For emergent bilingual students to thrive, schools need a culture of valuing bilingualism, supported by strong and committed leaders. As the Leadership standard of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning states, "Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness

and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning" (Learning Forward, 2011).

From 2015 to 2017, we convened a professional learning community of 14 emergent bilingual leaders from around the U.S. We defined emergent bilingual leaders as leaders at all levels who support multilanguage development, including district and university leaders. Our goals were to facilitate an opportunity for peer support and collect qualitative data on the successes and challenges in creating school communities that value emergent bilinguals.

Previous research has suggested that professional learning communities can provide the space to have deep, sustained conversations about teaching and learning in light of language development for emergent bilinguals (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010).

The qualitative study addressed these questions: How might schools and districts leverage multiple languages as assets rather than deficits? What is the role of leadership, and how is it

sustained when ensuring that multiple languages are supported as assets?

COMMON THEMES EMERGE

The leaders were part of a network originally convened by the Council of Great City Schools, a coalition of urban public school systems, through its annual conferences. They formed part of a network specifically dedicated to convening and sharing supports, strategies, and information on programs to support bilingual, immigrant, and refugee students in large urban school districts.

Included in the group were nine public school representatives (executive directors, district specialists, administrators, teachers leaders), three university professors, and two district/county office leaders. The emergent bilingual leaders met four times between 2015 and 2017 and, due to the large geographic distance, collaborated via conference calls and email.

Data for this study include coded data from charts generated from topics discussed at a summer convening, a survey protocol, and individual interviews of the emergent bilingual leaders who attended the summer convening.

Emergent bilingual leaders volunteered for the interviews through an electronic survey. If they wished to be interviewed, they were called within a two-week span in December 2017. The data shared here is from the online survey process and individual interviews. Four individual interviews helped clarify emergent bilingual leaders' challenges and successes as well as what sustains them in this challenging yet critically important work.

Throughout the convening, participants' unwavering commitment to the emergent bilingual students, families, and communities they served was clear. Their conviction is driven from a strong sense of moral purpose shaped through

Schools and districts need to value home languages, have asset-based systems that build capacity together, consider student heritage and background, and appreciate the community.

their experiences as emergent bilingual students themselves or through their work on behalf of emergent bilingual students and their families.

Three specific themes emerged that are valuable for other school leaders who serve emergent bilingual students:

1. Lack of acknowledgement and access;
2. The need for leadership, allies, and mentoring; and
3. The need for social and emotional supports for emergent bilingual students.

Lack of acknowledgement and access

Students enter school with a great deal of cultural capital and multiple language assets. Schools and districts need to value home languages, have asset-based systems that build capacity together, consider student heritage and background, and appreciate the community.

One emergent bilingual leader said, "My own experience as an English learner person allows me to understand the struggles and hopes of English learner students. I know they come to our school system with many assets and that these assets can be used as levers to support them in learning English. Having this understanding allows me to make decisions about our English learner programs and supports that must be provided to our students."

Yet the emergent bilingual leaders noted that, in the settings where they work, students' primary language, culture, and family experience are

often not valued as assets. Rather, these qualities are viewed as deficits, and students are often treated as if they had special needs, limiting their academic success.

Furthermore, as emergent bilingual leaders, study participants indicated that district leaders devalued their work. They experienced a sense of isolation and, in some cases, experienced retribution in the form of job demotions or reassignments. The retribution was often due to advocating for emergent bilingual policy and supports.

Another emergent bilingual leader said, "We spent time sharing our leadership stories, and, during that experience, I realized that as professionals working to improve the learning conditions for English learners and representing that cause, we are experiencing similar rejection, marginalization, and labeling. We are not alone, and we have to unite to change the narrative about English learners and how the work for them is viewed by the mainstream. We also have to help and protect each other so that we are not silenced in our quest to be the voices for this population."

These revelations often were followed by appreciation for a space where they could candidly share their struggles and support each other — which also highlights the need for education leaders to support emergent bilingual learners at various levels.

Leadership, allies, and mentoring

The group cited the critical role that leaders perform in establishing positive school environments for emergent bilinguals and all students. The many roles that they serve include:

- Facilitating high-quality professional learning;
- Supporting teachers on emergent bilingual instruction;
- Engaging families in an

- authentic manner; and
- Influencing policy at the district, state, and national levels.

To do this work effectively, participants need to find allies and form alliances. They noted the importance of the professional learning community's shared space for dialogue and support and expressed a desire to continue meeting as a group.

As one participant said, "We must create allies in the work and not be afraid to bring up the reality of the issues that impact English learners in policy, investments, programs, and equity. Shifting the narrative from a challenge to an assets-based conversation around English learners is the way we need to shape the work moving forward."

Another participant said, "I realized that institutions could do more if we — the leaders of this work — advocate stronger and used our power to point out the inequities. Having allies across the country who are doing the same thing gave me courage and pride in pushing harder."

Brooks, Adams, and Morita-Mullaney (2010) suggest that professional learning communities can provide the space to have deep, sustained conversations about teaching and learning in light of language development for emergent bilinguals. The findings from our study support this recommendation.

In fact, study participants offered to cover their own travel costs if it meant continuing collaboration, supporting each other's work, sharing best practices, and taking up collective action to achieve equitable outcomes for emergent bilinguals.

Two participants experienced in working with emergent bilinguals viewed their participation in the group as mentors for the younger leaders in the group. This further solidifies the importance of continuing this

District leaders can shape districtwide vision for emergent bilingual instruction, but individual schools must have some autonomy and assume responsibility to ensure a higher sense of ownership.

dialogue and collaboration as people with historical and diverse institutional perspective share their learning with others.

Need for social and emotional support

Emergent bilingual leaders have observed the trauma that emergent bilingual students suffer on a regular basis. The need for the intentional incorporation of social and emotional learning strategies to support emergent bilinguals was a recurring theme.

"There are many English learners in our school at present who are experiencing hardships like those I heard about from my dear friends and made me realize how critical it is to support students emotionally and socially in school," one participant said. "The experiences of students can greatly affect their schooling, and thus I am thinking of the importance of emphasizing multilayered support for students."

There is an even greater need for social and emotional support strategies now. We have identified refugee and newcomer students who have been held in detention centers for long periods, students who are here without parents, and students who have experienced or seen violence firsthand.

These students can exhibit behaviors in the classroom that appear to be disconnected, uninterested, or at times unaware of adult authority. Leaders in these situations need to recognize the students' behaviors as outcomes of lived experiences and not as disrespectful,

defiant, or demonstrating a lack of interest in school. So before we can build on their language and cultural assets, we must first address their social emotional state.

The intersection of trauma and leadership needs to be explored further to understand how these aspects might inform the culturally and emotionally responsive conditions needed to support emerging bilinguals.

Building multilevel leadership

The findings from these qualitative interviews suggest that there is a need for leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision and spur action toward the support of emergent bilinguals in schools.

District leaders can shape districtwide vision for emergent bilingual instruction, but individual schools must have some autonomy and assume responsibility to ensure a higher sense of ownership. Existing research on school leadership underscores this need.

For example, the successes of implementing or maintaining bilingual programs in the face of opposition show a shift from hierarchical leadership structures to collaborative ones (Ascenzi-Moreno, Hesson, & Menken, 2016). While hierarchical structures might be endemic to institutional structures, how leaders engage in accessing voice and recognizing expertise from diverse stakeholders can reflect a collaborative approach.

In supporting emergent bilinguals, Elfers and Stritikus (2014) identified five areas of intersection between district and school leaders:

- Instruction without fragmentation;
- A blend of district and school-led leadership initiatives;
- Communicating purpose;
- Differentiating support between elementary and secondary settings; and

- Using data to improve instruction.

Investigating four districts and 12 schools, they found that support from the district came in the form of vision, districtwide professional learning, and flexibility to attend to the varying needs of different schools and communities as it pertained to supporting emergent bilinguals. The flexibility in support was best leveraged when school leaders were informed about bilingualism (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). This was a first step in shifting how schools and districts support emergent bilinguals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Professional learning recommendations include:

- Identify the purpose of the learning and the knowledge and skills leaders who serve these student populations need;
- Provide spaces and places for emergent bilingual leaders to collaborate with those leading initiatives to ensure the inclusion of emergent bilingual student needs;
- Include emergent bilingual leaders in senior leadership roles;
- Garner support from all district leaders to build capacity on ways to advocate for students' assets instead of deficits; and
- Ensure all leaders have fundamental knowledge about the role of language and culture in teaching and learning.

BILINGUALISM AS AN ASSET

As demographic shifts continue in the U.S., the need for multilingual informed supportive leaders grows. Education leaders must be emergent bilingual leaders if this work is to move forward in meaningful, scalable, and transformative ways. Leaders at all levels need support to do this work.

Leaders must be willing to understand bilingualism and see it as an asset, engage in research-based strategies, engage families, and use collaborative strategies to better understand how to leverage and learn from the assets of emergent bilinguals.

In our study, collective conversations among emergent bilingual leaders led to personal affirmation and dialogue about strategies and approaches to better work with emergent bilinguals. Finding opportunities to share practices and strategies to navigate the challenges that emerge in various contexts is a place to start.

Leaders must be willing to understand bilingualism and see it as an asset, engage in research-based strategies, engage families, and use collaborative strategies to better understand how to leverage and learn from the assets of emergent bilinguals.

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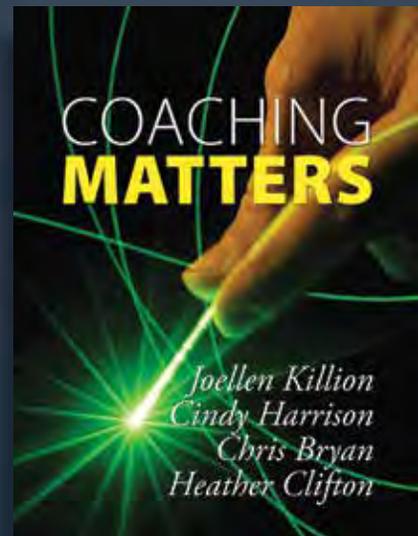
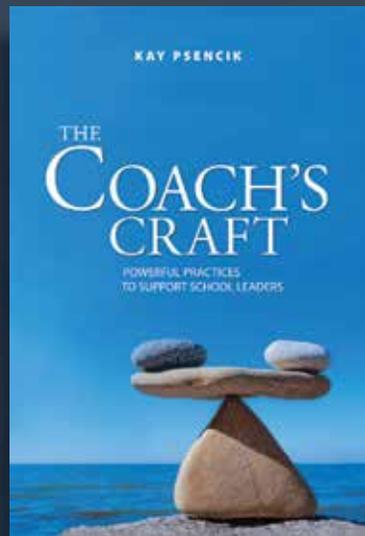
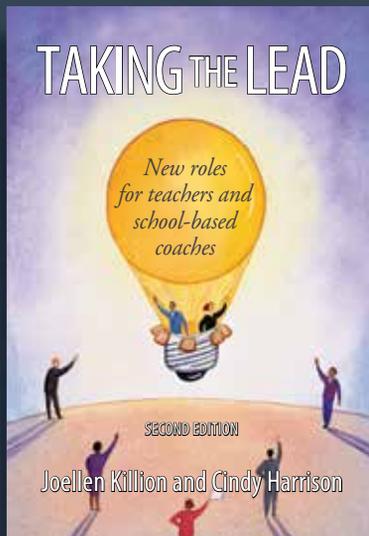
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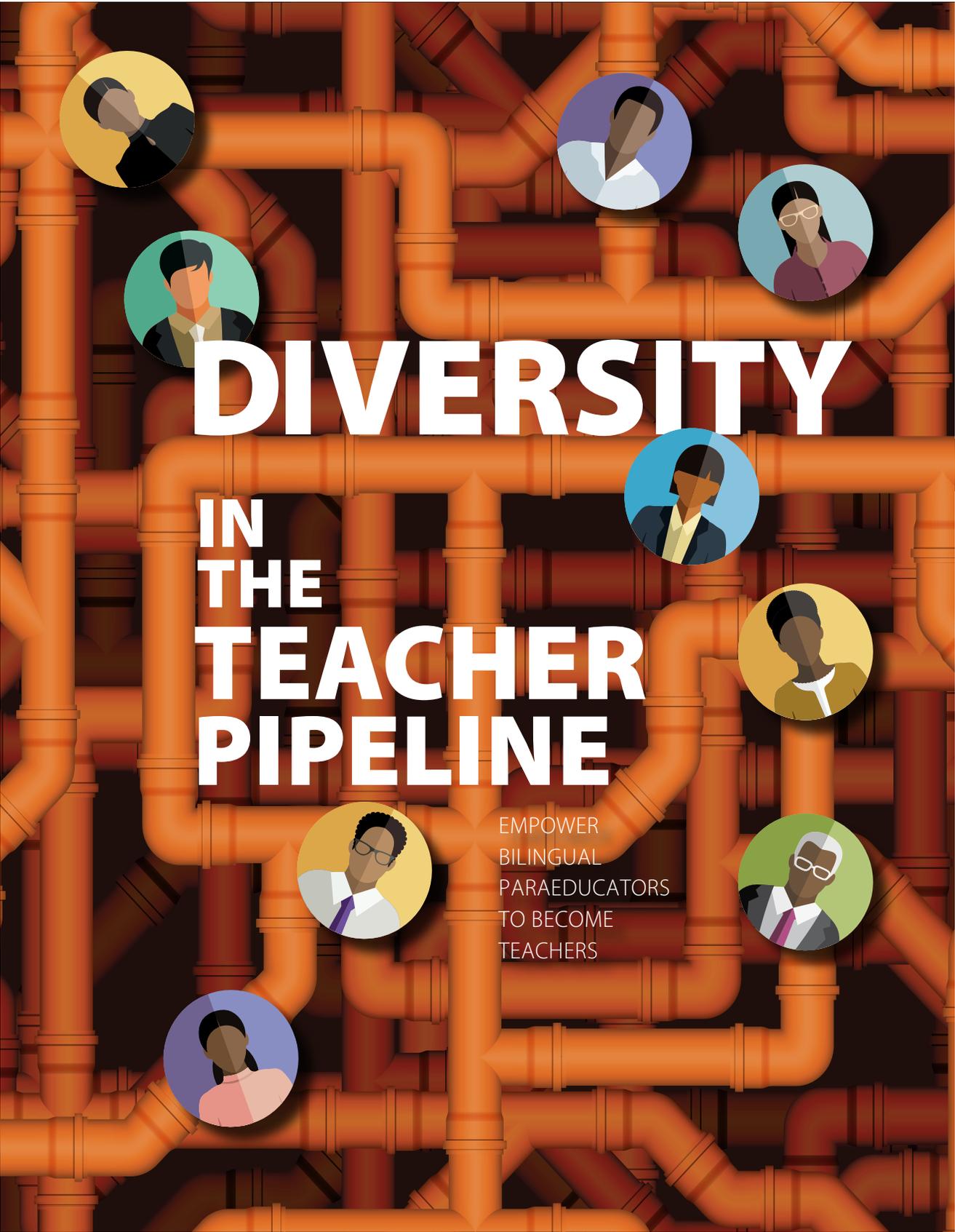
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DIVERSITY IN THE TEACHER PIPELINE

EMPOWER
BILINGUAL
PARAEDUCATORS
TO BECOME
TEACHERS

BY TONI RADER AND SHAWN PENNELL

Given that over 5 million K-12 students in the U.S. public school system are classified as English learners (NCES, 2017), many policymakers and school leaders recognize that public schools need ethnically and linguistically diverse educators. But about 80% of teaching staff are white (Williams, Garcia, Connally, Cook, & Dancy, 2016), and only 13% speak another language in addition to English.

To bridge this gap, some school districts have turned to bilingual paraeducators (sometimes called paraprofessionals or teacher aides) to support students' learning — and to cultivate the next wave of licensed teachers.

In 2012, the Northern Nevada English Learning Initiative, a consortium of education entities in and around Washoe County, Nevada, received a grant from the federal Office of English Language Acquisition to develop and implement professional

learning for paraeducators to work effectively with English learners.

Through this initiative, local school district staff and university faculty collaborated to develop a program to boost paraeducators' teaching skills. Specifically, paraeducators participating in the initiative learned about second language acquisition, inquiry-based science, and other district programs and priorities, including the Common Core State Standards, specific assessment tools, Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, and social and emotional learning.

Participating paraeducators have learned to better support students, and some have also built on their experience to become certified teachers, suggesting that supporting paraeducators can have benefits for students, adults, and school systems.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

As defined by the U.S. Department of Education, a paraeducator is someone other than a credentialed

teacher who provides instructional support for students (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Sometimes called “education support professionals,” paraeducators are generally unlicensed. As hourly wage earners, paraeducators often work more than one job to make ends meet and support their families both during the school year and seasonal school breaks.

A report from New America finds that one-fifth of paraeducators speak a language other than English at home. That is strikingly similar to the number of students who do (Williams et al., 2016). Since paraeducators tend to mirror student demographics, they are well-positioned to help bridge cultural and linguistic gaps between staff members, students, and families. Importantly, they can use their knowledge of students' home languages to help English learners access the curriculum.

Paraeducators are not only poised to meet the needs of diverse students, but also meet the needs of schools as

well. Paraeducators are a relatively stable part of the workforce. While 17% of teachers do not return after the first year of teaching, citing issues of low wages and lack of mentorship (Gray, Taie, & O’Rear, 2015), the attrition rate for teachers recruited from paraeducator career lattice programs is only 8% (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016).

These trends make paraeducators valuable resources to be tapped, and, in our experience, paraeducators are often interested in opportunities to learn and grow as teachers. As one paraeducator in Washoe County School District in Nevada said: “There are more [paraeducators] every year coming [to work in the schools]. They just need to receive an introduction about [the] education [system].

“I was educated in Mexico and worked as a teacher there,” she explained. “But when I came here, I didn’t know anything about the schools or education. [Professional learning] is a good tool to help us to be better professionals [and] an excellent opportunity to motivate us to keep moving forward in our careers.”

SKILLS FOR PARAEducATORS

Typically, paraeducators are offered little in the way of specialized, on-the-job professional learning. Although many hold bachelor’s and even master’s degrees, they may lack the knowledge and skills specific to working with students, including English learners.

Speaking the same home language as a student or having worked with students in that home language does not automatically translate into teaching skills that scaffold students’ integrated content and language learning.

Because all academic content areas require well-developed language skills, English learners, particularly those who are younger or newer to the country,

benefit from having instructors who are trained in topics specific to language learning (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marcelletti, 2013). As they work with students acquiring a second language, all educators should know, at minimum, the stages of second language acquisition and the challenges that individuals experience as they acquire language.

Many general education teachers have not had the opportunity to develop this knowledge, making professional learning essential. The need for that support is particularly great among paraeducators, given their limited past professional learning.

Professional learning content for paraeducators should include:

- Knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the job;
- Behavioral and instructional strategies (Keller, Bucholz, & Brady, 2007);
- Skills and experience in helping students become independent learners and guiding students through their struggles to construct knowledge (Ginagrecio, 2003); and
- Appropriate theories and philosophies for working with specialized populations (e.g. special education and gifted students) (Deardorff, Glasenapp, Schalock & Udell, 2007).

THE NORTHERN NEVADA ENGLISH LEARNING INITIATIVE

The Northern Nevada English Learning Initiative, a partnership between the University of Nevada, Reno and the Washoe County School District, included 57 paraeducators in prekindergarten through 12th grade. Of those 57, 47% (27 people) were Spanish-English bilingual. They were recruited through pamphlets, email announcements, and word-of-mouth.

Based on research indicating that

professional learning offered over time creates sustained changes in classroom practices (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017; Learning Forward, 2011), the course was created as a nine-month, nine-module course intended to impact paraeducator practice and ultimately serve as a career lattice bringing more bilingual paraeducators into full-time teaching positions.

Throughout the course, participants engaged in group structures, such as jigsaws and multimodal group presentations, and used various media types, including audiovisual and text.

The first module focused on second language acquisition theory. Paraeducators explored theories such as the silent period, the affective filter, and progression through the stages of language acquisition.

According to Stephen Krashen (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), second language acquisition includes time in which the learner is unable or unwilling to communicate orally in the second language. The silent period, or preproduction stage, is the first of the five stages of language acquisition.

Once the learner is ready to produce oral language, she enters the second stage, early production, and becomes proficient in producing one- or two-word phrases. In the next stage, speech emergence, the learner can communicate with simple sentences and ask simple questions.

During the intermediate fluency stage, learners use more complex sentences and ask questions to clarify what they are learning in the core academic areas. Learners at the advanced fluency stage are at or near the same level as a native speaker.

As a student progresses in learning a new language, he may experience stress or anxiety that inhibits his ability to acquire the target language. Educators use the term high affective filter to describe this phenomenon. They may



Lonna Neil, left, comprehensive life skills program teacher aide, and Wendy Allison, elementary school library assistant, do a word sort to categorize Tier I, II, and III science vocabulary as part of the Northern Nevada English Learning Initiative.

use strategies designed to lower the affective filter in order to facilitate the language acquisition process.

The second module focused on the Individual Differences Among Students Learning a Language model, which describes individual differences that affect the language acquisition process, such as personality and learning style, sociocultural issues, and motivation (Ellis, 2015). To introduce these concepts, participants identified how their own backgrounds, traits, and learning styles affect their learning and teaching. They then applied this insight as they explored strategies to reach students with different traits and styles.

To introduce inquiry-based learning, course designers created a module with hands-on inquiry-based science lessons designed to deepen the paraeducators' understanding of the 5E learning cycle (engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation) and instructional strategies, which helps learners construct their understanding of concepts being taught (Bybee, 2015).

As learners, the paraeducators experienced the value of the struggle to construct their own learning to gain insight into students' experiences of this process. The participants wrote and revised 5E lesson plans based on the Next Generation Science Standards, the Common Core State Standards, and technology standards.

RESULTS FOR PARAEducATORS

To examine the implementation and outcomes of this project, the project team gathered data from sources including the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, pre- and post-tests from the content covered in the course modules, participants' reflective journal entries, and researcher observation notes.

Results show that paraeducators both enjoyed and learned from the professional learning. The largest gains were in areas prioritized by the grant, such as language acquisition and inquiry-based science.

For example, over all four years, gains in content knowledge for second language acquisition, the Individual Differences Among Students Learning a Language model, and inquiry-based learning modules increased significantly from before the course to after. (Results were significant at the $p < .01$ and $p < .05$ from the pre-test to post-test.)

The initiative gave paraeducators deep learning on important concepts and programs, practical applications for their classrooms, a small stipend, and the opportunity to complete a rigorous, college-level course.

Reflecting on the project, one participant wrote, "The course has not only changed how I interact with English learners, but it's changed how I interact with all my students. I have a much better idea of how the brain works

when learning new concepts, how those concepts are practically applied, and how they are put into practice."

Another participant reported gaining overall confidence in her teaching skills: "I walk away from this course knowing a lot more about the educational system than I did before. ... I knew, based from experience, what these students needed to learn, but the course has taught me how to teach them professionally. The different learning activities have built up my confidence and professionalism when it comes to teaching our EL students."

As a result of the project, five paraeducators are working to become teachers. Three other paraeducators moved to positions within the district where they would be able to better use the knowledge and skills they gained. The remaining participants have remained in their positions, a positive indicator of workforce stability, with increased knowledge and competence.

"(The initiative) was a nice motivation to continue [with college]," said one participant. "I saw how I learned English myself and said, 'Oh, that's how I learn English. That's how I can continue studying.' I'm going to graduate [from college] after I finish (the initiative)."

BUILDING THE TEACHER PIPELINE

During the course of the project, university and school district leaders identified several paraeducators interested in transitioning into certified teaching positions.

To obtain teaching licenses, some paraeducators needed to return to school to complete a bachelor's degree in education, which would require an investment of time and money.

Others already held bachelor's degrees, which they could parlay into a provisional license. In both cases, paraeducators needed support to access and succeed in the local alternative

route to licensure program.

Initiative leaders attempted to identify the needs of paraeducators and best processes for encouraging and supporting them in working toward their teaching licenses. They also needed English classes to prepare them for the rigors of the 120-hour alternative route to licensure program.

Next, they needed help to prepare for the basic skills test they would have to take to receive a provisional teaching license. They also needed coaching to prepare for multiple essays and interviews. Finally, they needed guidance in procuring their transcripts and paying for a transcript evaluation.

A partnership program between the university, local community college, and Washoe County School District helped the paraeducators with these hurdles. The community college leveraged existing workforce development federal grant funding dollars to create an adult English as a second language course that was offered to bilingual community members interested in pursuing a teaching degree.

Nine people completed the course, including four paraeducators from the initiative, and two members of the group went on to apply for and complete the alternative route to licensure program.

One participant who was ultimately promoted into a certified teaching position attributed much of her success as a new teacher to the Northern Nevada English Learning Initiative. “Without the NNELI program, I wouldn’t have had the confidence to move forward into teaching. ... I even still refer to my NNELI [resources] when I am struggling with a student.”

GROWING OUR OWN TEACHERS

Pipelines and career ladders that include paraeducators, especially bilinguals, are an effective way to respond to the demand for bilingual

Pipelines and career ladders that include paraeducators, especially bilinguals, are an effective way to respond to the demand for bilingual teachers.

teachers. Because veteran teachers are retiring and student demographics are changing, the strategy to “grow your own” teachers by tapping into the existing paraeducator pool has robust potential.

We have found that it fills much-needed positions, increases educator diversity, provides models for diverse students, brings linguistic equity into the classroom, and develops paraeducators into their full potential.

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Reach. Investigate. Discover.

IDEAS

THE WILL TO CHANGE

"Changing entrenched patterns is possible with the will and the resources — financial, human, and otherwise — to focus on improving instructional practices."

— p. **57**

OUR STUDENTS,

OUR SOLUTIONS

EDUCATORS CAN
CUSTOMIZE THEIR
LEARNING THROUGH
ACTION RESEARCH

BY CRAIG MERTLER

When I work with educators on the broad topic of job-embedded professional growth, I often ask: Why would you want to try to answer *your* questions or solve *your* problems about *your* students and *your* teaching by using *someone else's* methods, data, and results?

I have spent years studying and facilitating an alternative approach to traditional research that locates the inquiry process in teachers' classrooms.

Action research is any sort of systematic inquiry conducted by those with a direct, vested interest in the teaching and learning process in a particular setting.

Action research is based on the premise that the best way to know if an innovative approach will work with your students or in your classroom is to try it out, collect and analyze data to assess its effectiveness, then make a decision about your next steps based on your direct experience.

In previous writings, I described action research as a process that “allows

Action research is based on the premise that the best way to know if an innovative approach will work with your students or in your classroom is to try it out, collect and analyze data to assess its effectiveness, then make a decision about your next steps based on your direct experience.

teachers to study their own classrooms ... in order to better understand them and to be able to improve their quality or effectiveness” (Mertler, 2017, p. 4).

Action research is beneficial because it is a continuing process of professional development, rather than a one-shot workshop, and because educators share the responsibility for their own professional learning (Oliver, 1980).

Educators are responsible for identifying the areas they want to improve (known as a problem of practice), designing and implementing innovative approaches for addressing their self-identified problem, collecting and analyzing data as a means of assessing the effectiveness of their innovation, and then reflecting on the process and experience to plan for either executing or revising the approach for future implementation cycles.

This model has greater focus on the learning (which educators themselves construct) as opposed to a focus on training (i.e. information given from an expert to a participant).

ACTION RESEARCH COMMUNITIES

Merging the process of action research with the concept of a professional learning community (PLC) results in an action research community (Mertler, 2016, 2018).

An action research community is a PLC but with a specific focus, a common thread of inquiry that provides the foundation for collaborative teamwork and professional growth (Mertler, 2016, 2018). As such, it shares the same four pillars of any PLC — mission, vision, values, and goals (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008) — and the benefits, including:

- Job-embedded professional learning;
- Educator commitment;
- Focus on professional collaboration, in general, but also as it relates to ongoing collective inquiry; and
- Focus on achieving better results for students (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Hord, 1997).

But the distinctive benefit of an action research community is that it provides a common and collaborative focus while still permitting individual educators or collaborative groups of educators to specify their own problems of practice, context, focus, or goals for their use of action research.

Customizing professional development doesn't have to be different for every individual in the action research community, although it can be. For example, action research

communities can foster collaborative action research that includes all teachers in a particular content area, department, or grade level, or that crosses disciplines, grade levels, and perhaps even school buildings.

It is crucial to note that an action research community (like any PLC) is not something educators do for an hour a week. It is more than simply sitting in the faculty lounge and having a conversation about an educational topic. It is a way of approaching and doing the job of being a professional educator, every minute of every day throughout the year.

When educators commit to collaborative professional learning and inquiry, it not only fosters knowledge and skill-building in a community environment, but also becomes an integral part of their daily professional lives (Mertler, 2016).

RESEARCH IN ACTION

To illustrate how an action research community works, consider the case of a rural pre-K-12 school. For some time, the faculty realized that traditional professional development offerings weren't meeting their professional learning needs. After sharing what they learned about action research, several educators launched their own

IDEAS

action research projects into individual problems of practice, engaging in reflective practice.

After school one day, they met to share their problems and ideas for potential solutions. One of the group was an elementary reading teacher. Her students routinely struggled with demonstrating reading comprehension skills on standardized tests. She focused on designing and implementing different types of assessment activities to enhance students' reading comprehension skills as well as give them experience and practice in responding to item formats that typically appear on standardized assessments.

Two secondary biology teachers had observed students' frustrations and difficulties in their introductory course, especially with vocabulary and concepts in the unit on cell division. Instead of using routine lectures to present the material, the educators used online simulations then assessed how well the simulations helped students master these concepts.

After these and other teachers shared their respective problems and plans for action research projects, they discussed how they might help each other. Realizing that their problems of practice were very different but focused on the same ultimate goal of improved student performance, they committed to support one another as fellow action researchers working in the same school with the same students. That support would include serving as sounding boards for ideas, providing constructive feedback, and lending moral support.

The group met regularly on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. During these meetings, they provided updates and status reports on individual projects, discussed goals they hoped to achieve, and posed at least one question about some aspect of their project with which they were struggling. Between meetings, they would test out

the ideas and suggestions, reflect, and plan for next steps.

CREATING THE CULTURE

Implementing an action research community effectively requires creating a conducive culture. To do this, three components are essential:

Educators must embrace reflective practice. Examining problems of practice and engaging in the deep thinking about causes and potential solutions requires a re-examination of long-held professional belief systems and a hard look at the various roles traditionally held by teachers, administrators, and students.

The ineffective one-size-fits-all model of professional learning has traditionally represented safe professional learning in that educators typically weren't required or encouraged to engage in any risk-taking in their own individual growth.

In contrast, embracing reflective practice requires a commitment by courageous professional educators who are willing to critically examine their own practices, make mistakes, and learn from those mistakes (Mertler, 2016). This means that there will sometimes be challenges — perhaps even failures — but courageous educators see these as opportunities for further growth and learning.

Commitment and time are essential. In an action research community, planning, collaboration, and professional learning can't be crammed into 30- to 60-minute increments at the beginning or end of the day. The commitment requires an "all day, every day" attitude toward professional growth, development, and learning, even though meetings among the members of the community take place at specific times.

Leadership at the building level is vital. In particular, leaders should focus on building and sustaining the

commitment of faculty and staff and tying the work to the school's mission, vision, and goals. Faculty and staff must know and see, on a daily basis, that the principal and assistant principals are equally committed to the learning community's overall success and that they will be supportive of faculty and staff needs.

If the proposed action research community is a districtwide effort, then district-level administrators play an essential role as well. They must be able to promote and facilitate not only enhanced student learning, but also improvements in adult learning, and to emphasize the importance of reflective practice and self-guided inquiry into context-specific teaching and learning.

These three cultural components are evident in the action research community example described earlier. First, participants engaged in reflective practice — focusing on their practice and how to improve it, critically examining how they taught content and interacted with students, integrating feedback from colleagues, and taking risks to try new ways of working.

Second, participants demonstrated commitment and time to the process of supporting each other. That commitment extended not only to the regular Thursday afternoon meetings, but also to doing the work between those meetings, being accountable to each other for continued progress on their projects, and supporting each other throughout the process.

Third, they had the support of the building administration. Not only did the principal routinely check on each participant's progress with his or her project, but she also encouraged participants to share what they were doing at schoolwide faculty meetings.

UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITIES

Because action research is

Continued on p. 60

READING, WRITING, AND REFORM

MISSOURI DISTRICT USES
TITLE II-A FUNDS TO IMPROVE
LITERACY INSTRUCTION

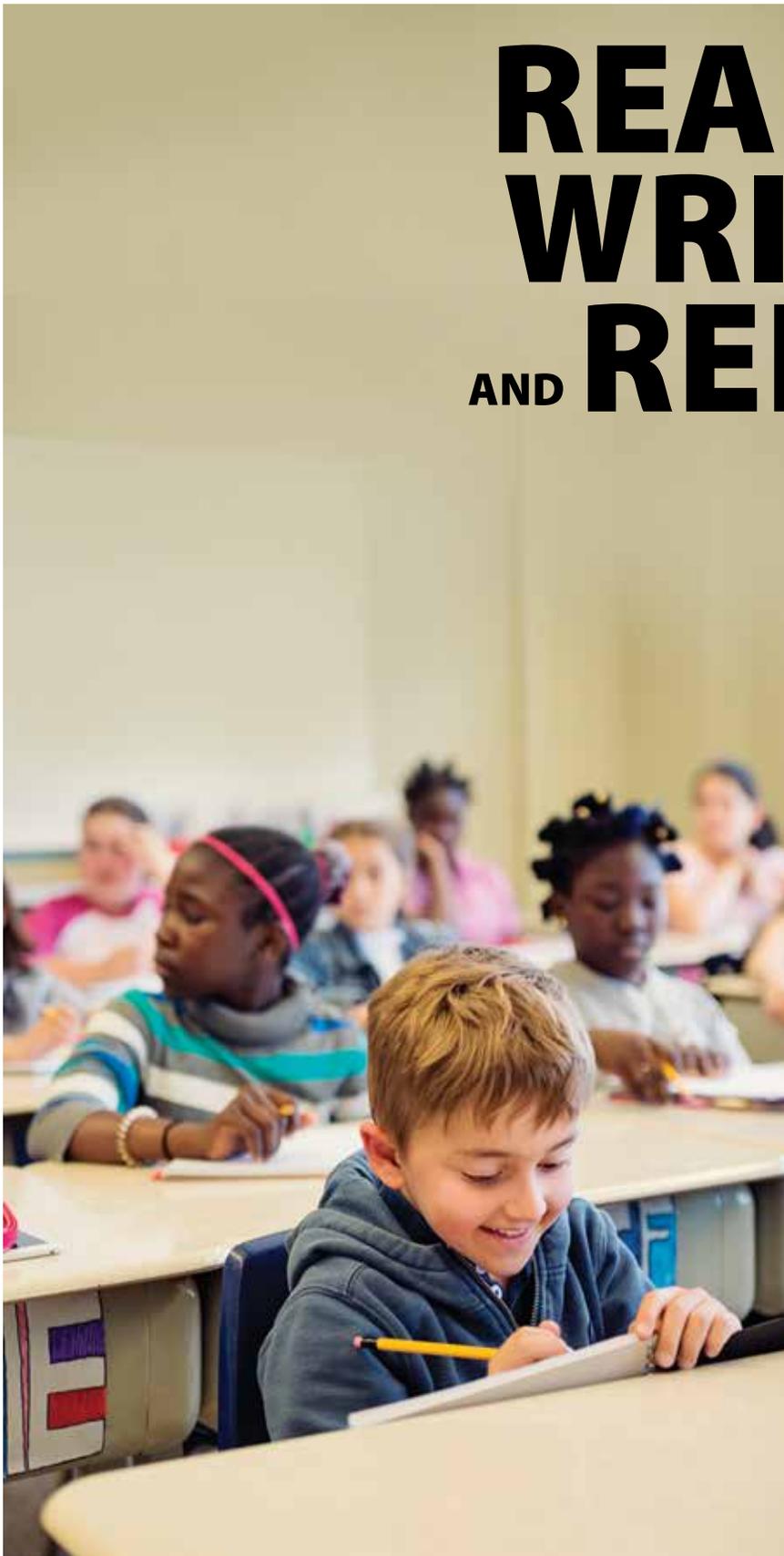
BY CHAD SUTTON

In fall 2012, my colleagues and I in Missouri's North Kansas City Schools knew something had to change in our approach to teaching the most important academic skills: reading and writing.

Missouri would soon adopt the Common Core State Standards and expect students to engage in higher-order thinking that requires strong literacy skills. But student performance on state assessments in English language arts had been below the state average for several years for all groups of students, and even more for free and reduced lunch and English learners, reflecting a troubling achievement gap.

At the same time, student needs continued to grow. Among our population of about 20,000 students, the poverty rate approaches 50% and the mobility rate 37%.

We recognized that a major contributing factor in our students' struggles with literacy was the inconsistency of our instructional approaches at the elementary level. Each of the 21 elementary schools allocated a different amount of time



IDEAS

to reading and writing instruction. In many cases, the time allocation and instructional approach varied by grade level within the same building.

Across the district, 3rd grade was the only grade level that consistently allocated a 50- to 60-minute daily block of writing because the 3rd grade state assessment included a writing prompt for which students needed to be prepared.

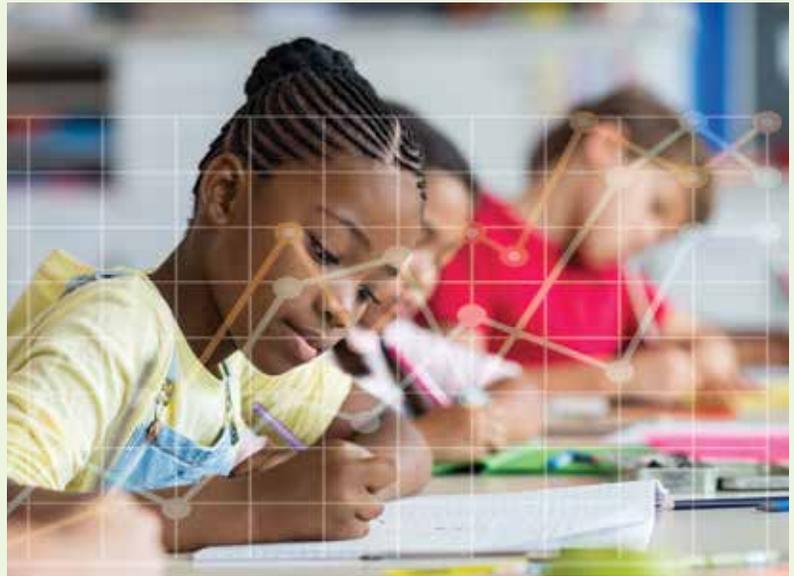
Turning this situation around would require an overhaul of our approach and, at its heart, professional learning and capacity building for teachers to work differently and more consistently. The variation of pedagogical approaches throughout the district had historically caused many challenges with professional learning and teacher collaboration. With so many different instructional methods, it was difficult for teachers and principals to identify commonalities across or even within schools when discussing Tier 1 literacy instruction.

With the crucial support of federal Title II-A funds, our district created a coherent approach that changed literacy instruction in North Kansas City and, more importantly, improved students' reading skills and performance.

Our process over the last seven years demonstrates that changing entrenched patterns is possible with the will and the resources — financial, human, and otherwise — to focus on improving instructional practices.

ACTION RESEARCH TEACHER TEAMS

Our first step was to establish a districtwide K-5 literacy task force that included K-5 teachers representing all grade levels and programs, building principals, instructional coaches, teacher union representatives, and central office leaders. The goal was to develop a research-based systemic approach to reading and writing that all 21 elementary schools would implement.



LESSONS LEARNED

Seven years in, North Kansas City Schools is working to expand its professional learning model from an elementary to pre-K-12 model.

During this time, we've learned several lessons about developing school improvement systems and the importance of alignment. These are things we have found to be essential:

- **Student-centered decisions:** Instead of making decisions about programs based on personal preferences, we have to think about the impact the program is having on student outcomes and base our decisions on these facts. Resource allocation should be based on fact, not favorites.
- **Planning:** We need to understand priorities, make a firm commitment to them, and develop a detailed plan for achieving them. The process of articulating, testing, and revising a strategic plan provides the guiding star. Without a written plan, progress will be minimal and most likely will never be sustained.
- **Resources:** Maximizing resources from the general budget, ESEA/ ESSA funds, and other grant money is crucial. As leaders, we are responsible for using local and federal tax dollars effectively to improve student outcomes. Providing necessary support for administrators and teachers means not only securing funding, but also aligning these resources to student needs. We used data to tell us which programs were the most effective use of our funds.
- **Leadership:** Leaders enable the other conditions for success. With strong support from the superintendent and board of education, we have provided funding for classroom libraries, professional consultants, and other literacy-based resources aligned to our plan. Both support for and the support of principals as instructional leaders matters, too. In fact, developing principals is a nonnegotiable. Principals are the ones in classrooms providing daily feedback and therefore must understand what high-quality literacy instruction looks like.

One of the task force's greatest strengths was also one of its biggest challenges: Each individual brought many different experiences and beliefs to the table about literacy instruction. Everyone on the task force believed the time allocated for reading and writing should not depend on which school or teacher the student was assigned. But beyond that, we needed to establish a common knowledge base of research and best practice.

To build this shared knowledge, we spent a significant amount of time in our first few committee meetings studying the research of literacy experts such as Richard Allington, Debbie Miller, Ellin Keene, and Lucy Calkins. From our readings and discussions, we identified key practices common across the research, including modeling and demonstrating thinking, individual student conferences, and a high volume of reading and writing every day.

We became eager to test out an intentionally designed pedagogical approach aligned to this research and collect evidence on how students responded to it. We developed action research teacher teams made up of small groups of teachers who worked through an action research model (see article on p. 54 about action research communities) to try out instructional strategies such as developing effective and efficient minilessons, structured approaches to individual conferences, note-taking strategies, and increasing reading and writing motivation for all students.

For this strategy to work, participating teachers needed time to collaborate as a team for planning, debriefing, and reflection. Four times throughout the year, we provided released time for these teachers during the school day, using Title II-A funds to provide substitutes.

Although teachers were also expected to put in additional time on

TO LEARN MORE

The pre-K-8 literacy plan for North Kansas City Schools is available at <https://bit.ly/2DhV2Zk>.

their own, and they did, this released time was very important because the teachers worked in different buildings and didn't have either formal or informal time during their workdays to examine data, discuss successes and challenges, or develop strategies to meet the needs of their diverse students.

Data collected from the action research teacher teams informed the work of our committees and of the district overall. Each team collected data in the form of student work, notes from conferences with individual students, and common formative assessments aligned to the Missouri learning standards.

Based on what they learned from the data, teachers would make adjustments to their minilessons and develop additional strategies to support students' needs. They shared this learning and the successful strategies with the committees to drive the work forward at the district level.

SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

With a new instructional plan for literacy complete, we turned our focus to professional learning support for principals and teachers. It had been several years since most teachers had engaged in district-sponsored professional learning in reading and writing instruction. To support teachers in making the pedagogical shifts called for in the new literacy plan, we needed to make a strong commitment to adult learning.

Our professional learning included four key elements.

We created regular learning

opportunities for teachers and principals across the district. Thanks to Title II-A funds, we were able to hire expert practitioners whose research had driven our approach to lead these sessions, including Debbie Miller, Matt Glover, and Ellin Keene.

We engaged grade-level teacher cohorts in professional learning during the school day several times throughout the year. Initially, principals selected one or two teachers per school, about 150 teachers in all, with the expectation that these teachers would then lead school-based teams in implementing the learning across the school. One of the strategies was for these lead teachers to demonstrate newly learned practices while their colleagues visited their classrooms.

We also developed a principal cohort, comprising all elementary principals and assistant principals, to ensure leaders engaged in the professional learning they needed to best support teachers.

We created demonstration classrooms. These are classrooms whose teachers have strongly aligned their classroom literacy practices to the districtwide, research-based literacy plan. With two of these classrooms in place (we now have 13), we asked elementary school principals to send at least 50% of their staff to these classrooms throughout the school year.

Strongly committed to this opportunity, principals, coaches, and teachers became creative with strategies for classroom coverage and the use of Title I, Title II-A, and general building budget financial resources to allow teachers to visit these classrooms.

We offered coaching support to teachers. The coaches had worked with expert consultants on coaching methods as well as reading and writing instruction.

We developed monthly literacy instruction modules for

IDEAS

principals. We believed that one of the key influences to the success of this literacy plan was the knowledge and instructional leadership of principals, so we redesigned monthly principal meetings, which had been mainly focused on lists of business items. We designed a series of one-hour modules, each of which related to one aspect of our literacy plan. To create consistency, we asked principals to lead this same module with their teachers sometime within the next month.

IMPACT ON TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

The new research-based literacy plan and the professional learning support quickly began to change teachers' and leaders' practices and

within three years had real impact on student outcomes.

Before implementing this model, elementary achievement scores on the Missouri Assessment Program test were typically below the state average in most grade levels. Since then, all grade levels have performed significantly above state averages for four consecutive years, and this includes English learners and the free and reduced lunch population.

Because the state implemented a new assessment in spring 2018, we can't make direct score comparisons before and after the 2017-18 school year, but we know that all groups of students continue to perform above state averages.

Finally, since implementing this model, three schools have been

recognized as National Blue Ribbon schools between 2016 and 2018, and five schools were among the top 25 elementary schools in Missouri in the 2016-17 school year. The district had not achieved either of these distinctions before 2016.

Our experience shows that it pays to invest in teachers and leaders becoming the very best they can be so that students become the best that they can be.

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Chad Sutton (chad.sutton@nkcschools.org) is assistant superintendent of academic services and school accountability for North Kansas City (Missouri) Schools. ■

Our students, our solutions

Continued from p. 56

customizable, action research communities provide opportunities for schools to target a wide variety of reform initiatives and innovations, even at the most micro levels.

Whereas some schools might focus their professional learning communities on highly specific curricular or social initiatives, schools that operate as action research communities can target a variety of initiatives and problems of practice.

Furthermore, the focus of an action research community can evolve over time, even while the infrastructure remains intact, theoretically for decades. The fundamental structure of an action research community — which includes a focus on research, collaboration, and support — serves as a flexible and powerful mechanism for achieving

an unlimited number of school improvement and reform initiatives.

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Discuss. Collaborate. Facilitate.

TOOLS

MATERIALS THAT MEET ENGLISH LEARNERS' NEEDS

Using tools created by the English Learners Success Forum on pp. 62-70, educators and education leaders can reflect on whether their instructional materials and teaching practices are meeting the needs of English learners. "Through reflection and discussion, we can understand how and why current approaches may not be producing the kinds of results we want for English learner students and begin to change those practices."

ABOUT ENGLISH LEARNERS SUCCESS FORUM

English Learners Success Forum (www.elsuccessforum.org) works to enhance instructional materials to address the linguistic and cultural needs of English learners. Free resources and tools are available for district or school leaders with an upcoming curriculum adoption, those who want to better support English learners in math and English language arts classrooms, or classroom educators. They can be used by those developing their own materials, adapting existing materials, or adopting new materials.



DO YOUR MATERIALS MEET ENGLISH LEARNERS' NEEDS?

BY CRYSTAL GONZALES AND RENAE SKARIN

There is substantial evidence documenting the impact of high-quality, educative learning materials on teacher practices and student learning, yet this evidence has not translated widely into more equitable learning opportunities for all students.

English learners tend to have less access to intellectually rich, grade-level content and instructional materials. With most English learners receiving instruction for math and English language arts alongside their non-English learner peers, it can no longer be the norm to simplify the content or rely on supplemental materials targeting English learners. Instructional materials must be well-designed to serve all students.

What do materials that do this well look like, and how do you know if yours measure up?

The English Learners Success Forum, an organization working to enhance instructional materials to address the linguistic and cultural needs of English learners, convened national English learner experts, field-leading content providers, and educators to examine how to integrate English learner supports in English language arts and math materials.

Advisory groups developed a set of guidelines for each content area, vetted them with K-12 educators to ensure they are practical and understandable for those with limited English learner instructional knowledge, and refined them based on pilot testing with content providers.

Using the tools on pp. 62-70, educators and education leaders can reflect on current teaching practices, learning environments, and instructional materials. Through reflection and discussion, we can understand how and why current approaches may not be producing the kinds of results we want for English learner students and begin to change those practices.

These tools are intended for those developing, procuring, or using instructional materials and for those who want to create better learning conditions and academic outcomes for English learners. Educators may complete these inventories independently or in discussion with colleagues.

One option is to form a lesson study collaborative or professional learning community to examine the evidence-based strategies in the tools and work together to surface answers, examples, and evidence for each question about whether and how those practices are in place in your schools or district. You can then build on this discussion to identify materials or practices that needed to be refined or overhauled.

Crystal Gonzales (cgonzales@elsuccessforum.org) is executive director and **Renae Skarin** (rskarín@elsuccessforum.org) is director of curriculum review process at English Learners Success Forum.

GUIDELINES INVENTORIES: INSTRUCTIONS

Preparation

1. Decide on the English language arts or math learning materials to inventory. If you are looking at multiple grade levels, select one to begin. You might start with the area in which your English learner students are not meeting grade-level standards.
2. Review the curriculum structure, learning framework, guidance documents for English learners, lesson plans, and other resources that could illuminate whether supports are or aren't embedded in lessons and across the curriculum.

Completing the inventories

3. While reviewing the learning materials, assign a numerical score for each question and note evidence for your responses. Complete this step with teachers and other colleagues to include multiple perspectives.
4. Use the scores and evidence for each area of focus to reflect on strengths and areas where materials need improvement. Start with the area of greatest need to focus your initial improvements. Focus improvement efforts on areas of greatest need.

Follow-up

5. To guide efforts to refine your learning materials and improve instructional practice, explore the resources at www.elsuccessforum.org. Identify strategies that promote English learners' deep content knowledge and complex thinking as well as language skills.
6. As you and your colleagues try new strategies in the classroom, document results and use them to inform further curricular improvements.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GUIDELINES INVENTORY

For the questions below, consider the extent to which the English language arts instructional materials under review currently meet English learners' needs and how you would explain your answers using specific examples from these materials. Choose the answer that best reflects your rating of that support aspect based on the evidence you find.

AREA OF FOCUS I:

INTERDEPENDENCE OF ORAL LANGUAGE, DISCIPLINARY WRITING, AND TEXT ENGAGEMENT

1. How often and how effectively do the oral language development activities guide students to engage with grade-level appropriate content, disciplinary practices, and subject matter?

Instructional materials rating	1. Never/nonexistent	2. Infrequently/limited effectiveness	3. Sometimes/somewhat effective	4. Often/substantially effective	5. Consistently/highly effectively
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NOTES ON 1:

2. How often and how effectively do writing activities incorporate discussions with peers and teachers as an integral part of the writing process?

Instructional materials rating	1. Never/nonexistent	2. Infrequently/limited effectiveness	3. Sometimes/somewhat effective	4. Often/substantially effective	5. Consistently/highly effectively
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NOTES ON 2:

3. How often and how effectively do the instructional materials provide interactive oral language development activities to support students in engaging with grade-level texts?

Instructional materials rating	1. Never/nonexistent	2. Infrequently/limited effectiveness	3. Sometimes/somewhat effective	4. Often/substantially effective	5. Consistently/highly effectively
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NOTES ON 3:

Source: English Learners Success Forum, www.elsuccessforum.org

TOOLS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GUIDELINES INVENTORY, CONTINUED

AREA OF FOCUS II: SUSTAINED LANGUAGE AND CONTENT SUPPORT

4. How often and how effectively are opportunities for students to use language practices, analytical skills, and conceptual understandings organized into an intentional progression within a unit and/or curriculum?

Instructional materials rating	1. Never/ nonexistent	2. Infrequently/ limited effectiveness	3. Sometimes/ somewhat effective	4. Often/ substantially effective	5. Consistently/ highly effectively
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NOTES ON 4:

5. How often are students afforded opportunities to learn language through prolonged exposure and negotiation of content and ideas in the target language? How are these opportunities scaffolded as needed?

Instructional materials rating	1. Never/ nonexistent	2. Infrequently/ limited effectiveness	3. Sometimes/ somewhat effective	4. Often/ substantially effective	5. Consistently/ highly effectively
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NOTES ON 5:

6. How often and how effectively are tasks and scaffolds designed to build *increasing* understanding of an *appropriately complex grade-level text* for the grade level?

Instructional materials rating	1. Never/ nonexistent	2. Infrequently/ limited effectiveness	3. Sometimes/ somewhat effective	4. Often/ substantially effective	5. Consistently/ highly effectively
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NOTES ON 6:

7. Do the instructional materials provide students with opportunities to engage in purposeful writing activities that build a nexus of college- and career-ready skills? Are those activities organized into an intentional progression?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent opportunities	2. Limited opportunities/ limited evidence of an intentional progression	3. Some opportunities/ some evidence of an intentional progression	4. Substantial opportunities/ substantial evidence of an intentional progression	5. Consistent opportunities/ consistent evidence of an intentional progression
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NOTES ON 7:

Source: English Learners Success Forum, www.elsuccessforum.org

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GUIDELINES INVENTORY, CONTINUED

**AREA OF FOCUS III:
LEARNER AWARENESS (METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES)**

8. Are high-quality strategies used to encourage students to reflect metacognitively on their own learning?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent	2. Limited strategies	3. Some strategies	4. Substantial strategies	5. Consistent and high-quality strategies
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NOTES ON 8:

9. Are teachers guided to support students in examining and progressively improving on their communication practices?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent	2. Limited guidance	3. Some guidance	4. Substantial guidance	5. Consistent and high-quality guidance
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NOTES ON 9:

**AREA OF FOCUS IV:
LEVERAGING STUDENTS' ASSETS**

10. Are materials structured to reflect an asset-based model of teaching and learning? Are teachers provided guidance for instructional practices that reflect that perspective?

Instructional materials rating	1. Never/nonexistent	2. Infrequently/limited guidance	3. Sometimes/some guidance	4. Often/substantial guidance	5. Consistently/consistent guidance
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NOTES ON 10:

11. Are there consistent opportunities to connect disciplinary learning with students' interests and lived experiences?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent	2. Limited guidance	3. Some guidance	4. Substantial guidance	5. Consistent and high-quality guidance
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NOTES ON 11:

Source: English Learners Success Forum, www.elsuccessforum.org

TOOLS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GUIDELINES INVENTORY, CONTINUED

12. How often and how effectively are teachers guided to use students' home language as a resource?

Instructional materials rating	1. Never/ nonexistent	2. Infrequently/ limited effectiveness	3. Sometimes/ somewhat effective	4. Often/ substantially effective	5. Consistently/ highly effectively
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NOTES ON 12:

13. How often and how effectively are strategies offered to promote student independence, agency, and autonomy?

Instructional materials rating	1. Never/ nonexistent	2. Infrequently/ limited effectiveness	3. Sometimes/ somewhat effective	4. Often/ substantially effective	5. Consistently/ highly effectively
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NOTES ON 13:

AREA OF FOCUS V: FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

14. Do teachers receive guidance to formatively assess language proficiency and content understandings in order to generate feedback and make instructional decisions?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent	2. Limited guidance	3. Some guidance	4. Substantial guidance	5. Consistent and high-quality guidance
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NOTES ON 14:

SCORING AND NEXT STEPS

If you rated the support aspects at mostly 4 and 5, then you are off to a good start. Consider more robust ways of supporting English learners in your context. With effective implementation, these materials can affect English learner student English language arts outcomes positively and create more equitable learning conditions.

The support aspects rated 3 or below are places to further explore in the materials improvement process. Visit www.elsuccessforum.org/resources for links to activities, strategies, and other resources that may be helpful in the materials improvement process.

Source: English Learners Success Forum, www.elsuccessforum.org

MATHEMATICS GUIDELINES INVENTORY

For the questions below, consider the extent to which the mathematics instructional materials under review currently meet English learners' needs and how you would explain your answers using specific examples from these materials. Choose the answer that best reflects your rating of that support aspect based on the evidence you find.

AREA OF FOCUS I: INTERDEPENDENCE OF MATHEMATICAL CONTENT, PRACTICES, AND LANGUAGE

1. Do the instructional materials afford regular opportunities for students to revisit and revise their *language* and *mathematical thinking*?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent opportunities	2. Limited opportunities	3. Some opportunities	4. Substantial opportunities	5. Consistent and high-quality opportunities
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NOTES ON 1:

2. Are mathematics **and** language goals organized into an intentional progression in the instructional materials?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent progression	2. Limited evidence of intentional progression	3. Some evidence of intentional progression	4. Substantial evidence of intentional progression	5. Consistent evidence of intentional progression
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NOTES ON 2:

3. Do the instructional materials guide students consistently and strategically to communicate (speak, listen, read, and write) about mathematics? And for specific purposes?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent guidance	2. Limited guidance/ limited evidence of a specific academic purpose	3. Some guidance/ some evidence of a specific academic purpose	4. Substantial guidance/ substantial evidence of specific academic purposes	5. Consistent and strategic guidance/ consistent evidence of clear academic purposes
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NOTES ON 3:

Source: English Learners Success Forum, www.elsuccessforum.org

TOOLS

MATHEMATICS GUIDELINES INVENTORY, CONTINUED

AREA OF FOCUS II: SCAFFOLDING AND SUPPORTS FOR SIMULTANEOUS DEVELOPMENT

4. Do the instructional materials show evidence of asking students to produce, interpret, and make connections between various mathematical representations?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent evidence	2. Limited evidence	3. Some evidence	4. Substantial evidence	5. Consistent and high-quality evidence
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NOTES ON 4:

5. How often do the instructional materials guide configuration of students in whole-group, small-group, pairs, and individual work? How are teachers guided to strategically use that time to support English learners?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent guidance	2. Limited guidance	3. Some guidance	4. Substantial guidance	5. Consistent and high-quality guidance
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NOTES ON 5:

6. Do the instructional materials provide teachers with guidance to anticipate and manage relevant language demands and opportunities?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent guidance	2. Limited guidance	3. Some guidance	4. Substantial guidance	5. Consistent and high-quality guidance
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NOTES ON 6:

AREA OF FOCUS III: MATHEMATICAL RIGOR THROUGH LANGUAGE

7. Do the instructional materials afford students opportunities to engage in purposeful uses of mathematical practices? How are teachers guided in supporting them?

Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent opportunities and guidance	2. Limited opportunities and guidance	3. Some engagement opportunities and guidance	4. Substantial engagement opportunities and guidance	5. Consistent and high-quality engagement opportunities and guidance
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NOTES ON 7:

Source: English Learners Success Forum, www.elsuccessforum.org

MATHEMATICS GUIDELINES INVENTORY, CONTINUED

8. Do the instructional materials offer strategies consistently to maintain productive mathematical struggle for English learners?					
Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent	2. Limited strategies offered	3. Some strategies offered	4. Substantial strategies offered	5. Consistent and high-quality strategies offered
NOTES ON 8:					

9. Are teachers supported well in cultivating and facilitating meaningful mathematical discussions between students in the instructional materials?					
Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent	2. Limited support	3. Some support	4. Substantial support	5. Consistent and high-quality support
NOTES ON 9:					

AREA OF FOCUS IV:
LEVERAGING STUDENTS' ASSETS

10. Is guidance provided to use contexts for connecting mathematics to students' lived experiences?					
Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent	2. Limited guidance	3. Some guidance	4. Substantial guidance	5. Consistent and high-quality guidance
NOTES ON 10:					

11. Are resources provided to challenge teachers to reflect on their own values and beliefs in regard to language and learning?					
Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent	2. Limited opportunities to reflect	3. Some opportunities to reflect	4. Substantial opportunities to reflect	5. Consistent and high-quality opportunities to reflect
NOTES ON 11:					

Source: English Learners Success Forum, www.elsuccessforum.org

TOOLS

MATHEMATICS GUIDELINES INVENTORY, CONTINUED

12. How often and how effectively are activities structured to encourage students to use their existing language tool kits to participate (rather than use prerequisite language as a barrier to getting started)?					
Instructional materials rating	1. Never/nonexistent	2. Infrequently/limited effectiveness	3. Sometimes/somewhat effective	4. Often/substantially effective	5. Consistently/highly effectively
NOTES ON 12:					

AREA OF FOCUS V: ASSESSMENT OF MATHEMATICAL CONTENT, PRACTICES, AND LANGUAGE					
13. Are models provided of students engaged in mathematical practices? How varied are the examples of language proficiency in those models?					
Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent models	2. Limited models/limited variety	3. Some models/some variety	4. Substantial models/substantial variety	5. Consistent and high-quality models/consistent variety
NOTES ON 13:					

14. Are assessments structured to capture students' growth and progress with both mathematics and language?					
Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent evidence	2. Limited evidence	3. Some evidence	4. Substantial evidence	5. Consistent and high-quality evidence
NOTES ON 14:					

15. Are teachers guided to use quality formative assessment of both mathematics and language to make instructional decisions?					
Instructional materials rating	1. Nonexistent guidance	2. Limited guidance	3. Some guidance	4. Substantial guidance	5. Consistent and high-quality guidance
NOTES ON 15:					

SCORING AND NEXT STEPS					
<p>If you rated the support aspects at mostly 4 and 5, then you are off to a good start. Consider more robust ways of supporting English learners in your context. With effective implementation, these materials can affect English learner student mathematics outcomes positively and create more equitable learning conditions.</p> <p>The support aspects rated 3 or below are places to further explore in the materials improvement process. Visit www.elsuccessforum.org/resources for links to activities, strategies, and other resources that may be helpful in the materials improvement process.</p>					

Source: English Learners Success Forum, www.elsuccessforum.org

Connect. Belong. Support.

UPDATES

2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE PLANNING GEARS UP

In February, 75 volunteers and the St. Louis Host Committee met at Ed Plus in St. Louis, Missouri, to review proposals for the 2019 Learning Forward Annual Conference. We received over 800 submissions and are putting together a program that will give educators guidance and tools they need to support teacher and student learning.

Kathy Gross (in red shirt), a member of the St. Louis Host Committee, and Kathy Wimberley, of Springfield (Missouri) Public Schools, review conference session proposals.

Denise Glyn Borders named new executive director

Denise Glyn Borders will serve as Learning Forward's new executive director beginning in June.

"We welcome Denise Glyn Borders to Learning Forward," said Alan Ingram, past president of Learning Forward and chair of the executive director search committee. "Denise brings strategic leadership, strong research, and expertise from a range of sectors, in pre-K-12, government, academia, profit, and nonprofit organizations," said Ingram.

"As a long-time follower of Learning Forward, I'm honored to have the opportunity to serve as the organization's next executive director," said Borders.

"Learning Forward built the foundation for effective professional learning when it created the Standards for Professional Learning. I look forward to working with the board of trustees and Learning Forward staff and members to leverage that foundation while exploring new avenues to achieve the organization's vision for equity and excellence."

Most recently, Borders served as president of SRI Education, a division at SRI International, where she led learning and development, technology and learning, and education policy. Previously, Borders was senior vice president and director of the U.S. Education and Workforce Development Group at FHI 360, a global human development organization with an evidence-based research approach.

Earlier, Borders was a senior vice president at AED, where she oversaw U.S. program operations in education, early childhood development, research and evaluation, and education policy and practice. She also served as president and CEO of The McKenzie Group.

She served as associate director of the Office of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Professional



Denise Glyn Borders

Development for the Department of Defense Education Activity. She was also chief of educational accountability and assistant superintendent for Baltimore City Public Schools in Maryland and a consultant at CTB/McGraw-Hill Publishing.

In addition, Borders has been a curriculum specialist, teacher supervisor, classroom teacher, and university lecturer. Borders serves on the board of trustees for Teachers College, Columbia University, and for AdvancED.

"I can't wait for Learning Forward's members and stakeholders to meet Denise," said Learning Forward President Leigh Wall. "They will appreciate so much the insights and passion that she will harness to advance Learning Forward's vision."

The decision to hire Borders comes after a seven-month nationwide search.

Stephanie Hirsh, Learning Forward's outgoing executive director, will support Borders through a brief transition before leaving the organization as a full-time staff member at the end of June.



LEARNING FORWARD CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

In 1969, Ron Brandt organized a gathering of staff developers in Minneapolis to discuss the issues they faced in their relatively new field. Since then, the gathering turned into a membership organization of more than 11,000 members.

Originally named the National Staff Development Council and rebranded as Learning Forward in 2010, the organization has evolved as the field of professional learning has evolved. Through 2019 and into 2020, Learning Forward will recognize and celebrate this evolution. Keep an eye out for:

- Historical journal content with commentary from some of the field's leading thought leaders;
- Audio interviews with long-term members;
- A timeline of the organization's history;
- In-person celebrations at this year's Annual Conference in St. Louis; and
- Opportunities on social media to share your story as a Learning Forward or NSDC member.

Learning Forward Foundation and Affiliate leaders are joining with Learning Forward staff and members to highlight key moments in our history. If you'd like to participate in anniversary planning, contact Zach Sherburn (zach.sherburn@learningforwd.org).

Seeking districts for evidence-based coaching project



Learning Forward is seeking district partners to implement and study a proven coaching model with middle and high school teachers.

Funded by a federal grant, Learning Forward is collaborating with the American Institutes for Research and Teachstone on a study of a two-year supplemental coaching program, MyTeachingPartner 1:1 Coaching. The program has been shown to boost student engagement and achievement.

Participating districts' coaches will get extensive coach training and ongoing support from Teachstone. American Institutes for Research will help districts identify potential schools and teachers and cover partial support for coaches' time. For further information, contact Janice Poda (janice.poda@learningforward.org).

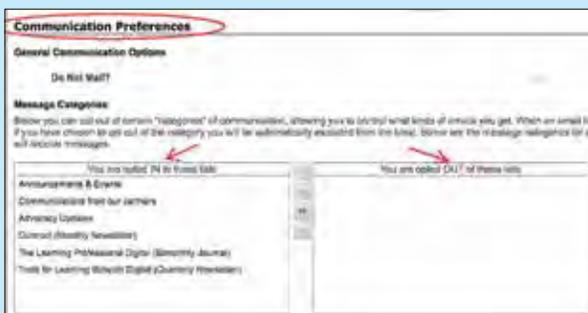
UPDATE YOUR EMAIL PREFERENCES

Are you getting the Learning Forward information you value the most? You can personalize the type of information you receive from Learning Forward and tailor the number of emails you get by updating your online profile.

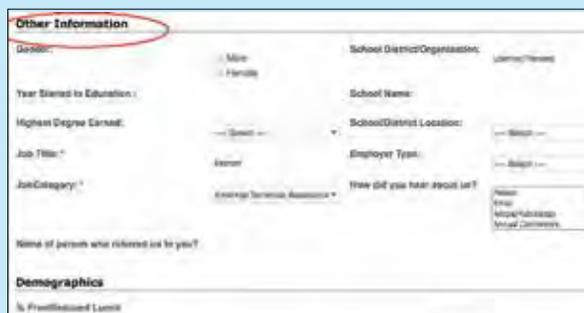
That will ensure that you only receive information according to your interests.



1. Log in to our website, go to My Account > Edit My Information.



2. In your Communication Preferences, you can opt out of any email categories that you don't wish to receive.



3. Update the Other Information section to help us further customize the content you receive.

LEARNING FORWARD MEMBERS DELIVER PROCLAMATION TO CAPITOL HILL

BY MELINDA GEORGE AND JON BERNSTEIN

Leaders from Learning Forward affiliates in Virginia and New England joined Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh in Washington, D.C., in February to deliver a message to lawmakers about the importance of federal support for professional learning.

The group delivered Learning Forward's Proclamation for Professional Learning to the offices of senators and representatives from Virginia and Connecticut. The proclamation, signed by more than 1,700 Learning Forward members and stakeholders, states that professional learning is essential to improving teacher practice and student outcomes.

The proclamation calls on policymakers to support funding for effective, job-embedded professional learning that aligns with the definition included in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The participation of affiliate leaders as advocates was critical because their Congressional delegations include individuals with influence over Title II-A oversight and funding: Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., chair of the Education and Labor Committee; Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee; Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., chair of the Labor, Health, Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee; and Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., a member of both the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and Appropriations Committees.



Learning Forward leaders gather on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., to deliver the Proclamation for Professional Learning to policymakers. From left: Stephanie Hirsh, Elizabeth Foster, Lesley Hughes, Barbara Patterson Oden, Judy Newhouse, Esther Bobowick, Sue Renehan, and Melinda George.

Policymakers heard from educators how Title II-A dollars impact teaching and learning in their districts. The Learning Forward teams offered to act as ready resources for more information, site visits, and examples of effective Title II-A spending. Each office also received a copy of the Learning Forward Proclamation for Professional Learning with signatures from educators across the country.

The meetings allowed advocates to focus the attention of Congressional

members and their staffs on the importance of adequately funding Title II-A. After the Connecticut educators traded information and stories with a member of Murphy's staff, the staff person said she would take a deeper look at Title II-A funding this year.

The education fellow in Kaine's office affirmed his support of Title II-A and said he appreciated having data from the districts for Kaine to use when making the case on Capitol Hill. DeLauro also expressed appreciation for

the advocates' work and willingness to come to Washington to tell their stories and press for funding.

A staff person for Scott said there was a possibility of her office's support if Learning Forward hosts a future briefing about how professional learning is implemented and evidence of its effectiveness.

The meetings also yielded useful insights into funding for this year. While initial House Education and Labor Committee hearings will focus on school construction, there may be interest in Every Student Succeeds Act oversight hearings, including one on elevating the teaching profession. In a similar vein, DeLauro's staff said they might be interested in having issue-specific hearings later in the year.

Finally, we heard in a number of the meetings that Congress is interested in how professional development is being used to support teachers as they address students' social and emotional learning.

We recognize and appreciate the time our advocates invested in preparing for the visits as they honed their presentations and data to share. For example, Learning Forward Virginia advocates developed one-page summaries on the use of Title II-A funds in their districts.

The summaries included how much Title II-A funding was allocated to their district (including the decline in Title II-A funds over the last five years), what they used the funds to accomplish, and data that provided evidence that the use of the funds yielded results in student outcomes, school accreditation, and teacher retention.

While Title II-A received level funding during the fiscal 2019 appropriations process, we are now focused on the fiscal 2020 appropriations process. The process began in early March with the president's proposed budget that once

The meetings allowed advocates to focus the attention of Congressional members and their staffs on the importance of adequately funding Title II-A.

again called for the elimination of all funding for Title II-A. As we write this, a divided Congress is wrestling with uncertain spending allocations and leaders from both political parties are expressing displeasure with spending decisions. Educators will need to be louder and more persistent to have our case heard.

To help educator advocates, Learning Forward will provide ongoing updates about the appropriations process as well as opportunities for our community to get involved. These include:

- Virtual and in-person workshops on telling your state, district, or school Title II-A story, including impact data;
- Sample emails and tweets for stakeholders;
- Updated talking points on spending caps and Title II-A; and
- Regular advocacy webinars to keep you up to date.

To be notified of these opportunities, sign up to receive updates from Learning Forward's A-Team at learningforward.org/advocacy/sign-up.

We look forward to engaging all educator advocates in this critical work.

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AFFILIATES LEARNING TOGETHER WITH WEBINARS

Learning Forward Affiliates further the organization's mission in their work across the U.S., Canada, and internationally, reaching thousands of committed professional learning advocates and implementers throughout the year through conferences, workshops, book studies, online courses, and more.

To support the work of the affiliates, Learning Forward hosts webinars that provide information about affiliate operations, ongoing capacity-building efforts, organizational priorities, and other relevant content that can be adapted and localized.

In February, Learning Forward COO Michael Lanham and consulting attorney Nancy Greiwe held a webinar about affiliate operations, addressing the legal and financial requirements, tax filings, and record-keeping that ensure affiliates are healthy and in good standing. They answered specific questions from affiliate leaders and showed how to complete relevant documents in clear language.

A webinar in March focused on affiliates' advocacy work, including visits to Congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. It also covered how highlighting data about Title II-A expenditures and their impact can drive future efforts to advocate for resources and support.

Contact Elizabeth Foster (elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org) or Niki Gamble (niki.gamble@learningforward.org) with ideas for future webinars. For information about affiliates, visit learningforward.org/affiliates.

AT A GLANCE

English learner students in the United States



There are more than 4.8 million English learners in U.S. schools.¹

4,800,000

55%

...of public school teachers in 2011-12 taught at least one English learner.²

67%

of those in urban areas

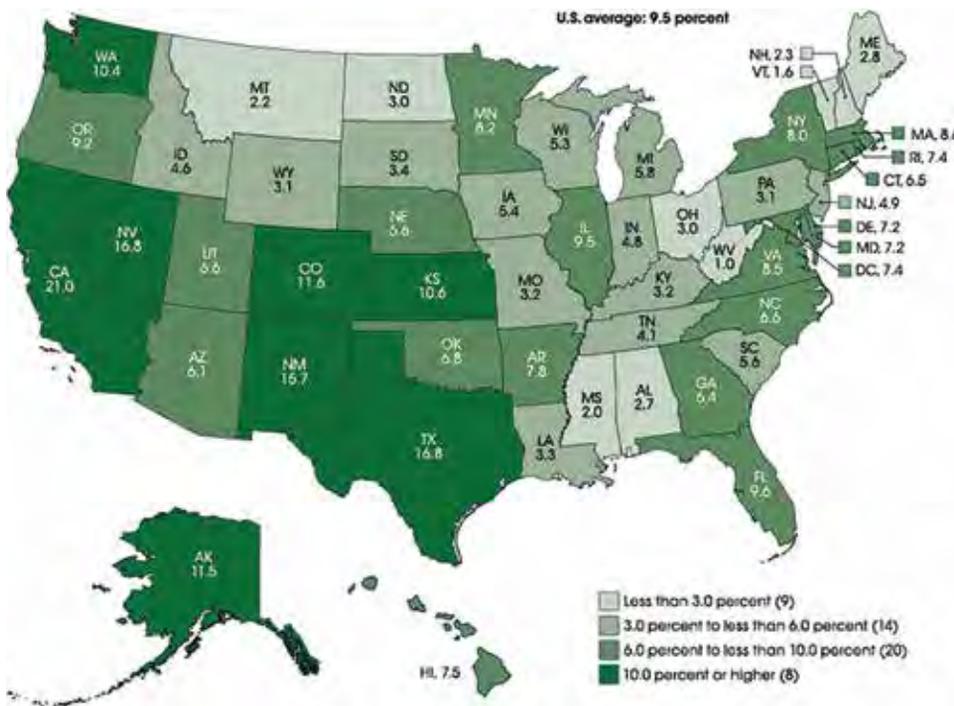
58%

of those in suburban areas

42%

of those in rural areas²

ENGLISH LEARNERS IN U.S. SCHOOLS SPEAK OVER 400 LANGUAGES.



Percentage of English learner students in public schools in 2015³

NATIONALLY, 77% OF ENGLISH LEARNERS SPEAK SPANISH, BUT THERE IS DIVERSITY ACROSS STATES.¹

For example:

Nationally



In Alaska, 40% of English learners speak Yupik languages.



In Maine, 32.4% Somali, 13% Arabic, 9.5% Spanish, and 9.2% French.



Sources

¹ www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-characteristics

² nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_498_t1n.asp

³ nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp



Leadership development at all levels



Learning Forward supports organizations in implementing sustained, standards-based professional learning grounded in a cycle of continuous improvement. This requires all stakeholders in the system to take collective responsibility for adult and student learning, and understand their roles and responsibilities in a learning system. We support:



DISTRICT LEADERS to establish the conditions—a shared vision, qualified leadership, aligned resources, measures to learn and improve from, and effective change management—that promote continuous improvement in teaching and learning.



SCHOOL LEADERS to apply the Standards for Professional Learning in their schools and ensure that educators are working in learning communities that engage in ongoing cycles of continuous improvement.



TEACHER LEADERS to form teacher-led learning teams that engage in a cycle of learning that includes analyzing data, setting learning goals, selecting learning designs, implementing new instructional strategies, and assessing and adjusting practice.

We want to transform your system into a true learning system.

For more information on how we can provide onsite, customized support for your school or district, go to <https://consulting.learningforward.org/consulting-services/>, or contact Tom Manning at tom.manning@learningforward.org.