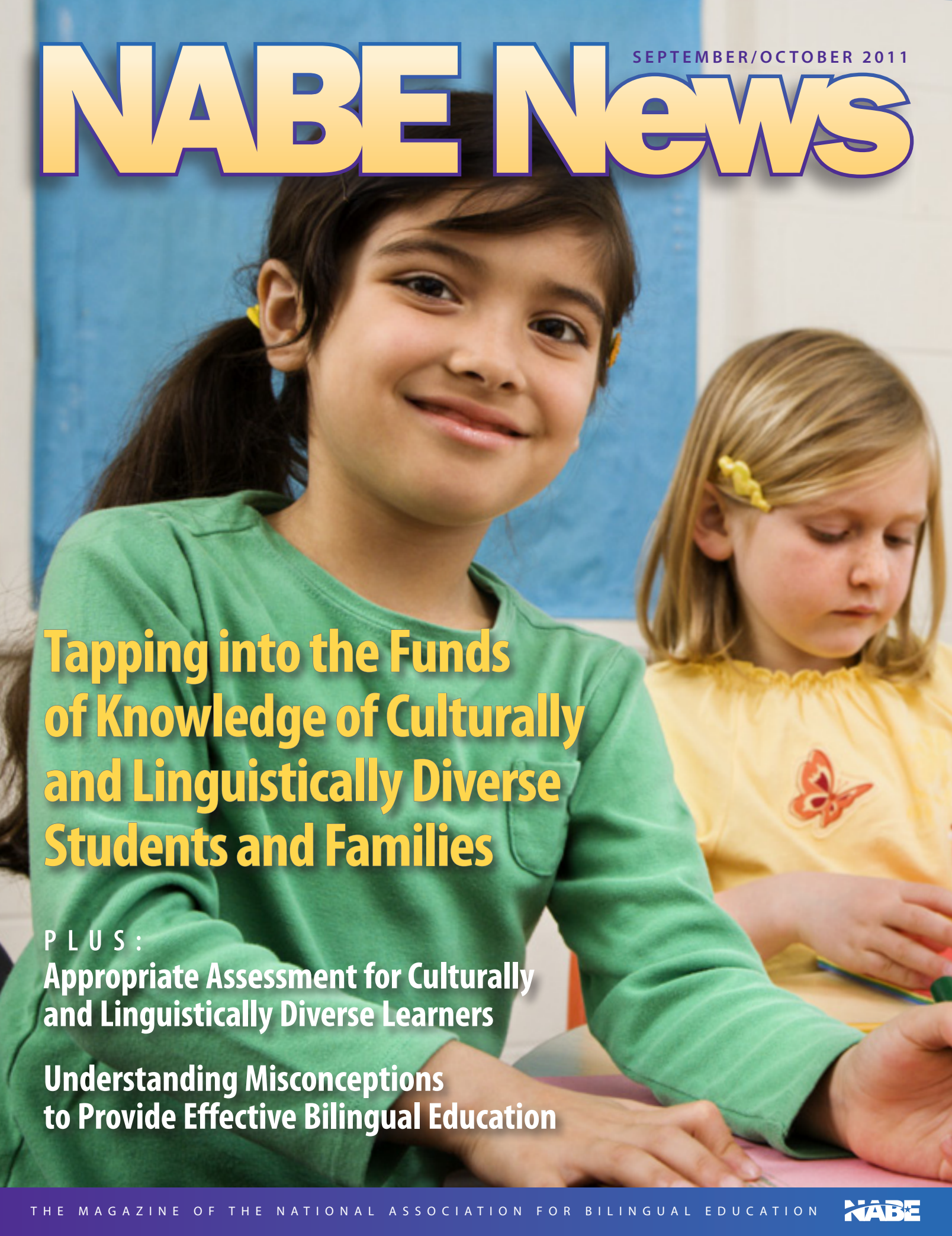


# NABE News

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011



## Tapping into the Funds of Knowledge of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students and Families

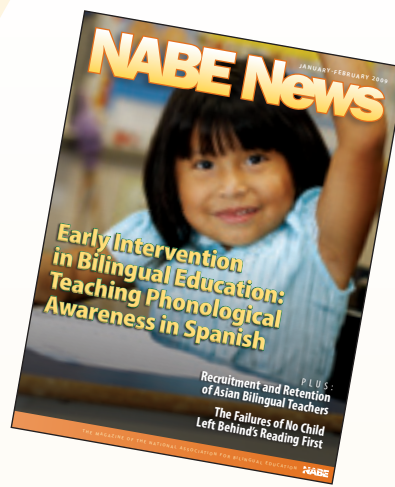
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- Issue 5: September/October
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# NABE News

The Magazine of the National Association for Bilingual Education

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# Letter from the President



Rossana Ramirez Boyd  
NABE Board President

I have a lot of news for everyone. During the regular NABE Executive Board meeting on September 22, Norma Hernández, from the firm International Consultants located in Louisiana, was appointed to the board as Parent Representative. We have not had a parent representative for the past five years. Her role will include working with the Parent and Community Involvement Special Interest Group and with the local committee chair of the Parent Institute at the NABE Conference. Also on September 22, Dr. Yee Wan, from the Santa Clara County Office of Education in California, was elected to the board to complete two years of a vacated member-at-large position. Dr. Wan will be playing a very critical role in reaching out to Asian American teachers and school administrators and encouraging them to join NABE.

In my last letter, I mentioned the strategic plan that NABE has for this year. We have made a many improvements in the organization during the past two months. We are in the process of replacing the old server and computers in the office to provide better services to you. We now have a new database that is reliable and is currently available for online registration for the 2012 conference in Dallas. Additionally, we have a new accountability system to manage our financial resources more efficiently. If you want a report of our finances, please contact our treasurer, Leo Gómez, at <lgomez@aol.com>.

We have improved our advocacy efforts by attending meetings at the USDOE to voice our support for bilingual educational programs and native language assessments. Although the ESEA has not been reauthorized, the blueprints now available are not strong enough to support bilingual education through federal legislation. I will continue to urge our board members, our special interest groups, state affiliates, and our allies to take an active role in speaking to

U. S. senators and representatives to consider preparing a bilingual education amendment to the current blueprint. Having federal legislation will help strengthen support for bilingualism and biliteracy for our students through effective programs. I truly believe that we can duplicate what Texas State Senator Ralph Yarborough did in 1967. He mobilized many politicians, including Ted Kennedy to pass the Title VII Bilingual Education Act as an amendment to the ESEA. We can do this again!

On behalf of NABE, our Executive Director, Dr. Santiago Wood, has joined forces with the Hispanic Coalition which consists of 26 national organizations, to voice support or opposition for education bills that have been filed or are in the process of being filed in Congress. For example, a letter was sent to Senator Tom Harkin, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions with our comments on the discussion about the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA).

Also, we mailed congratulatory letters to leaders who have taken a strong and bold step to implement district-wide dual language programs in their schools. These include, Superintendent Danna T. Bedden from the Irving Independent School District, Irving, Texas singled out for kudos. Also identified for praise were Dr. Gustavo Balderas from the Madera Unified School District, Madera, California and Trustee Susan Alvaro, from the San Mateo County Board of Education, Redwood City, California who launched the "Seal of Biliteracy" program in August of this year. If you have successful bilingual programs that you would like to share with NABE, please send me descriptions so that we can include information about them on the NABE website.

As you are aware, this year there were many anti-immigration bills filed in multiple states during their legislative sessions. Although in most states the bills did not pass, the situation in Alabama is a different story. Alabama is in the news these days announcing a "victory"

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# Tapping into the Funds of Knowledge of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students and Families

*Carla Amaro-Jiménez, The University of Texas at Arlington*

*Peggy Semingson, The University of Texas at Arlington*

"It's called 'La Tamalada... Yolanda knows how to make tamales. My dad will make the meat and my mom will make the corn stuff that goes on the husk and we set the kids on the stools around there and we give them a pile of the masa and Yolanda knows how to put the corn husk down and rub the masa and meat and wrap it. We make our own tamales...!"

(Alejandra, interview)

In the context of doing home visits and interviews as part of a research study on parents' participation in their children's literacy learning conducted by the second author (Semingson, 2008), Alejandra, a single parent of four school-aged children, was given a book, *Family Pictures/Cuadros de mi Familia*, by Mexican-American author Carmen Lomas Garza. Alejandra explicitly connected the Lomas Garza literary text

with a Mexican cultural tradition in the household: making tamales. She connected this cultural experience with the types of school literacies and texts her second-grade child, Yolanda, was engaging with in the classroom, drawing resourcefully on cultural and linguistic Funds of Knowledge present in her bilingual/bicultural household (Moll & González, 2004) to support her daughter's literacy learning.

## Introduction

Creating meaningful connections between home and school is not always an easy task, especially when parents and families speak a language other than the one spoken by the classroom teacher. The challenges become even greater when these families belong to a different culture than one's own. Additionally, researchers have argued that a focus on assimilation and devaluing of students' language and culture can result in notions of subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999, 2005; Worthy, Rodríguez, Assaf, Martínez, & Cuero, 2003). In contrast to such deficit models, an additive model seeks to build on students' and family's strengths and abilities and transform teachers' and schools' ways of perceiving the families with an overall goal of increasing student achievement (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2010;

Moll & González, 2004; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992).

In this article we advocate for the implementation of additive practices for educators, teachers, and administrators to meaningfully engage with Latina/o students and families, drawing upon a Funds of Knowledge framework (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). We first examine the term Funds of Knowledge referring to the original use of the term by Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg (1992). We then highlight selected recent studies that have drawn on the Funds of Knowledge in bilingual and multilingual classroom settings to offer concrete suggestions for teachers and administrators of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) children and families.

### Defining Funds of Knowledge

The literature on Funds of Knowledge suggests that educators must draw upon students' background knowledge and experiences to enhance learning. Studies have suggested that drawing on the experiences that students have accumulated in their households with siblings, peers, friends, communities, and parents are not only valuable to students' lives, but can assist teachers in understanding the ways in which these experiences can be practically and meaningfully connected to classroom curriculum (e.g., Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). In an ethnographic study, Riojas-Cortez (2001) examined the ways that 12 bilingual preschoolers' play in a South Texas classroom reflected their use of Funds of Knowledge. Her data suggest that the preschoolers drew upon their culture and language in their interactive play (e.g., in the kitchen center) and other shared spaces. Drawing on Moll and colleagues' work (1992), Riojas-Cortez developed a useful taxonomy of 12 categories of Funds of Knowledge the children drew upon during play, which included child care, family, education, farming, and construction, among others. The author suggests that educators should intentionally draw upon these Funds of Knowledge exhibited and make connections to classroom curriculum.

In fact, a key component of the Funds of Knowledge framework is to be able to identify what unique experiences students and their families possess and later link them to instruction (Riojas-Cortez,

Studies have suggested that drawing on the experiences that students have accumulated in their households with siblings, peers, friends, communities, and parents are not only valuable to students' lives, but can assist teachers in understanding the ways in which these experiences can be practically and meaningfully connected to classroom curriculum.

Huerta, Flores, Perez and Clark, 2008). Gutierrez (2002), for example, documented how drawing was used to build bridges between a third grade bilingual student's background experiences and his academic achievement in school. The researcher and classroom teacher used bilingual books and writing topics that were based on the student's interests in soccer. By tuning in to his interests through close observation, the teacher was able to create contexts whereby the student was successful in classroom literacy practices such as writing.

However, being able to tap into students' household experiences and bring them to classroom instruction can be challenging. Interestingly, Upadhyay's (2009) study of a Hmong teacher suggests that doing so may be less of a challenge for those whose experiences resemble the children's lives. By closely analyzing Lee's classroom interactions and implementation of classroom activities, the author suggested that Lee was able to bring in a variety of culturally-relevant activities into her instruction because she had, herself, direct knowledge of cultural dynamics present in Hmong families. For instance, because Lee knew about the role that gardening plays among Hmong's families and culture, she was able to make a direct connection between the household experiences and the content they were learning in the classroom. Bringing these experiences, along with her sensitivity for the children in the classroom who were not Hmong, allowed these students' to not only understand why science is relevant to their lives but to develop a greater understanding of the science content taught in the classroom.

### Implementing an Additive Framework in the Classroom and School

As it has already been argued, teachers and administrators must value the cultural and linguistic resources that CLD students bring into the classroom. However, they must begin by being pro-active in order to seek out specific ways to engage and value parents' language, experience, knowledge, and participation within the curriculum and the learning that takes place in the classroom.

### Identifying the Funds of Knowledge Present in their Households

In order to enact an additive framework for working with CLD students and families, teachers need to first identify the rich kinds of experiences that students and their families possess (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Teachers should also be aware that the parents themselves may not be completely aware that these experiences can and in fact are valuable (Spielman, 2001). While it is certainly important to gather information related to their countries of origin, language(s) spoken at home, number of siblings, etc., these pieces of information can be gathered through traditional means, including classroom discussions, parent-teacher conferences and school events. On the other hand, visiting their community and home can provide teachers with a wealth of information which may not be available otherwise, such as information about their daily lives, their family dynamics, and the ways in which learning opportunities are provided in the household. By doing these visits, teachers will also move away from making use of stereotypes or overgeneralizations about their students'

backgrounds and rather use information gathered from the children and families themselves, to identify their strengths and to highlight how unique their experiences are.

Prior to collecting these data, teachers will need to think about how the information gathered will help them better understand their student and his/her family, how their students learn, the kinds of supports available at home, and the conditions for learning for the child. In fact, González et al. (1995) have suggested that teachers conduct research visits, as opposed to home visits, where teachers solely collect data about the family involved. Field notes, a personal journal, and questionnaires can be used while doing these visits (González et al., 1995). A list of questions, in both English and Spanish, like those provided in Table 1, can be used as a starting point. Note that gathering information about the child and families, as well as building rapport and trust with the families, should be both an ongoing and systematic process.

### Becoming a Reflective Practitioner Who Understands the Role of the Funds of Knowledge in their Instruction

Practitioners need to make strategic use of the information they have collected about the child and families. To do so, they need to adopt the role of a reflective practitioner—this is a role which will allow them to not just analyze the information gathered, but who will critically reflect on what they do and identify areas of improvement. They can ask themselves: (1) How am I incorporating my students' and their families' assets and strengths in my teaching already?, (2) How am I taking into consideration the assets and strengths these families have in my teaching?, (3) What can I do to improve how I communicate with the parents?, and (4) What can I do to improve what I do in the classroom that is responsive to their unique lived, cultural, and linguistic experiences? (See Table 1) In other words, this reflection exercise will allow them to think about how they will use that information, and how gathering such information will aid their teaching. Asking these questions will also allow them to find ways to become more proactive in incorporating these aspects into their teaching.

**Figure 1. Questions that can be used to gather information about the Funds of Knowledge – A Focus on Literacy Practices**

English	Spanish
What do you remember about your own schooling experiences?	¿Qué recuerda de sus propias experiencias escolares?
What kind of support did you have at home when you started reading and writing?	¿Qué tipos de apoyo tuvo usted en su hogar cuando comenzó a escribir y a leer?
What were your strengths/weaknesses in learning in your native language?	¿Cuáles considera eran sus fortalezas y debilidades al aprender en su idioma nativo?
Do you read and/or write in another language (second language)? If yes, which language?	¿Escribe o lee usted en algún otro lenguaje (segunda lengua)? Si la respuesta es sí, diga cuál lenguaje.
Tell me about your experiences learning to read and write in your second language.	Dígame de sus experiencias aprendiendo a leer y escribir en su segunda lengua.
Do you recall the moment when your child began to read and write? If yes, tell me about that moment in his/her life. If not, please explain why you think you do not remember that moment.	¿Recuerda usted el momento en que su niño(a) empezó a leer y escribir? Si la respuesta es sí, hableme de ese momento en su vida. Si la respuesta es no, por favor explique por qué cree usted que no recuerda dicho momento.
Describe the kinds of experiences that your child has with reading and writing at home.	Describa los tipos de experiencias que su niño(a) tiene con la lectura y escritura en el hogar.
Do you help your child with reading and writing at home? Please explain why.	¿Le ayuda usted a su niño(a) a leer y escribir en el hogar? Por favor explique por qué.
Please give me examples of things you do at home to help your child with schoolwork.	Por favor deme ejemplos de las cosas que usted hace en su hogar para ayudarle a su niño(a) con cosas de la escuela.
What are some of the things you find helpful when working with your child in school tasks?	¿Cuáles son algunas de las cosas que encuentra usted son beneficiosas cuando está trabajando con su niño(a) en cosas de la escuela?
Do you prepare your own materials to help your child with reading and writing? If yes, what are these and are any of these materials or ideas especially helpful? If not, please explain what you use.	Prepara usted sus propios materiales para ayudarle a su niño(a) con la lectura y escritura? Si es así, qué materiales son estos y de qué manera le son útiles estos.

### Making a Direct Link between Students' Funds of Knowledge and School Curriculum

Intentionally fostering a curricular context for incorporating the Funds of Knowledge, both school- and classroom-wide, is imperative. According to Olmedo (2009, p. 27), three characteristics need to typify the school community: 'compromiso' (commitment), 'confianza' (trust), and 'colaboración' (collaboration). Parents and teachers need to be committed to learning from one another, to fostering mutual confidence and trust, and to work together in collaborative ways to improve student learning.

To bring the Funds of Knowledge into the curriculum, teachers need to begin by making students aware that the experiences

they bring from home are valued in the classroom. For example, teachers can go beyond creating pairs or buddies in the classroom to help one another academically and linguistically; the pairs can be used to allow them to compare their experiences, whether similar or different, in collaborative ways. Likewise, developing trust with the children and their families can be achieved through a variety of means, such as using family journals where the family communicates with the teacher about the successes and challenges the child may be experiencing in the classroom. Such family journal can also ensure that there will be a two-way communication between the family and the school. Other research-based strategies can be found in Table 2.

**Figure 2. Connecting Recent Research Studies on Funds of Knowledge to Classroom Practice**

Research	How Students Funds of Knowledge were Connected to Practice	Implications for Teachers
(Dworin, 2006)	Dworin and the classroom teacher led students to draw on the writing process and their skills in writing and translating to create dual language stories. Students began the project by engaging with reading of bilingual books that developed the theme of culturally relevant family stories. Students interviewed family members and used oral stories as basis for stories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use oral language stories as basis for writing.</li> <li>• Value dual language work and translation of dual language texts (reading, writing, listening, speaking).</li> </ul>
(Taylor, Bernhard, Garg, & Cummins, 2008)	Students authored stories initially by dictating and drawing in response to questions posed about their culture, home, and experiences. Parents and families were invited to contribute photos and assist with translations of the stories into their native language. These often became inter-generational projects with parents and grandparents participating in the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage collaboration with family members in multi-media assignments.</li> <li>• Parents and family can provide input and assistance in the native language.</li> </ul>
(Tan & Barton, 2010)	A sixth grade science teacher connected a nutrition unit to students' lived experiences by having them bring, discuss, and make connections with their foods eaten at home. This increased engagement and access to the curriculum while giving student's voices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make connections from curriculum to students' stories and lived experiences.</li> <li>• Incorporate storytelling and dialogue based on students' related connections to the concepts.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

Teachers working with CLD children and families hold varying perceptions, from deficit to additive and in-between of how much these families bring into the education of their children. Many of these belief systems, however, do not take into consideration the social and cultural aspects of the families and contain negative assumptions about the role of parents in involvement in literacy learning, resulting in subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999; 2005). In such deficit models, it is unlikely that parents will be able to actually incorporate suggested activities in the home, if these have no relevance to them or parents lack resources to implement the initiative set by the teacher and/or school. In contrast, with positive models that are based on listening to the needs of the parents and building on cultural and linguistic strengths and assets, it is more likely that activities and program suggestions will be more likely to be implemented in the home. Listening to parents' needs about school and literacy learning in order to implement a program are crucial.

Additive frameworks, such as the Funds of Knowledge, can be seen as a starting

point for parent involvement; that is, not only is it important to see the larger context from which our students come, but it is relevant to our daily instruction to know what our students have background knowledge of so we can build on what they already know. By making the effort to contact parents and families and learn more about their lives, educators can collaborate with parents as partners, and not as empty vessels to be filled. Parents have a lot to say and contribute if only we will listen, learn, and design instruction that builds on their strengths and needs. By building on students' and families strengths, students will see that the teacher is making an effort to reach out to their home life, and this can become a source of pride for the child and the family as well. ★

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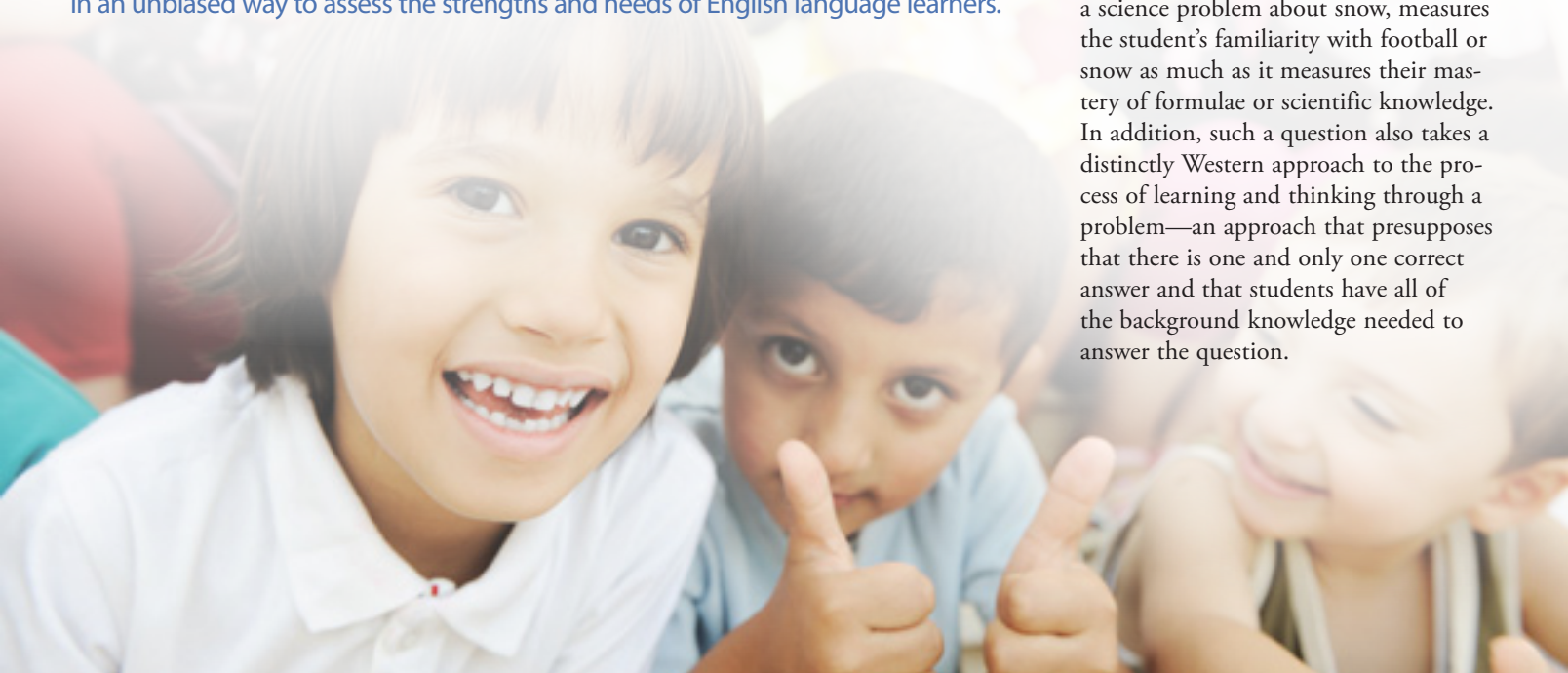
# A Recipe for Student Achievement: Successful and Appropriate Assessment for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners

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Educators have long acknowledged that all is not right in the world of assessment, particularly where our culturally and linguistically diverse learners are concerned. For these students especially, appropriate and accurate assessment is crucial in identifying their needs, selecting appropriate services, and delivering and modifying instruction (Klingner and Artiles, 2003). However, for these students, ironically, schools and teachers are frequently challenged in figuring out where to begin. They've sliced the assessment pie many different ways in an attempt to understand what pieces of the process should be prioritized, what "ingredients" need to be included in a successful assessment, and how to use assessment results in an unbiased way to assess the strengths and needs of English language learners.

It is often said that assessment follows naturally from good instruction. While such a statement is somewhat oversimplified, it is true that certain characteristics underlie effective and accurate assessments in any context. All assessment, whatever the population, should take into account the following:

1. **Language of assessment.** Often, educators are faced with a dichotomy: assess in L1, or assess in L2. Less frequently is there support for a balanced or integrated approach (Krashen, 2007; Rhodes, Ochoa and Ortiz, 2005), where assessment may occur in both languages and may take informal measures into account as well as formal ones, to provide a more accurate picture of students' abilities without the limitations of a single-language approach.
2. **Translating standardized assessments.** Often, we may think that administering a Spanish-language (or other language) version of a particular assessment will accomplish the same outcome—or, even more problematic, one might attempt to translate individual items from a test into the student's L1. Such an approach ignores the fact that test items are rooted in linguistic and cultural constructs and concepts that are not so easily translated (Rhodes, Ochoa and Ortiz, 2005; Esparza Brown and Doolittle, 2008). A math question asking students to consider how many points are scored in a football game, or a science problem about snow, measures the student's familiarity with football or snow as much as it measures their mastery of formulae or scientific knowledge. In addition, such a question also takes a distinctly Western approach to the process of learning and thinking through a problem—an approach that presupposes that there is one and only one correct answer and that students have all of the background knowledge needed to answer the question.



## Reviewing Language

How do you know if the language on the test is such that students will need additional support?

There is no tried-and-true formula to identify every word that is part of the “academic language” lexicon (Cummins, 2003). However, keeping a few key questions in mind can help teachers identify some of the words, sentence structures, and text clues that are common to academic language. These questions are listed below:

- Does the assessment contain complex vocabulary that has not previously been taught in class?
- Are the sentences complex, containing more than one clause, multiple prepositional phrases, or prepositions and conjunctions whose meaning is not clear from context?
- Are text features (titles, subheadings, bold print, underlining) available and used to highlight any key words, concepts or phrases?
- Do questions present multiple demands in terms of language processing, pairing complex syntax or vocabulary with challenging underlying concepts?

**3. Awareness of what is really being measured.** When a student takes the math assessment discussed above, for example, review the test materials to determine the degree to which the assessment measures math knowledge or language proficiency. If the language of the assessment is so complex that the student will not be able to access the content and curriculum contained in the assessment, teachers should be aware of that fact. If possible, the assessment should be modified or postponed; if testing mandates make such a step impossible, teachers should use caution and discretion in interpreting the assessment results and using them in decision-making.

**4. Basal and ceiling norms.** Assessment results can also be skewed by a lack of awareness of developmental issues within a cultural and linguistic context. Assessors may halt assessment at a perceived “ceiling” because they believe they have reached the limit of a child’s cognitive, intellectual, or linguistic knowledge. However, developmental norms differ across cultures, and the scope and sequence of vocabulary, skill, and concepts may simply be taught and acquired in a different way, or at a differ-

ent pace, in another culture (Mazur and Rice Doran, 2010). In addition, the process of acquiring an additional language may mean that students appear to have “scatter skills,” or areas in which they test proficient outside the typical sequence of skill acquisition, simply because their language development is also occurring outside that expected sequence.

**5. Early childhood issues and developmental impact.** Students from diverse backgrounds may have experienced atypical issues in their early years, ranging from cultural transition to sometimes-traumatic immigration stories or family separations. While teachers must be careful not to generalize or make stereotypical associations about their culturally and linguistically diverse students, it is nonetheless true that students in this category are often (for sociological and economic reasons outside their control) at disproportionate risk for poverty, high mobility rates, residence in substandard housing, and lack of access to health care, nutrition programs, and other benefits. Where the existence of such factors has been verified, teachers must be aware of the impact these factors may have on the assessment process.

**6. Parental reports.** Particularly when assessing students for special education eligibility, parent or family input is deemed of the utmost importance in the assessment process. Here too, school staff need to be aware of the impact of culture and language. Parents new to the school system may need additional explanation of the special education and/or placement process. Family input may “look” different when students are not living with parents, or whose parents and family members are present but lack legally documented status. Family surveys—a frequent tool used to gather parent and family member input early in the intervention, assessment, or placement process—may not be accessible to family members still in the process of learning English or still in the process of acquiring literacy. When possible, it is highly preferable to use one or more family interviews, conducted in the family’s native language by an individual who has knowledge of the cultural and linguistic norms relevant to the family.

With these considerations in mind, school personnel may want to keep the following recommendations in mind. These are not hard and fast “rules,” but rather, general guidelines that apply to many situations in which culturally and linguistically diverse students are being assessed.

**1. Keep your population in mind, and tailor assessment to the background and needs of those students.** The first element in any assessment process should involve determination of those languages in which the student is most likely to be successful. This may be the student’s native language, their second, third or additional language (particularly if the student never acquired literacy or academic language in their first language), or a combination. Students who are older may have what appear to be unevenly developed “splinter skills,” due to differing curricula, scope and sequence across cultures and educational systems. Often, assessment results may show a delay or disorder when, in fact, a student was never presented with the concepts or vocabulary that are being assessed.

2. Ask what is really being assessed.

As described above, does the assessment test knowledge and skills, in a non-biased way, or does it measure the student's prior knowledge, exposure to content, or English language proficiency? (Obiakor, 2007) If the latter, do you have additional (formal or informal) ways to supplement this assessment and provide a more accurate set of results?

3. Consider the accessibility of the assessment. Whether a formal psychological assessment or an authentic classroom-based assessment, the materials should be visually accessible (or auditorily accessible) as well as accessible from a linguistic and cultural perspective. Too many problems on a page, or a profusion of small type or figures grouped together, may cause difficulty for students with visual figure-ground issues, which make it difficult for students to distinguish multiple figures from one another or pick out foreground vs. background images. Font size, style, and features (such as putting everything in bold, or nothing in bold) may make it difficult for students to identify numbers, letters, or the correct answer.

4. Recognize that, for many assessments in many schools, the population on which the assessment instrument was normed is not the same population on which it is being used. As student populations become more diverse, the norming group for many of our most common assessments no longer "looks like" a representative American classroom. This means that the basal levels, testing ceilings, stanines and percentiles established in the norming process may not hold true for your own students. Assessment must be viewed as an ongoing diagnostic process, as opposed to a static one that results in a quantitative fixed score. It is useful to remember that every assessment truly reflects more than that which it was designed to measure, as it reflects (among other variables) the student's physical and mental well being, their response to the environment, the language of the assessment and their comfort with the tester-student relationship.

Above all, school personnel must remember that assessment should be used to measure student progress and growth. Where assessment is used to obtain a "yes" or "no" answer ("Should this student receive special education services?" "Is this student reading on grade level?" "Does this student qualify for English language learner accommodations?"), personnel must be cognizant that any one assessment, by itself, may give a biased or incomplete result, depending on the cultural and linguistic content of the assessment and the match between what the assessment measures and the student's language proficiency and prior knowledge.

5. Strive for a balanced assessment process linked to classroom instruction at each stage. Educators and school systems must recognize that different cultures have different priorities in terms of child development, particularly with concepts such as attainment of independence, self-help and self-care. Students from other countries may be coming from a different curriculum, with a different scope and sequence of skill acquisition. In order to accurately measure these students' prior knowledge, some flexibility in testing procedures is often required; educators should be willing to assess below the basal level if it is necessary and to go above the traditional ceiling for an assessment, in order to determine whether the student may have scatter or splinter skills in areas outside the range indicated by the basal or ceiling.

6. Involve the appropriate personnel. Culturally responsive assessment for culturally and linguistically diverse learners is a complex task, and professionals who understand the full cultural, linguistic, social, and emotional context of each assessment should interpret results (Fiedler et al, 2008). Accordingly, the assessment process for these students should be individualized, with each assessment selected because it is appropriate for the student's level of language proficiency and background knowledge. Input from school psychologists, bilingual psychologists and bilingual assessment team personnel, and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers can help to guarantee a successful assessment process. In addition, consider involving counselors, after-school personnel, social workers, and even community members if families feel such involvement is appropriate.

Assessment must be considered as more than a gateway to determine failure or success, advancement or retention. If our approach to assessment is focused on student success, we will prioritize methods of assessment and procedures that facilitate and support student success.

Above all, school personnel must remember that assessment should be used to measure student progress and growth. Where assessment is used to obtain a “yes” or “no” answer (“Should this student receive special education services?” “Is this student reading on grade level?” “Does this student qualify for English language learner accommodations?”), personnel must be cognizant that any one assessment, by itself, may give a biased or incomplete result, depending on the cultural and linguistic content of the assessment and the match between what the assessment measures and the student’s language proficiency and prior knowledge. Standardized measures, in particular, should be used as one of several tools determining the answers to the high-stakes, “yes or no” questions listed above. Additional data should be considered as appropriate from assessments in multiple languages, from family and student interviews (as opposed to survey questionnaires), student work samples, and curriculum-based measures (Esparza Brown and Doolittle, 2008).

Finally, assessment must be considered as more than a gateway to determine failure or success, advancement or retention. If our approach to assessment is focused on student success, we will prioritize methods of assessment and procedures that facilitate and support student success. This process would involve, first, a more careful selection of assessments (for example, if a student’s expressive language is not yet at a third-grade level in English, don’t select an assessment which requires the student to read at a third-grade level in English). Second, it would involve a collaborative approach to assessment. Just as we accept that one single assessment cannot tell us all we hope to learn about a student, we also

should accept that no single staff member or perspective can offer a balanced and complete view of the student’s strengths, needs, and best educational options. Assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse students should include input from general educators, teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or bilingual education teachers, and special educators where appropriate (Davisson, 2006). In addition, support personnel such as school counselors, social workers, after-school coordinators, community members, and others who can speak to the student’s social and emotional needs should be invited to join the process. Just as we now acknowledge that it takes a “village” to raise a child, so too we must recognize that it may take a “village” to assess a child and interpret the results appropriately. This may involve putting more time and effort into the assessment process than we have been accustomed to doing and, also, involves going out of our way to reach those who may not have been traditionally involved in our assessment processes. There are many individuals, starting with the parent/ family and student, who can inform the assessment process. Their feedback, as well as that of all stakeholders, constitutes a significant ingredient of the “assessment pie”. Seeking their input, and constructing an integrated, multi-dimensional assessment process, may require more time than required to administer a formal, standardized, “one-shot” assessment (Artiles et al, 2010). However, it also gives one a more holistic picture, one that leads to more appropriate instruction and integration of services and facilitates the placement and success of all learners in our global “village”. ★

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# Understanding Misconceptions to Provide Effective Bilingual Education

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“Ser bilingüe es como vivir en dos mundos. Uno puede hablar con personas en español y entrar en su mundo. Lo mismo pasa cuando hablas, escribes y lees en inglés. Ahora que empecé el programa de educación bilingüe, puedo ver que tan valioso es ser bilingüe porque hay tantos niños que puedo ayudar en su primer idioma.”

“To be bilingual is like living in two worlds. One can speak to people in Spanish and enter into their world. The same thing happens when you speak, you write, and you read in English. Now that I have begun the bilingual education program, I can see how valuable it is to be bilingual because there are so many children that I can help in their first language.”

This quote comes from Francisco, a college student who was just entering a teacher education program to become a bilingual teacher. Francisco came to the United States from El Salvador when he was fourteen. His mother, a migrant worker, had lived and worked for several years in the United States before she could bring Francisco and her other children to join her. By the time Francisco arrived in the United States, he was high school age. Like most students who come at the secondary level, Francisco received no first language support. He was submersed in classes given only in English. His English as a second language classes focused on grammar drills and conversational language and did not prepare him for the academic demands of college.

Fortunately, Francisco was an outstanding soccer player and was able to attend college on a scholarship. He nearly dropped out because the academic challenges of learning in English were so great. His grades were low at first but he persisted with

encouragement from his mother and his coach and gradually improved his grades and became more confident in his studies. He decided he would become a teacher, and since he was bilingual, it seemed logical to him to study bilingual education.

When, as a senior, Francisco did some observations in a first-grade bilingual classroom, Francisco saw for the first time how English language learners in a bilingual setting were able to participate fully in the classroom activities. He noticed that the children felt good about themselves as learners because they could draw on their first language strengths as they studied school subjects. Francisco was inspired to use his bilingualism to help others so that they would not have to struggle as much as he had. After teaching bilingual students for many years, he is now an Assistant Principal in a school that is 98% Latino, but his goals of supporting these students' bilingualism has never changed.

## **It's All In the Name**

It is unfortunate that students like Francisco have had to struggle in school without being able to use their first languages as they learn. We, as educators, can help them view themselves differently and value their first language from the beginning of their schooling experiences. We can start by seriously considering what we call our newcomers. García (2010; 2009) has proposed that instead of labeling our children as limited English proficient, culturally and linguistically diverse, language minority, or even calling them English language learners, we refer to these students as emergent bilinguals. This term signals that we acknowledge that we value the language they bring to school as well as the language they are learning. Their bilingualism and biliteracy emerges through effective bilingual education in classes where teachers understand how bilinguals use their two languages and why.

## Languaging, Translanguaging, and Code Switching

As García (2010) points out about emergent bilinguals, “whether born abroad or in the United States, most of the children have a rich family life with abundant *languaging* in languages other than English” (3). García’s use of the word *languaging* makes *language* into a verb. People language as they communicate; that is, they use language in different settings with different people in order to accomplish different purposes.

When bilingual and multilingual students use language, they often *translanguage*. García (2009) defines *translanguaging* as the “process of going back and forth from one language to the other” (49). She points out that bilinguals in everyday use often code switch. They naturally translanguage with different people for different reasons as they communicate.

*Code switching* has a negative connotation for many people who assume that English learners may insert a word or phrase from their native language because they don’t have full command of English. While it is true that one strategy English learners can use is to rely on their first language as they communicate in a second language, most code switching is done for other purposes.

Grosjean (2010) lists several reasons for code switching. One reason is that some concepts are better expressed in one language than in another. For example, when our son-in-law’s mother from El Salvador got to know us, we learned that the Spanish word that we should use when referring to her is *consuegra*. This one word in Spanish can replace what is expressed by a whole phrase in English. As Grosjean notes, if the person you are speaking to is also bilingual, bringing in words from both languages enriches the conversation in the same way that having a large vocabulary in one language allows a person to express herself more fully.

A third reason that people code switch is to establish social solidarity. As Grosjean (2010) writes, “Code-switching is also used as a communicative or social strategy to show speaker involvement, mark group identity, exclude someone, raise one’s status, show expertise, and so on” (54–55). In South Texas along the border, bilinguals often code switch to identify themselves as part of the Mexican American community. Administrators at our university make a point of moving between Spanish and English as meetings start with our Latina,

Spanish-speaking president. She often inserts Spanish in her conversations with influential Latino community members at fund raisers.

While bilinguals translanguage in their day to day interactions, the fact is that most bilinguals are stronger in one language than the other depending on the setting in which they find themselves. Bilinguals develop fluency in different domains rather than showing an equal ability in each domain. For example, many bilingual teachers who teach different subjects daily in their classrooms find it difficult to explain the rationale for bilingual education to parents or other community members in Spanish. Even though these teachers speak Spanish, they may not have developed the vocabulary needed to translate these complex concepts into Spanish. Church is a setting where bilinguals are often not equally comfortable using both their languages. Many bilinguals are more comfortable in church services that use the language they used in church as a child.

Despite the many examples bilinguals provide, most educators view bilinguals as needing to be able to use both languages equally well. In fact, Grosjean (2010) claims that bilinguals “simply do not need to be equally competent in all their languages. The level of fluency they attain in a language . . . will depend on their need for that language and will be domain specific” (21). Because bilinguals develop their two languages differently, very few are completely balanced.

Perhaps the reason that people assume that the ideal bilingual is balanced results from thinking of a bilingual as the sum of two fully developed monolinguals. Grosjean compares a bilingual to a hurdler in track and field. The hurdler has to have the skills of a high jumper and the skills of a sprinter, but combines jumping high and running fast into a new skill. A problem with conceptualizing a bilingual as two monolinguals is that we test the two languages separately, expecting equal proficiency in each one in the academic language domain. As a result, bilinguals are generally found to be deficient in one or both of their languages.

Our eight-year-old granddaughter, Maya, provides an example of a typical bilingual. When she is with us she almost always speaks in English. No one told her to speak English to us, she just figured out that that was our stronger language even though we often speak Spanish to others around her. When Carmen, a monolingual Spanish speaker, comes to

the house, Yvonne speaks Spanish to her, and so does Maya. If Carmen and Yvonne are in conversation, Maya will often join the conversation in Spanish and code switch for Yvonne to clarify something she has said in Spanish to be sure Yvonne understands. Maya also speaks Spanish to her godparents from Argentina who do speak English, but are native speakers of Spanish and always make a point of speaking to her in Spanish.

Like most bilinguals, Maya is not completely balanced. She uses English more often than Spanish in more settings with more people. As a result, she is more fluent in English than in Spanish. However, her language dominance could change. If her parents moved to a Spanish-speaking country and Maya attended school where all the classes were taught in Spanish and if she developed Spanish-speaking friends, her language dominance would shift. Her fluency in Spanish would naturally increase as she used Spanish more often in more settings with more people. If Maya was in an effective dual language program at school, she would also develop academic Spanish.

## Supporting Bilingual Students in Schools

Once we understand how bilinguals translanguage, that is how they use their languages in different settings, we can consider how to support them in our schools. Even though enrichment bilingual approaches such as dual language have been shown to be more effective than English Only approaches, even though in most of the world bilingualism is the norm, and even though there are clear advantages to bilingualism, in many schools in the United States emergent bilinguals are only instructed in English. Because many teachers working with English language learners recognize the importance of helping them develop competence in English, it seems logical that the best way to develop English proficiency is to immerse learners in an environment in which they hear, speak, read, and write English all day. Although the idea that “more English leads to more English” is logical, it is not the best approach to working with bilingual students. Cummins encourages teachers to rethink monolingual strategies for teaching multilingual students. An important point that he makes is that accessing both their languages helps emergent bilinguals develop identities of competence. In some settings, ELLs are made to feel incompetent.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1983) describes how newcomers to English feel when immersed in English-only instruction:

The child sits in a submersion classroom (where many of the students have L2, the language of instruction, as their mother tongue), listening to the teacher explaining something that the child is then supposed to use for problem solving ... the child gets less information than a child listening to her mother tongue. (116)

Not only does the child learn less; the child may also come to view herself as not being competent in school tasks. Instead, we want to create children who see the value of using their first language as they learn.

### Avoiding Misconceptions About Language Use

Cummins (2007) discusses three misconceptions commonly held by educators of ELLs. The first misconception is the idea that instruction should be carried out exclusively in the target language without recourse to the student's L1. A second misconception is that translation between L1 and L2 has no place in the teaching of language or literacy, and the third is that in bilingual programs the two languages should be kept separate. These misconceptions arise when teachers or researchers ignore the reality of bilingual communities and everyday language use as bilinguals translanguage. Figure 1 lists these three misconceptions and the realities of effective teaching for emergent bilinguals.

The first misconception that Cummins discusses, what he calls the direct method assumption, is that second language students should be taught entirely in the target language. For English language learners, this means that all instruction should be given in English. Cummins cites a study by Lucas and Katz (1994) that describes nine exemplary programs in which English was the primary language of instruction. Nevertheless, as the researchers explain, in these classes teachers found multiple ways to use students' first languages for useful purposes. We have developed a list of strategies that teachers we have worked with have used to support their students' primary languages as they teach:

1. Ensure that environmental print in the classroom reflects students' first languages.
2. Supply school and classroom libraries with books, magazines, and other resources in languages in addition to English.
3. Have bilingual students read and write with aides, parents, and other students who speak their first language.
4. Encourage bilingual students to publish books and share their stories in languages other than English or produce bilingual books in English and the students' first languages.
5. Allow bilingual students to respond in their primary languages to demonstrate comprehension of content taught in English.
6. Use DVDs, videotapes or websites produced for children in other languages to support academic learning and raise self-esteem.

A second misconception that Cummins (2007) discusses is the belief that translation has no place in the classroom—what he calls the “no translation” assumption. Like the direct teaching assumption, excluding translation ignores what happens in bilingual households and communities. In our border community, we see example after example of how skilled the children are at translating back and forth between English and Spanish as they play with friends or interact with the adult community. They often serve as language brokers, helping adults with important business translations. This is true of all bilingual communities, but sometimes schools do not realize how skilled their bilingual students really are.

Cummins (2007) suggests that using translation in the classroom recognizes skills children bring to school as language brokers, and it promotes the acquisition of English. Cummins is not referring to concurrent

translation in which the teacher translates each thing she says. This practice is ineffective because students only pay attention to the language they understand. However, judicious translation can allow students to better comprehend key concepts during activities like morning message. For example, a teacher can have a more advanced bilingual translate the message so that a beginning English learner can understand what has been written. Translation also promotes biliteracy development as students write and translate their own books. When bilinguals can show monolingual peers their translanguaging abilities, they are more valued by their classmates, and they develop a sense of self-esteem. As Cummins (2007) notes, allowing translation in the classroom helps bilinguals develop “identities of competence” (228).

A third misconception that Cummins terms the Two Solitudes assumption is that in bilingual classrooms the two languages should be kept rigidly separated. However, many effective practices are excluded when instruction is limited to one language at a time. For example, having students access cognates depends on using both languages simultaneously. Teachers can have students read bilingual books. Students can carry out linguistic investigations and compare and contrast their languages. Students can also have exchanges with sister classes in other countries where one of their languages is used.

One other strategy that draws on students' first languages and permits the use of two languages in the classroom is preview, view, review. If the teacher, a bilingual peer, a bilingual cross-age tutor, a bilingual aide, or a parent can simply tell the English learners in their native language what the upcoming lesson is about, the students are provided with a preview. During the view, the teacher conducts the lesson using strategies to make the input comprehensible. With the

**Figure 1. Misconceptions and Realities**

Misconceptions	Reality
All teaching should be in the target language	Research shows that judicious use of the first language promotes second language acquisition
Translation should not be allowed in the ESL or bilingual classroom	Emergent bilinguals are often asked to translate outside the school. Teachers can draw on this skill in school.
In dual language bilingual programs, the two languages should be kept strictly separate	There are times to keep the two languages separate, but there are also times to bring them together for instructional purposes

help of the preview, the students can follow the English better and acquire both English and academic content. Finally, it is good to have a short time of review during which students can use their native language. For example, students who speak the same first language could meet in groups to review the main ideas of the lesson and then report back in English. Figure 2 outlines the preview, view, review technique.

The preview, view, review technique provides a structured way to alternate English and native-language instruction. Using preview, view, review can help teachers avoid concurrent translation. Preview, view, review can also motivate students to stay engaged in the lesson.

While bilingual education may not be possible in some schools for a variety of reasons, teachers in monolingual teaching settings can find ways to use their bilingual students' first languages to promote academic success. Second language learners may appear to have shorter attention spans than native speakers, but in reality those students may be suffering from the fatigue of trying to make sense out of their new language. Often teachers complain that their English learners misbehave and don't pay attention, or they think their second language learners may have some learning problems because they do not seem to be learning. The first language preview and review can help them understand and stay engaged in their lessons.

Yvonne recalls an experience she had in an elementary classroom when she was asked to give a demonstration lesson. The teachers in the school had not had much experience with English language learners, who were now appearing in their schools. The principal had tried to explain to the teachers the importance of drawing on students' first languages and thought bringing in someone from the outside might help.

Yvonne taught a reading/science lesson on seed growth to a class of second graders with primarily native English speakers and five native Spanish speakers, one of whom had been in the country only three months. She explained to the native English speakers that some of the lesson would be in Spanish, but that she would do things to help them understand. She previewed the lesson in Spanish by showing some seeds and talking about them and then reading a very comprehensible big book in Spanish, *Una semilla nada más* (Ada, 1990).

Native English speakers got restless almost immediately and complained, "I don't understand!" and "Speak English!" However, the native Spanish speakers participated eagerly. The newcomer, José, answered and commented so much that Yvonne had to tell him to let others talk. Yvonne followed the preview, view, review model and did the view in English with lots of comprehensible input and a hands-on activity where students classified seeds according to shape, size, texture, and color. All the students, including the Spanish speakers, participated during the view. During the review, Spanish speakers participated again while English speakers were beginning to understand some and listened more carefully, but did not really participate.

At the end of the lesson Yvonne approached the classroom teacher, who had tears in her eyes. She told Yvonne:

I thought José had serious learning and behavioral problems. Seeing him today helped me see that he wants to learn, he just doesn't understand! Look at how my English speakers responded! They were acting like José does when I teach in English all day long.

Allowing translation when it serves a pedagogical purpose, using preview, view, and review, and using different strategies to support students' first languages can promote academic success for emergent bilinguals. It is important to remember, however, that the most effective way for second language students to develop both academic concepts and English language proficiency is through the full development of their first language (August & Shanahan, 2006; Crawford, 2007; Cummins, 2001; Krashen, 1999; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Some students, like Francisco, may succeed even when they are placed in inadequate programs, but many do not. When teachers and administrators develop a clear understanding of bilingualism and bilingual education, they can support students in such a way that they can capitalize on the rich language resources that emergent bilinguals bring to our schools. By doing this we can provide the best possible education for all our students. ★

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FIGURE 2. Preview/View/Review

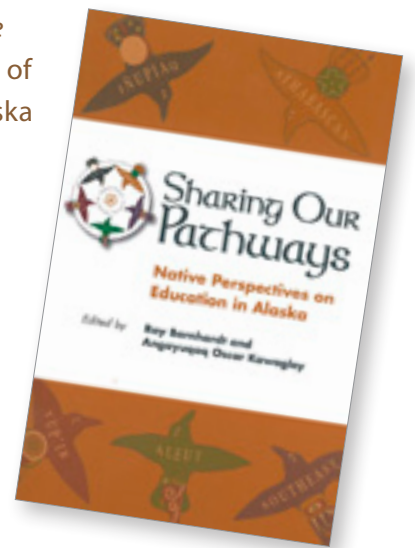
<b>Preview</b>	<b>first language</b> The teacher or a bilingual helper gives an overview of the lesson or activity in the students' first language. This could be giving an oral summary, reading a book, showing a film, asking a key question, or leading a short discussion. If several language groups are in the class, students could work in same language groups to answer a question and report back in English.
<b>View</b>	<b>second or target language [English]</b> The teacher teaches the lesson or directs the activity in the students' second language using strategies for making the input comprehensible.
<b>Review</b>	<b>first language</b> The teacher or the students summarize key ideas and raise questions about the lesson in their first language. Students can work in same language groups to do this and report back in English.

# Native Perspectives On Education in Alaska

*Jon Reyhner, Northern Arizona University*

Ray Barnhardt and the late Angayuq Oscar Kawagley in *Sharing Our Pathways: Native Perspective on Education in Alaska* bring together 63 essays published in the newsletter of the same name between 1996 and 2005 contributed by staff and associates of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (ARSI). Frank Hill, one of the contributors, writes,

*Those of us associated with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative for the past seven years have been promoting the concept of culturally-responsive schools as a means to create systemic reform in Alaska's rural schools—especially those whose student populations are predominantly Alaska Native. Improved student academic achievement is the ultimate goal. We understand and believe that if we base teaching and schools on the local environment and culture, giving respect and credit to students and heritage, we can begin teaching at a higher level. We also understand and believe that students who have healthy self concepts are better learners. (p. 27)*



The essays are divided into five sections—Athabascan, Iñupiaq, Tlingit/Haida, Unangan/Alutiiq, and Yup'ik/Cup'ik Pathways to Education—representing the different Native groups across Alaska. Barnhardt in his introduction notes how the ARSI sought to “implement a set of school reform initiatives that systematically documented the indigenous knowledge systems of Alaska Native people” for use in schools (p. xi). Indigenous or

traditional knowledge according to Nakutluk Virginia Ned “is the knowledge of the local environment that people have developed to sustain themselves and thus it serves as the basis for cultural identity. It is the knowledge built up by a group of people through generations of living in close contact with nature” (p. 9). Thus as Kawagley notes, “nature is our textbook,” and it is through close observation of nature that one learns (p. 305).

Harking back to the African proverb that it takes a village to raise a child, Bernice Tetpon declares, “everyone in the community is a teacher” (p. 105) and Paul Ongtooguk affirms “the community is a school” (p. 100). In the United States too often for Native peoples their village was excluded from its rightful role, even to the point of putting Alaska Native students into government boarding schools in the lower 48 states where they were punished for speaking their Native languages.

“First and foremost a person must have a solid foundation in his or her own culture and be able to walk solidly in that one world, learn all about it, believe in it and live it. Then, if a person chooses to do so, he or she can add to that one world the best from others: Japanese, Russian, German, American...”

— Cecilia Tacuk Martz

This legacy of exclusion has created hard feeling about education for some Native people. “If we are to make parents and grand grandparents feel welcome in the school,” according to Ruthie Sampson, “we must invite them into the school and publicly apologize for what happened to them or their parents in the past. We must hear their story and validate it. We must not ignore it or it will continue to fester and more bitterness will grow” (p. 118). Today, according to Sampson, “Not only or we trying to save our languages, but also our history” (p. 119). “As we lose our Native languages,” Kawagley writes, “more and more of us begin to take part in the misuse and abuse of nature.... [English words] are a product of a mindset that is given to individualism and materialism in a technomechanistic world” (p. 296). Too often, as stated by one Alaska Native elder quoted by Barnhardt, “The schools are more concerned about preparing our children to make a living than they are in preparing them to make a life for themselves” (p. xvi).

Ongtooguk makes an excellent point in his essay on “Aspects of Traditional Iñupiat Education” that some progressive approaches to teaching, including “learning by doing,” are problematic. He writes that “The Iñupiat were not successful hunters because they threw themselves into ‘learning by doing’ situations. To learn about sea ice conditions and safe travel ‘by doing’ alone would be suicidal” (p. 95). He concludes that students need information, which can come from Elders and by becoming close observers. Then they need apprenticeships to become skilled in the tasks they set themselves to.

The contributors to *Sharing Our Pathways* echo again and again the thought of Cecilia Tacuk Martz that “first and foremost a person must have a solid foundation in his or her own culture and be able to walk solidly in that one world, learn all about it, believe in it and live it. Then, if a person chooses to do so, he or she can add to that one world the best from others: Japanese, Russian, German, American...”

(p. 279). Overall, the contributors document efforts by Alaskan Natives to take back control of the education of their children from colonial attempts to assimilate them into mainstream American society in order to develop an education system that melds Alaskan Native knowledge with “Western” education. The appendices include the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools adopted by the Assembly of Alaska Native Educators and lists of Alaska Native values sorted by region. It is a companion volume to the editors’ *Alaska Native Education: Views From Within* that was reviewed in the April/May 2010 issue of *NABE News*. ★

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**Note:** All page numbers are from Ray Barnhardt and Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley (Eds.), *Sharing Our Pathways: Native Perspective on Education in Alaska* (Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Native Knowledge Network, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2011).

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