

Educator's Voice

NYSUT'S JOURNAL OF BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

VOLUME IX, SPRING 2016

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Valuing and Supporting Multilingual Learner Students in High School English Language Arts Classrooms

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Creating an Engaged School Community

A Voice for Writing: A Universal Language for Secondary ELLs

Empowering ESL Students for Leadership and Literacy

Speaking with Two Bilingual Educators

Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for ELLs

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English Language Learners: A Mosaic of Languages and Cultures

In this issue ...

Authors share how they engage their English language learners (ELLs) in activities that boost both their academic knowledge and linguistic skills, crucial in this era of increased rigor. This is vital to the Blueprint for ELLs' Success, which recognizes that all teachers are teachers of ELLs.

This issue highlights 11 groups of educators whose work with language learners ranges from our youngest prekindergartners to high schoolers on the road to graduation. Authors present ways to consider the budding dual-language skills of toddlers, explore avenues to support multilingual readers and writers, and describe ways to build community among ELL parents and families. Teachers share their stories of collaboration on social justice projects, peer-assisted activities and video projects, and engaging newcomer ELLs in their classrooms, all of which activate learning across several content areas in all four modalities of listening, speaking, reading and writing, in addition to cultural reflection. Finally, bilingual educators and teachers of English to Speakers of Other languages (ESOL) discuss ways to successfully partner with colleagues and families to enhance the success of ELLs at school. This collection of best practices and thoughtful innovation will help all teachers educate and play to the many strengths that ELLs bring to our classes.



Karen E. Magee, *President*
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Dear Colleagues,

This Volume is about sharing insights into the realities that our English language learners experience as they progress through our school systems. It's about the caring and supportive learning environments created by teachers, school-related professionals and other specialists. It's about engaging families and shepherding them into the larger school community. Since English language learners are a heterogeneous group, this means that our educators are continuously growing their knowledge base by building an understanding about language acquisition, social and emotional learning, culture, and content development in order to best serve the complex needs of this diverse population.

The articles that follow contain stories about moving across cultures, illustrations of effective practices, and research-based findings intended to contribute to the growing knowledge of New York State's educators.

Sincerely,

Catalina Fortino

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The Editorial Board wishes to thank the following individuals for their contributions to the development of this volume:

Barbara Back, Clarisse Banks, Teresa Bashant, Cynthia DeMichele, Glenn Jeffers, Terry McSweeney,
David Rothfuss, John Strom, and Ellen Sullivan.

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English Language Learners: A Mosaic of Languages and Cultures

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Some of the photos in this journal, of NYSUT members and their students, were taken by the following photographers:

- Maria R. Bastone
- Jonathan Fickies
- Marty Kerins Jr.
- El-Wise Noisette

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Valuing and Supporting Multilingual Learner Students in High School English Language Arts Classrooms

SUMMARY

In this article, the authors explain the strategies frequently used in their own ELA classrooms to support and value ELLs. The authors' schools are affiliated with the Internationals Network for Public Schools and the strategies discussed reflect the five Core Principles developed by the school network.

We are Teachers of English to Speakers

of Other Languages (TESOL) and English language arts (ELA) teachers working at three different small high schools in New York City — International High School at Lafayette, Brooklyn International and Flushing International. Our schools are affiliated with the Internationals Network for Public Schools, which is a network of 22 schools and academies in New York City, the San Francisco Bay Area and the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Although our three schools have distinct traits, all of the schools are structured in a similar model that we believe

best supports our English language learner (ELL) student population.

While we appreciate working in schools based on the Internationals Network for Public Schools model, we realize that many school contexts are structured very differently. In this article we will focus on the strategies we use to help our beginning, intermediate and advanced ELLs feel valued and supported in our ELA classrooms. We will also address how these strategies can be used by teachers in other contexts. These strategies have been informed by many of our esteemed colleagues' practices, our own classroom trials and tribulations, and many professional development opportunities within and outside the network.

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Claire E. Sylvan, Ed.D, founded the Internationals Network for Public Schools in 2004, and served as its first executive director until Jan.1, 2016. She was a teacher and leader for more than 25 years in New York City public schools.

Robin Perenchio, United Federation of Teachers
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Natalie Solomon, United Federation of Teachers
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The model incorporates both instructional and structural elements. Our belief is that students come to us with tremendous, but very diverse assets that can best be actualized by creating opportunities for students to work together on projects. These projects, designed by teachers who work together in interdisciplinary teams, incorporate both language and content supports, goals and skills, and require students to collaborate. Since adult work and student work in schools always mirror each other, both the adults and the students work in collaborative groups that are project-oriented.

For the adults, time is structured into school schedules for regular interdisciplinary team meetings. Teams are responsible for working with students who travel in cohorts. Unusual for high schools, teachers from various disciplines work together and teach the same students, so they can learn from each other and best support the students. Any high school with large numbers of English learners can choose to adopt both the structures and the instructional practices, and any teacher in any school can implement the instructional strategies in his or her own classroom.

Throughout the school day, students at our schools simultaneously learn language and are immersed in an engaging and rigorous high school curriculum. The Internationals Network model values five Core Principles: heterogeneity and collaboration in our classrooms, experiential learning, language and content integration, localized autonomy and responsibility, and one learning model for all (Internationals Network for Public Schools). In addition to the five Core Principles, we also promote the integration of students' native languages into the curriculum. Students' native languages are both used as a vehicle to learn their target language (English) and valued as a core part of their multicultural and multilingual identities (Garcia & Wei, 2014). The five Core Principles will be discussed at further length throughout the article and are notable in that they inform our teaching practices and decisions, how our schools are organized, how faculty and staff interact with each other, as well as how we interact with students and families.

As high school teachers we only have a few short years to ensure our ELLs graduate high school ready for the next stage of their lives. Our students have

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Students come to us with tremendous, but very diverse assets that can best be actualized by creating opportunities for students to work together on projects.

Valuing and Supporting Multilingual Learner Students in High School English Language Arts Classrooms

We embark on the challenge of ensuring our ELLs can graduate high school, ready for post-secondary success, by trying to provide ... opportunities for our students to use their new English language skills, while also supporting the development of their home languages.

rich experiences and knowledge acquired in prior schooling, their home countries and on their journeys to the United States. In our schools, at the time of admission all students have been in the U.S. for four years or less. More than 90 percent of students across the Internationals Network are eligible for free and reduced lunch. About 70 percent of our students have been separated from one or both parents in the course of immigration to the U.S., and many students do not live with their immediate, or even any, family members. In many of our schools, 30 percent or more of our students have had interrupted formal education. We embark on the challenge of ensuring our ELLs can graduate high school ready for post-secondary success, by trying to provide as many different opportunities for our students to meaningfully use their new English language speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, while also supporting the development of their home languages.

Our heterogeneous classrooms include students with many diverse needs. For example, in one 11th grade English language arts classroom it is likely there are students with limited or interrupted formal education (SIFE); students who are no longer classified as ELLs because they have passed the NYSESLAT exams; students who excel in speaking English, but struggle with academic writing; and students who have a disability. We utilize a number of different

strategies in our own classrooms that provide our diverse students with many opportunities to accomplish their academic goals and prepare them for the next stage of their lives.

Why do we focus on these particular strategies? The Internationals Network for Public Schools' unique model has proven successful in addressing the academic, social, and linguistic needs of ELLs at the high school level (Ancess & Darling-Hammond, 1994; Zeiser et al., 2014). Research on tracking students has shown that those who might otherwise struggle academically actually do better in heterogeneous settings and in the long-run, all students perform better academically in untracked classrooms (Catambis, Milkey, & Craig, 1999). Furthermore, moving away from student tracking toward heterogeneous groupings has been shown to have broader-reaching impacts, with increased academic achievement resulting, together with students' increased self-esteem and improved interpersonal relationships (Oakes & Well, 1998; Slavin, 1993; Villa & Thousand, 2003).

The core structural element in our schools organizes teachers into interdisciplinary teams who share heterogeneous cohorts of students. The goal is to promote the development of academic English, credit accumulation and academic success for our students. Rather than ESOL teachers

Teacher collaboration provides a powerful format for teacher learning and has been shown to have a positive impact on English language development measures.

being solely responsible for academic language development, interdisciplinary teams plan and design their instruction to maximize the development of academic language (Francis & Rivera, 2006). School structures and other supports are very important in ensuring teachers' effectiveness: heterogeneous grouping must be coupled with support for teachers to learn appropriate strategies to adapt their instruction (Daniel & King, 1997). Collaboration among teachers, particularly those with knowledge of language development and disciplinary knowledge, has been shown to enhance multilingual learners' academic performance (August & Hakuta, 1997; Desimone, Prater and Steed, 2011; Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly & Callahan, 2003; Varghese & Jenkins, 2005). Teacher collaboration provides a powerful format for teacher learning and has been shown to have a positive impact on English language development measures.

The need for collaborative experiential projects to promote academic achievement across the content areas is borne out of research that points out the need for collaborative tasks in order to effectively integrate language and content (Swain, 1999). The integration of language and content as well as developing collaborative experiential projects are instructional strategies that will provide ELLs access to and benefit from implementation of the Common Core State

Standards. Saunders and Goldenberg (1999) demonstrate the importance for ELLs of language development techniques to grade-appropriate academic development and success. Finally, students' home languages are an often overlooked instructional resource. The creation of ample opportunities for students to use English in meaningful ways in experiential projects contributes to development of proficiency in English, and the use of students' home languages makes a significant contribution to their academic development (Saville-Troike, 1984).

Our Strategies for Best Supporting Multilingual Learner Students:

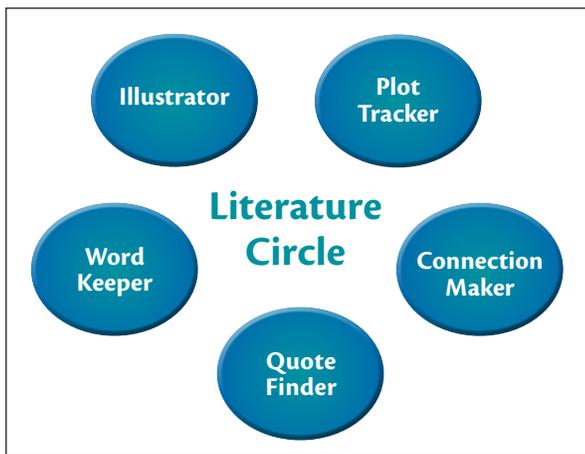
1. Heterogeneous grouping:

In alignment with the Core Principle "Heterogeneity & Collaboration" we strive to provide many opportunities for our diverse students to work with each other and support each other in our ELA classes.

- **Literature Circles:** When reading a complex text, students participate in heterogeneous literature circles. A visitor in the room during a literature circle would see small groups of four to five students with a range of skill levels and native languages supporting one another as they read their assigned text. The main

continued on following page

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way the students support each other in the literature circle is by performing a specific task as the group reads and reflects on the text. This process continues over several classes and the roles are rotated amongst the students

in the group. Example roles may include the “Connection Maker” (who is responsible for making connections between the text and another story, life or the world), the “Quote Finder,” the “Illustrator,” the “Word Keeper” (who keeps track of the important new vocabulary words) and the “Plot Tracker.” We suggest assigning stronger students the more challenging roles, such as the “Plot Tracker,” during the first few sessions to have them model the process for the other students in their literature circle.

- Partner and small group work: Throughout the reading of a text, teachers use strategies such as Think-Pair-Share to help students organize their thinking about the text. A Think-Pair-Share uses the following protocol: the teacher proposes a question; students have time to think about their response; the students pair up with a partner to discuss their ideas; and finally,

some students share their pair’s ideas with the whole class.

- Seating arrangements: Our students sit in small clusters of desks or tables that seat three to five students. We consider factors such as gender, native languages, English proficiency, and personality traits when creating assigned seats. We hope that in their assigned seats students will use their fellow groupmates as a resource and support system. For example, when we provides our students with instructions, we also give students time to discuss and clarify the next steps in both English and their native languages.

2. Student choice:

The Internationals’ Core Principles encourage all members of the school community to create environments that value “Localized Autonomy and Responsibility.” As teachers, this informs our decision to provide our students with many meaningful choices throughout the year with the intention of encouraging students to take more ownership over their learning (Internationals Network for Public Schools).

- Layered Curriculum: Based on Dr. Kathie Nunley’s method for differentiating instruction, Layered Curriculum supports the variety of learning styles students come to the classroom with and allows them to

take ownership of their work, as they choose which projects they complete (Nunley, 2004). There are three layers, and each layer is composed of different activities that touch on varying levels of understanding and skill development. The foundational layer tests for understanding and helps build students' background knowledge. The second layer asks students to build on this understanding and apply the knowledge gained in the first layer. The third and most complex layer provides ways for students to extend their knowledge through critical thinking and analysis. Within each layer, students select the tasks to complete based on their individual learning styles and complete the work at their own pace. Each option comes with points, and students can acquire a certain amount of points per layer to complete the project. In the most ideal situation, a student will have a chance to complete all three layers.

- **Independent Book Project:** The Independent Book Project is a simple but effective way to encourage students to approach reading with more excitement and interest. At the beginning of the project, we use the public library, our classroom libraries, and a variety of online resources to expose our students to many different novels. Students are then responsible for

selecting a novel that they will read independently. Before they start reading, students must receive approval from their teacher to ensure that the novel is matched to their reading levels. Students read their books at home while completing a series of assignments that help demonstrate their understanding. Last year, 11th grade students chose books ranging from *Pride and Prejudice* to *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

3. Creative and meaningful student-centered projects:

Along with student choice, we also strive to create opportunities for our students to engage in creative and meaningful projects. We find that student-centered projects facilitate deeper thinking in a supportive environment.

- **Debates, performances, presentations, and Socratic discussions:** All of these projects provide students with the essential opportunity to express their ideas and ask questions orally before writing a more formal essay. We often find many of our ELLs have important and interesting ideas they are ready and excited to share with their classmates in a structured project such as a debate or presentation. However, they may have less confidence when trying to write down these ideas in an essay that requires

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Student-centered projects facilitate deeper thinking in a supportive environment.

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Interdisciplinary projects help provide students with the vocabulary and broader contexts required to access the texts they are reading in their ELA class.

formal academic language. We find that if we provide students with the opportunity to prepare and present a debate in a group or participate in a Socratic discussion before requiring them to write down their ideas, they are much more successful in accomplishing their goals. These meaningful and student-centered projects also provide opportunities for students to collaborate and support each others' learning.

4. Interdisciplinary Projects:

The Internationals Core Principle “One Learning Model for All” means that the teachers and students collaborate with one another on a daily basis. Teachers try to plan interdisciplinary projects that help students develop language and content knowledge in a more streamlined and meaningful manner (Internationals Network for Public Schools).

- Teachers work on grade-level teams (ninth and 10th graders are on the same team, so the 9/10 teacher teams mirror this). This collaborative work environment helps facilitate our success in providing students with the opportunity to complete interdisciplinary projects. We believe that interdisciplinary projects help provide students with the vocabulary and broader contexts required to access the texts they are reading in

their ELA class. During the 2013–14 school year, a ninth and 10th grade team of teachers at Brooklyn International High School collaborated on developing an interdisciplinary project focused on music. After learning about world music in social studies class, creating and performing an original song in theater arts class, examining the roots of American music in English class, studying fractions and musical notation in math class, and examining the science of sound in science class, the interdisciplinary project culminated in groups of students performing an original song and then leading a roundtable discussion about a topic of their choice related to music and music's role in all five disciplines. This is an example of a large-scale collaboration that happens once a year and requires that time be carved out and also demands plenty of patience. We recognize that this is not possible in all schools, but we strongly recommend interdisciplinary collaborations on smaller scales, as well. For example, during the 2014–15 school year, students in an 11th grade ELA class wrote different types of poetry from the perspective of various people in the Civil War, a feat that could not have been achieved without the history teacher's Civil War unit.

As ESOL and ELA teachers we are responsible for developing our students speaking, listening, writing and reading skills.

5. Support for native language development:

The “Language and Content” Core Principle shapes our belief that language is inseparable from content and that both components must be taught explicitly (Internationals Network for Public Schools).

- Native language projects: Students complete projects in their native languages in many of their content courses. In an ELA class, this can include students writing poetry, memoirs or short stories in their native language.
- Text-to-self journaling in native language: As students read a text, they write journal entries in their native languages that are connected to the text thematically. The journal entries help the students access their background knowledge and improve their writing fluency in their native languages (Garcia & Wei, 2014).
- Active reading: Students practice annotating and text coding as they read, often using their native language to help them access the text. In an 11th grade English class, students will text code a short story by underlining sentences they think are important, circling new vocabulary words and putting an exclamation point next to events that surprise them.

6. Multiple modalities:

As ESOL and ELA teachers we are responsible for developing our students speaking, listening, writing and reading skills. As such, we strive to provide opportunities for students to use many different modalities for learning new content and language.

- As we read a novel or play, we will watch the film version or look at images depicting important plot events. After reading an act of *A Raisin in the Sun*, we will show the film (with subtitles in English) to help solidify and expand on students’ understanding of the text. It is also especially helpful for ELLs’ language development to hear the words as they read the subtitles and watch the action on screen.
- We also provide opportunities for students to listen while reading the text through using audio recordings and read alouds. For example, in the aforementioned Layered Curriculum, students may be asked to describe the main conflict in a novel. One project option could have them draw the conflict on paper or digitally, while another option could be to write a well-developed paragraph. Both tasks would require the student to provide a description of the conflict, whether it is internal or external, and the resolution.

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Valuing and Supporting Multilingual Learner Students in High School English Language Arts Classrooms

7. Differentiated texts:

Our students are purposefully assigned to their classes to maximize heterogeneity. To include and support our diverse students in our projects we aim to provide them with differentiated versions of texts.

- When possible, teachers will use graphic novels, simplified texts, summaries and chunks of texts to help diverse learners access complex texts. For example, when reading *Romeo and Juliet* in a ninth and 10th grade class with a mix of beginning, intermediate and advanced multilingual learner students, the teacher provided students with four different versions of the text: a beautifully illustrated graphic novel version of *Romeo and Juliet* by Gareth Hinds that includes small chunks of the original Shakespearean language; the *No Fear Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet* with Shakespeare's language "translated" into modern English; the Folger Shakespeare Library version with original Shakespearean English; and then a teacher-created version of *Romeo and Juliet* in which the teacher made copies of the Gareth Hinds graphic novel, whited out the Shakespeare text and added modern English appropriate for a beginning ELL student. Developing this many differentiated texts to help diverse students is a time-consuming process that can happen over many school years.

Conclusion

We have been using these many different strategies in our classrooms and have enjoyed adapting them to our students' different needs, interests, and backgrounds. We hope that other teachers will also embrace and experiment with these strategies in their classrooms. We know these strategies work because students come in with varied English proficiency and extremely varied academic skill and content knowledge. Yet, because they are using language actively to work with their peers in the variety of ways we describe above, students develop oral and eventually written proficiency in their new language as evidenced by their increasing proficiency in presenting projects, explaining summative portfolios of their work as well as passing New York State ELA exit examinations (Regents).

These strategies, which have been informed by the Internationals Network's Core Principles, have had a powerful impact on our students' success in high school. During the 2013-14 school year, Internationals Network schools had a four-year graduation rate of 64 percent compared with New York State's ELL graduation rate of 36 percent and New York City's ELL graduation rate of 37 percent, for August graduation rates (Kolodner).

Our schools also have strong college acceptance rates. For example, at Flushing International High School, 94

percent of students graduating in 2015 were accepted into college. During the 2014–15 school year, the International High School at Lafayette’s college acceptance rate was 100 percent, with 60.3 percent of students accepted into four-year colleges; 39.7 percent were accepted into two-year colleges. Brooklyn International High School’s college acceptance rates are similar. During this current school year, 2015–16, 78 students out of 80 students at Brooklyn International applied to college and 100 percent of those students have been accepted into either a four- or two-year college.

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Right from the Start: A Protocol for Identifying and Planning Instruction for Emergent Bilinguals in Universal Prekindergarten

SUMMARY

This article addresses a schoolwide approach to identifying language learners at the prekindergarten level. This article proposes the use of the Language and Learning in Prekindergarten protocol, which not only recognizes children who are acquiring English, but also offers their first teachers a means to gain a linguistic profile with valuable information for planning instruction. This protocol safeguards the first decisions that early childhood educators must make including, bilingual supports, initial screenings, placement, the language of instruction, and referrals for evaluation.

Access to prekindergarten has become

a popular initiative of education reform across the country. In New York, funding for Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) has increased dramatically in a short time following a pledge from Gov. Cuomo to support universal access to prekindergarten for New York's children in order to better prepare them for school (Craig & McKinley, 2014). Increased funding resulted in the rapid expansion of programs offering UPK; in New York City, enrollment for the fall of 2015 is expected to exceed 70,000, nearly all eligible children (Potter, 2015).

In New York, as in the entire country, there has been unprecedented growth in the number of children who enter school speaking little or no English. In 2013, the enrollment

of "Limited English Proficient" children in Kindergarten exceeded 24,000 (NYS BEDS Enrollment) but there were more than 146,000 New York children ages 0 to 5 who spoke languages other than English in their homes (NYS-ELC Application, 2013). Recently the terms we use to refer to this student population have been evolving. García, Kleifgen and Falchi (2008) coined the term "emergent bilinguals" to refer to individuals in the beginning stages of acquiring a second language. Increasingly, this is the term used in the literature. The term "emergent bilingual" acknowledges a young child's existing skills and language practices rather than emphasize the language he/she is learning and consequently does not know. This term is also in keeping with our growing understanding of the significance of bilingualism both

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to individual academic achievement and for preserving a competitive advantage in a globalized economy.

Currently, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) mandates implementation of the *New York State Identification of English Language Learners* (NYSITELL) test beginning in Kindergarten. At the pre-K level, UPK regulations provide guidance for assessment and instruction, but do not mandate a process for identifying emergent bilinguals. As the expansion of UPK coincides with increases in the number of emergent bilinguals, questions arise about programming and instruction for a grade level quickly becoming the new entry point into school. Preparing for our young students begins with important questions: how do we identify emergent bilinguals as they enter prekindergarten? What do we need to know in order to prepare for their instruction?

Over the course of a long career in early childhood education as a pre-school teacher, school social worker,

and as an administrator, I had the opportunity to work with thousands of young children, mostly from immigrant families living in poverty. In my last seven years in the New York public school system, I was a principal in an early childhood center that offered a variety of programs to more than 1,000 children under the age of 6. Of these, more than 270 attended a UPK program in the school. Those years gave me the opportunity to develop an approach for identifying emergent bilinguals and gathering meaningful information — their strengths, their unique needs — that would inform instruction and programming.

Often when a pre-K student who speaks another language first enters our school we think our first priority should be to quickly identify the *level* of his or her English proficiency. Is this child a beginner? We think we need to match the level of proficiency to a corresponding amount of support in the home language; beginners need more home language support, more

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Right from the Start: A Protocol for Identifying and Planning Instruction for Emergent Bilinguals in Universal Prekindergarten

At 4 years old, all children are developing language. Even those students from English-speaking homes do not yet fully command the English language.

advanced students need less, etc. That is our logic. However, for the pre-K child, we are beginning with the wrong premise. At 4 years old, all children are developing language. Even those students from English-speaking homes do not yet fully command the English language. *Our first priority should be to develop their language skills in order to enable academic learning.* This means that in our first interactions, we can be less concerned with quantifying how much English the emergent bilingual knows and more interested in the nature of his or her early experiences with language in conversations, books, stories, songs, etc. We know that oral language development is fundamental to literacy development (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001) in English speaking children. For bilingual children, a cross-linguistic relationship exists; for example, vocabulary development in the home language supports reading comprehension in English (Bialystok, 2007). Additionally, children's emergent literacy skills are strengthened when they maintain their home language as they acquire English (Cheatham & Ro, 2010).

There is a growing body of research arguing for fortifying the home language in order to advance learning in the second language (Kohnert, 2005; Bialystok, 2007; Cárdenas-Hagan & Carlson, 2007, Espinosa 2008). Cummins (2001) describes the

relationship between languages in the bilingual child positing that “the level of L2 [second language] competence which a bilingual child attains, is partially a function of the type of competence the child has developed in L1 [home language] at the time when intensive exposure to L2 begins” (Cummins, 2001, p. 75). Observing children over many years and analyzing data on their achievement informed the creation of a protocol. Entitled *Language and Learning in Prekindergarten* (LLPK), this protocol not only recognizes children who are acquiring English but also offers their first teachers a means to gain a linguistic profile with valuable information for planning instruction.

As a school leader, I was able to notice patterns in the student population, placement, or achievement that helped safeguard the first decisions in many areas, such as bilingual supports, initial screenings, placement, the language of instruction, and referrals for evaluation. The best ideas of teachers, parents, administration, research, and young students themselves produced a useful protocol to guide the identification of emergent bilinguals and the first steps to take toward their instruction. The LLPK is the result of years of teaching and learning at the pre-K level. What began as individual steps in our registration process grew into a fully developed protocol that later was named and documented. Over time, hundreds of

children underwent the steps in the LLPK.

The Language and Learning in Prekindergarten (LLPK) Protocol

The LLPK outlines a whole school approach that begins at registration and continues through key steps in the first weeks of school. All children, emergent bilinguals and English speakers, follow the same steps but the information garnered for each child recognizes emergent bilinguals and is used to plan for their instruction. The steps of the LLPK are outlined below.

Step 1: Document Review

Typically parents complete an application for a UPK program well in advance of registration. Since registration can be a formal process requiring legal documents (i.e. birth certificates) and appointments for screenings, schools need to prepare appropriate supports (translated documents, interpretation services) for a successful process. In the LLPK, the application for UPK includes questions about the home language similar to those in the *New York State Home Language Questionnaire*.

- What languages do you speak at home?
- In what language do you speak to your child most of the time?
- What languages does your child understand?

- What languages does your child speak well?

In a document review of all the applications, it is easy to identify which students will need screenings in the home language and may be identified as “emergent bilinguals.”

Step 2: Family Interview and Social History

An interview with a family member to document the child’s social history is a vital element to a successful start in school. The child’s parent or guardian is best equipped to inform us about the child’s skills, talents, developmental history, etc. This is a moment to engage a family and learn from them. The social history is best gathered in an interview between the teacher and a family member who can tell the child’s “story” for the teacher to document. Questions can be broad and individualized but the questions that relate to emergent bilinguals and English language learning would include:

- When did the child begin to speak single words?
- In what language did the child first speak?
- When did the child begin to speak in short sentences? In what language?
- In what language does your child speak to you?

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The pre-K teacher who knows that a child recites letters in his home language and pretends to read or write in that language can advance instruction beyond teaching concepts of print to focus on other elements of emergent literacy.

- When your child speaks in your home language, is he or she easily understood?
- If your child speaks in English, is he or she easily understood?
- Does anyone at home speak English to the child (perhaps a sibling)?
- How has your child learned English so far (television shows, siblings, childcare, etc.)?
- Does your child have books at home or visit the library? In what language are these books read to him or her?
- Has the child attended any nursery or childcare program? Was English spoken at that program?
- If your child has a childcare provider, in what language does this person speak to your child?
- Have you intentionally exposed your child to more than one language to ensure that he or she is bilingual or multilingual?
- In pre-K we will begin to learn very basic things about reading and writing at each child's pace. Can your child name any letters in English? Can your child recognize letters or symbols in another language?
- Does your child pretend to read? What have you noticed?
- Does your child pretend to write? In what language?

Responses to these questions provide invaluable information about developmental milestones, family resources, family values, and emergent literacy skills. Pretending to read, for example, demonstrates a grasp of concepts of print, a fundamental literacy skill. As children trace their fingers over words, follow text from top to bottom on a page, or call out individual letters in a word, they demonstrate an understanding that there are conventions governing print. Even before they can recognize all the letters in the alphabet, they can understand that symbols (letters) grouped together (words) express ideas in spoken language. Here bilingual children may actually have an advantage; once they master the concept, they develop print awareness in multiple languages (Reyes and Azuara, 2008). In fact, Bialyok (2006) reports, “in studies with 4-year-old pre-readers, bilingual children consistently outperform monolingual children in a test assessing the extent to which they understand the symbolic concepts that underlie print” (p. 109). Knowing a child's existing skills shifts our starting point for instruction, but if we focus exclusively on what emergent bilinguals can demonstrate in English, we will miss this obvious strength. The pre-K teacher who knows that a child recites letters in his or her home language and pretends to read or write in that language can advance instruction beyond

teaching concepts of print to focus on other elements of emergent literacy.

We expect each child to have a unique configuration of responses as it is unlikely that a child would have had no exposure to English at all in the first years of life. A common occurrence for young emergent bilinguals is that they have some exposure to English through early childcare arrangements. At first glance, these children may seem to command the English language where they may only have mastered rudimentary social language. Asking about early experiences with language clarifies how the child has been exposed to English without confusing exposure with mastery. These young children may exhibit a combination of bilingual language skills — social language in English but richer vocabulary in the home language. However, they need continued growth in the home language if they are to reap the benefits of their bilingualism.

Above all else, this first interview is a sensitive step in engaging a family. Several of these questions listed relate to values (reading, writing) and resources (having books, writing materials) that not all families share. These questions are intended to get at language use, not school readiness skills, as these are not prerequisites of any kind for prekindergarten. Instead,

inquiring about the child's use of language in the years prior to pre-K helps the first teacher individualize instructional goals and anticipate what the child may need to meet these goals.

Gathering an accurate and comprehensive social history has another important function. When there are concerns about a young child's development or academic progress, it may be that an evaluation by the Committee for Preschool Special Education (CPSE) is warranted. However, the research on special education among children classified as English language learners points to widespread error and confusion often leading to disproportionately high rates of classification but also to a void in the services necessary for this population (Brown & Campbell, 2015). At the preschool level, the initial screenings relying on English language instruments can set in motion this disproportionality even before children formally enter school (Hardin, Scott-Little, & Mereoiu, 2013).

The experience of educators working with large populations of emergent bilinguals at the preschool level is an invaluable resource in understanding the important elements of a comprehensive social history. Alma Aponte is one such educator who served as chairperson of the CPSE in a New

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Without a social history to inform the interpretation of [test scores], the skills and capacities of emergent bilinguals can be missed entirely as they may not be captured in English language assessments.

York school district with a large prekindergarten program with many emergent bilinguals. She identified key points to guide the use of a social history during the process of referral to the CPSE:

- Pay particular attention to impoverished conditions during infancy. We know that young children who live in poverty have less access to resources. We also know that Latinos, for example, have both high numbers of emergent bilinguals and high rates of poverty. We must be able to distinguish the impact of both poverty and English language learning before we can identify a disability.

- Share the document among the evaluators — often times each evaluator in the CPSE process begins with a new social history form to complete. Not only is this inefficient and tedious for a parent, it creates multiple opportunities to miss important information.

- Make appropriate use of the information in the social history. The evaluation process can become overly focused on scores and performance results. Without a social history to inform the interpretation of these numbers, the skills and capacities of emergent bilinguals can be missed entirely as they may not be captured in English language assessments.

Ms. Aponte chronicled decades of work as a CPSE chairperson where a well-constructed social history, used

appropriately and widely, became a protective factor in preventing disproportionality.

Step 3: Informal Interview with the Child.

Now we are attentive to how the child uses language. We begin with comfortable conditions: a family member is present, toys are available, seating or furniture is child-sized, distractions are minimal. Ideally the interview with the child is conducted bilingually — in the home language and in English. It is important to gauge language use in both languages so that we can clearly identify the child's strengths. Begin with the home language.

Since the child interview is not a fact-gathering activity but rather a chance to converse, those topics that are most compelling to children are likely to be more successful. Early childhood professionals have a long list of these topics: What did you do for your birthday? Who lives at your house? What's your favorite game? Asking first in the home language, it is also important to ask the child if he or she speaks English. It is telling if the child begins to respond nonverbally (i.e. nodding, shrugging, pointing) and no longer responds verbally. Encourage the child to “demonstrate” the words he or she knows in English in order to observe his or her expressive language.

Student responses in the child interview should be monitored for features such as:

the choice of words, the complexity of responses, the number of words in a response, the clarity of expression, and the language of choice. In the example below of a Spanish-speaking child, we can note certain strengths:

Teacher: What did you do for your birthday?

Child: I have party *en mi casa*. I have a lot, a lot *globos* (making big circles with her arms). Pink. *Y mis amiguitos...* friend.

In this exchange, the teacher observes that the child has sufficient knowledge of English to understand the question and responds with facts and important details. Using a common English phrase (“I have”) she relates the story of a party at her house. She communicates that she had many, many balloons using another common phrase (“a lot”), a word in Spanish, and physical gestures to make herself understood. Although she cannot combine the detail in one sentence, she adds that her balloons were pink. She seems to want to elaborate on who attended and begins a full sentence in Spanish but stops short opting for another commonly known English word for young children: friend. This child is deliberately using the languages and vocabulary at her disposal to tell a story that occurred in the past with unmistakable detail and some enthusiasm.

One obvious strength children exhibit during an interview is co-mingling their languages to make themselves understood. Rather than be concerned about strict adherence to one language or the other, we note the child’s resourcefulness in self-expression. In fact, when children “borrow” from one language to express themselves in another language we can better assess their grasp of a concept. Teaching the corresponding vocabulary to a child who already understands a concept is a lower-order task.

Bilingual or multilingual individuals are able to employ skills in all their languages to make meaning in an academic setting. Advances in our understanding of bilingualism have led to pedagogical approaches such as translanguaging, where “students are asked to alternate languages for the purposes of receptive or productive use (García & Wei, 2014, p. 20).” When little children are encouraged to employ translanguaging we are able to get a fuller sense of their skills and capacities.

Making a Determination

A careful review of Steps 1 through 3 can help us determine who is an emergent bilingual. We remember that we are not looking to identify a level of English proficiency but rather we want

Bilingual or multilingual individuals are able to employ skills in all their languages to make meaning in an academic setting.

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Initial screenings may set in motion a deficit perspective that focuses on what children cannot produce in English rather than how well prepared they are for school.

to know about children’s language skills in order to plan for their instruction. Based on our understanding of the nature of bilingualism in early childhood, we can make a determination about each student using a process of elimination. Emergent bilinguals in prekindergarten generally satisfy the following conditions:

- They have been exposed primarily (but not exclusively) to the home language from birth;
- Their developmental milestones in language exhibit growth in the home language or in multiple languages;
- They may co-mingle their languages in conversation and strategically employ translanguaging to make themselves understood;
- Although they may have good comprehension (receptive language), they have minimal expressive language in English.

Once we can identify emergent bilinguals in our prekindergarten we can turn our attention to instruction. The LLPK does not stop at identifying emergent bilinguals but continues to inform their instruction.

Step 4: Review of Existing Screenings

UPK requires initial screenings. At this point the child’s scores and evaluations are reviewed to assess emergent literacy or numeracy skills and ensure that bilingual supports are made available.

The LLPK continues with a review of initial screenings that have been conducted in the home language or bilingually. Across UPK programs there are varied instruments used for initial screenings (i.e. DIAL-R, Bracken, Brigance). The LLPK introduces guiding principles to inform the interpretation of results from initial screenings using any instrument:

- Screenings conducted in English with children who do not speak English are not valid and we should not place great weight on the results. Initial screenings should be conducted in the home language;
- Many initial screening instruments tend to measure specific or discrete skills in English (vocabulary, letters, colors, numbers, etc.) that correspond to age or general school readiness. While they may be useful, they may not fully capture a child’s skills in the home language. Consequently, initial screenings may set in motion a deficit perspective that focuses on what children cannot produce in English rather than how well prepared they are for school. The LLPK does not confuse school readiness with English language acquisition; instead, the LLPK promotes a strengths perspective where results from initial screenings are informed by the portrait of the child’s language skills drawn from the social history and child interview.

- The National Association for the

Education of Young Children (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003) warns against the overuse of one-time administration of standardized measures with young children — the LLPK does not rely on one-time administrations of any instrument but rather enables an unfolding of children’s language skills that teachers can note and support through instruction.

Step 5: Document Interactions & Language Development

Over the course of the UPK academic year, teacher/child interactions are critical for learning and language development. Anecdotal records of these interactions illustrate the child’s progress and continue to inform individualized instructional planning.

Interactions with teachers can serve as assessments and reveal the child’s mastery of academic language skills while peer interactions can reflect what a child has mastered with regards to social language. Documenting language interactions through anecdotal recordings, quotations, comments, scribed dictations, etc., at multiple points in the year provides the necessary evidence of a child’s progress in English acquisition in a manner that is authentic and meaningful. Regular review of anecdotal records of these interactions supports progress monitoring in the UPK classroom.

Ultimately, anecdotal records of language interactions benefit the child’s teacher in Kindergarten. A rich linguistic profile of a child’s progress in pre-K provides the receiving Kindergarten teacher more valuable information than scores from one-time test administrations. A seamless transition from pre-K to Kindergarten benefits children when their teachers share important features of students’ progress so that educators can anticipate and put in place the necessary supports for academic success.

Instructional goals in UPK programs are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards through the competencies articulated in the *New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core* (2011) [PKFCC]. One of the principles expressed by the PKFCC concerns the use of the home language for learning stating that it is “essential to encourage *continued first language development* [emphasis mine] in our children by providing them with appropriate education settings such as a bilingual classroom or integrated English as a Second Language Program (ESL)... (p. 6).” Research confirms that bilingual instruction enhances English acquisition and long-term academic achievement for emergent bilinguals from pre-K to third grade (Escobar, 2013).

A rich linguistic profile of a child’s progress in pre-K provides the receiving Kindergarten teacher more valuable information than scores from one-time test administrations.

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Many UPK programs do not offer bilingual instruction but do offer families many bilingual supports. We are challenged to think broadly and recognize how using the home language for instruction supports maintenance of bilingualism and also allows us to maximize the benefits of cross-linguistic transfer for academic learning. In addition, when we allow our children to use all their skills — in any language — for greater comprehension or self-expression, we have not threatened English acquisition but supported it.

One Example: Alicia enters pre-K

Alicia was an adorable 4-year-old who entered pre-K in November. Since she was registered (Step 1) late in the year, the usual initial procedures were handled differently. As principal, I met with Alicia's mother individually to complete the social history bilingually (Step 2). I learned that Alicia had been in a domestic violence shelter for months; registering for pre-K was a fresh start for Alicia and her mother but they knew no one in the community. The social history also revealed that Alicia had no prior preschool experience and spoke only Spanish at home. Her mother reported that she had worked with Alicia at home to get her ready, reading and writing together to the best of the mom's abilities. Compelled by her family circumstances to move quickly, Alicia was assigned to the one remaining opening for the year.

The child interview (Step 3) was scheduled to take place on her first day but she would not respond. We allowed her to spend more time in the classroom and become acclimated to her new circumstances. The initial screenings (Step 4) would be conducted with her new teacher and an interpreter.

Every classroom at the school had bilingual support. A bilingual teacher (Spanish-English in our case) had regularly scheduled times in each classroom to help children build their home language skills as they were learning English. Bilingual support was a bridge for academic learning that classroom teachers welcomed.

Soon the classroom teacher began expressing concern about Alicia. She had not spoken a word in class. She was cooperative but seemed disconnected. Despite multiple attempts, the teacher had not been successful in completing initial screenings due to her silence. I offered my support to the teacher.

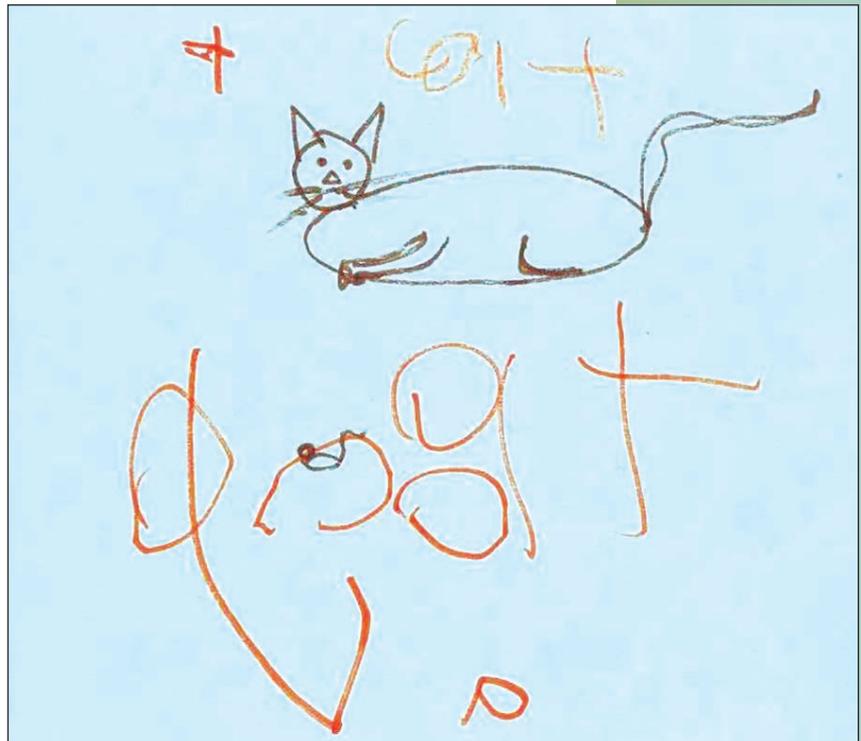
Whenever I try to engage a preschool student I talk about my cat Chiclet (the word for “chewing gum” in Spanish). The name alone usually gets a smile. I approached Alicia with a story about Chiclet during center time (Step 5). For her activity, Alicia had chosen to “write” on a clipboard all her favorite words displayed around the classroom. I spoke to Alicia entirely in Spanish and using my own clipboard, I drew a picture of my cat

Chiclet. Alicia began to smile. She grabbed my clipboard and began writing. To my surprise, she painstakingly wrote the letters c-a-t at the top of the page. I noticed how Alicia had written in English when she did not speak English so I asked her what she had written. Very quietly, Alicia sounded out c|a|t. Since we had not spoken in English, I asked Alicia what “cat” was.

Once again Alicia took my clipboard and wrote a word — this time in Spanish — gato. She sounded out the letters g, a, t, and o in Spanish. Finally she spoke: “Esto significa gato” [this means cat].

Alicia could not express herself in English yet she had phonological awareness in two languages. In our interaction I could observe that she had learned about letter sounds in English from her mother and applied the same principle to Spanish, the language she did speak. Alicia demonstrated how translanguaging works: she used skills in one language to make meaning in another. She also demonstrated how learning in one language advances learning in another. While reading in Spanish is taught in phonemes, not letter sounds, Alicia successfully applied the same principle of sounding out letters for Spanish words and evidenced her emerging biliteracy.

It would have been easy to miss Alicia’s skills if our only focus had been to



document the level of her English proficiency; Alicia did not speak English! Instead, the LLPK protocol offered a structure where we could learn about Alicia first from her mother, and then from our own interactions in the Spanish language. Alicia was one of many emergent bilinguals in our school who presented unique challenges to our protocol. Yet eventually we completed each step of the LLPK and documented her remarkable growth in prekindergarten. Alicia was among our highest-achieving students who moved on well prepared, with emerging skills in English, and ready to tackle Kindergarten.

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Conclusion

The primary goals of the LLPK can be stated as follows: to identify those children who enter prekindergarten as emergent bilinguals and gather meaningful, relevant, and useful information about their development and language use so as to inform instructional planning.

Gauging whether this goal has been met is a multi-faceted undertaking. Gathering program statistics, such as rates of identification and overall student performance enabled an evaluation of the effectiveness of LLPK at the program level. By contrast, analyzing student-specific data, including parent feedback, samples of work, assessment scores, and teacher anecdotal records, could be used to assess how well the LLPK informed instructional planning.

The pattern of demographic shifts evident across the country was also evident in our school. The LLPK protocol served us well to identify the more than 44 percent of emergent bilinguals in prekindergarten every year. Everyone at the school collaborated to ensure translation and interpretation services for families, and access to bilingual supports for instruction.

Our student population demanded that we learn about bilingualism. Responding with a protocol that respected their home languages and their remarkable asset as bilingual individuals, we supported learning in prekindergarten and created

the ideal conditions where the skills a young child brings from home become the basis for success in school.

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Creating an Engaged School Community

SUMMARY

Some immigrant families may experience stress and confusion regarding school requirements and school communication.

The Cohoes School District, a small, under-resourced district with a very diverse immigrant population, works to integrate English language learners and their families into its learning community. Recognizing the multiple educational and personal challenges faced by immigrant students and their families, district teachers created relaxed and helpful ways to assist the immigrant students' transition into the American school system.

Jose is a second grader in one

of the Cohoes Elementary schools.

He came from El Salvador with his family only one year ago. His English improved enough in one year to communicate with his peers and he always looked happy. One day I found Jose in tears. He was very upset because some of his classmates were playing soccer in an after-school program and he was not enrolled. I asked him why his parents did not sign him up when the forms went home three weeks ago. In response, Jose cried even louder, "Mrs. Kats, so many papers go home every day and my parents don't know what is important and what is not. My mom does not read English or understand anything about my school."

The episode with Jose made me realize how much confusion and stress immigrant families experience in regard to school mail and school requirements.

I was ashamed that, as a Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), I did not identify this problem sooner. After speaking with Jose, I began collecting every piece of mail that went to families' homes and found ways to translate them into the five dominant non-English languages in our district: Pashtu, Arabic, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese. The district administration was open to this project and helped me identify, collect, and translate the correct forms.

Today, there are more than 3.5 million English language learners (ELLs) in United States schools and this number is growing rapidly (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Most often, the families of ELLs come to our country to better their lives and to ensure a better future for their children (Public Broadcasting Service, 2013). They usually settle in less-affluent

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Katya Kats, Cohoes Teachers Association

neighborhoods, where schools are often overwhelmed and overcrowded. These schools face unique challenges working with immigrant families (Kozma, 2014). They try to provide many services not only for the children but also for their families. According to Monica Freeland (1991), one of the many challenges for schools is establishing a steady connection between the school and the immigrant families. This article explains the importance of relationship building with the ELL students' families, examines the challenges schools face in establishing lines of communication with such families, and outlines several successful examples from the Cohoes School District, where I work.

There is a diverse population of immigrant families in Cohoes. They come from different countries, speak different languages, and have diverse cultures. Some of the families came to join other family members, others to seek new opportunities in order to avoid economic stress, and still others to escape religious persecution. The Cohoes district welcomes new families and tries to help them establish a new life. We found that conventional avenues for involving parents in schools were often closed due to the language barrier and cultural

differences. Cohoes works hard to provide ELLs with assistance in a culturally competent manner. We do this by trying to learn their culture (and sometimes language) and by engaging parents in school life.

The Cohoes district does its best to provide interpreters in order to enable the immigrant parents to understand the schools' policies, assessments and curriculum. In order to do this, the district uses different resources in the community, as well as a network of interpreters. We ask immigrants who came some time ago and learned English to help with the translations. Most parents do not decline because they remember their own struggles and the assistance they received from the Cohoes schools.

Some of the immigrant and refugee students in our district carry with them the unseen scars of personal trauma or hardships that most teachers can hardly envision:

Dima and his sister came from Moldova, a small country between Romania and Ukraine. The family came just three weeks before the school year started. They were frightened and anxious. The older sister, Mariana, knew some English and

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Creating an Engaged School Community

Teachers should be trained in cultural sensitivity. This includes knowledge about food, clothing, religion and customs, and, most importantly, the political situations in the native country of their ELL students.

tried to take care of Dima, who was a Kindergarten student. The cafeteria was one of the biggest challenges. The district helped the parents apply for a free lunch program. However, the children did not eat much of their lunches because they could not identify some of the food offered in the cafeteria. For example, they did not know what peanut butter was and were nervous about trying it, as well as many other foods that were a mystery to them. One day, their teacher became frustrated and insisted that they at least try their lunch. Little Dima began to cry and his classmates laughed at him. The next day Dima did not come to school. When I reached out to Dima's mother, I found out that the family fled Moldova because of the ongoing warfare that started after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Dima's native country, it was dangerous to be outside where tanks roamed and people were killed on the streets. The children spent all their time inside their apartment, anxious whenever their parents had to leave. Clearly, Dima and his sister were deeply affected by the war in Moldova and this trauma had to be explained to the teachers and staff who came in contact with these and other ELLs from that country. I was glad that Dima's mother opened up to me, and I began reading more about the Transnitria

War (Hughes, et al, 2002). I noticed that, while Cohoes had quite a few ELLs from Moldova, no one spoke about the reasons they fled their country.

My experience with Dima and his family led me to understand that teachers should be trained in cultural sensitivity. This includes knowledge about food, clothing, religion and customs, and, most importantly, the political situations in the native country of their ELL students. In addition, I learned that it often helps for teachers to find out more about their student's siblings, what languages are spoken at home, the ELL's and their parent's educational background, and the system of education present in student's country of origin. It is most critical for school districts to know if the immigrant students experienced trauma in the form of war, natural disaster, etc. This information provides teachers and school staff with a solid foundation from which to identify the services and programs the district can appropriate for the ELLs. Regardless of the conditions that brought the immigrant students to the United States, almost all of them have had some tragic and hostile experiences. At times, maybe too often, they feel alienation, loneliness, and extremely low self-esteem in the face of a new strange world. The district tries to recognize the multiple educational and personal challenges faced by

newcomer students and has created more relaxed ways to help the immigrant students transition into the American school system.

My experience with the families of the ELLs taught me the importance of being proactive in establishing open lines of communication. By consistently reaching out to the parents of my ELLs I learned that the reasons for lack of communication about their situation were many and different. Many parents of the ELLs are often too nervous about not being able to understand or be understood by the teachers. In addition, some of the parents' cultural backgrounds do not encourage communication with authority figures, such as educators. A father of one of my ELL students referred to a school visit as a very fearful experience. According to his country's beliefs, school is a temple of knowledge and a teacher is a priest who brings this knowledge to children. "It's not respectful, and even punishable, to bother the teacher with trivial problems," he said.

Yet other parents told me that they find the American school system to be impersonal and insensitive to their needs and situations. For example, in Cohoes, there are many Russian Orthodox families who are deeply distressed by Halloween. For many years, the Russian students did not come to

school on Halloween in order to avoid participating in the costume parade or listening to Halloween stories. The district confronted this problem creatively. On the day of the Halloween parade, the district also holds a Harvest Festival, which is attended by all students who do not celebrate Halloween. At the Harvest Festival, the students play games, participate in competitions, and earn treats and prizes. Every ELL student from Russia now comes to the festival. It has become such a big event that every year more non-immigrant students join the Harvest Festival. The parents come to observe their children playing and competing in carnival games, as well as to participate as judges.

Cohoes School District's experience with Halloween taught us an important lesson: we need more culturally responsive communication to the parents of our immigrant students. While it can be difficult to engage foreign families in the school community, it is possible. Every ESOL teacher now tries to learn about the culture of his or her students. We have invited parents to school, asking them to talk about their former countries and to bring something representative of their culture. The ESOL teachers often report what they learned about their students' background at the faculty meetings. This approach also enriches the education of monolingual students who learn

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The Cohoes' message is simple: we acknowledge our ELLs and their cultures. We will provide the changes necessary to accommodate our new immigrant families.

about Chinese New Year, Muslim prayer rugs, Croatian food, Afghani drinks, and Bosnian fairy tales.

Every spring, Cohoes also sponsors an ELL potluck picnic. Parents of most of our ELLs come to this picnic and bring their traditional food, drinks, and games. They meet and socialize with parents from different schools who come from the same country and/or culture. They develop a network of people in similar situations, discuss their children's health care providers, required immunizations (and the reasons for them), and immigration news. They also learn from each other about local social services they can utilize. Many general education teachers also attend the picnic, which offers them one way to establish a relationship with parents who they do not usually see in school.

At our most recent potluck dinner: Little Aziza is twirling around making pretty sounds with the tiny bells attached to her dress. Aziza is from Pakistan and speaks Pushtu. Her classmate Amar is also from Pakistan, but his family speaks Urdu. Mohamed's family is from Afghanistan and speaks Farsi. They often sit together trying to find a common language, happy to communicate and share their experiences. Although they do not speak the same language, they are happy to be with people who understand their

culture and do not dismiss it as "non-American." Their parents are content, too. For some of them, the ELL picnic is a first social event in the U.S.; the first time since immigrating that they put on their best clothes and visit a nonthreatening and nonjudgmental place. They feel proud looking at the children's performances and talking to fellow immigrant parents. They proudly offer the food from their countries and gladly give recipes to anyone who enjoys it. At our picnic, people enjoy the food from a great variety of cuisines: Moroccan, Afghani, Pakistani, Ukrainian, Brazilian, Moldovan, and many more.

The ELL potluck picnics have become a huge success. The children perform in English or their native language. They recite Mother Goose poems and act out small plays in English. They dance wearing clothing from their native countries. They are proud of their heritage and are not ashamed of their lack of English language fluency or lack of knowledge of American culture. Our picnics are so popular that they had been featured in a local newspaper as an example of successful school outreach. The Cohoes' message is simple: we acknowledge our ELLs and their cultures. We will provide the changes necessary to accommodate our new immigrant families.

Success of immigrant students depends upon many factors. One is equal access to all the information that American students have. This information can lead to various employment and college opportunities.

Andrey is a senior at Cohoes High School. He has been in the U.S. for only three years, but has mastered all of his classes, including mainstream English. He is competitive, hard working and ambitious. He wants a career in medicine. He knows he needs to go to college, but he is not familiar with the U.S. college system. His parents worry about being able to afford college and are unsure about how to search for an appropriate and inexpensive education. Andrey comes to the guidance counselors with a lot of questions. The counselors give him the same answers they generally provide to an American student. But Andrey does not understand. He is too new to the country, too insecure in his American “way of life,” and is afraid to look and sound funny. His classmates give him various suggestions, joking about his insecurities. His ESOL teacher knows about his insecurities and his lack of knowledge of American colleges. She tries her best to help Andrey to apply to the colleges that match his abilities. She talks

to his parents, explains about financial aid and guides them through the application process.

We must respect the immigrant families’ desire to succeed. A great majority of immigrant students have a deep commitment to succeed. They know they have to be “Americans,” but for many adolescents, “acculturation” is situational (C. Mitchell, 2015). They try to present behavior consistent with mainstream U.S. values; they want to be the same as their peers at school. They do not like their accent, they do not like their names (that are often hard to pronounce for Americans), or their limited English abilities. The Cohoes School District is sensitive to these insecurities and tries to address them. For example, the district invites local colleges to speak in front of ELLs and their parents. Translated letters of invitation to this event are sent to immigrant families well in advance. The district’s ESOL teachers are extremely helpful to ELLs during the stressful time of graduation. They introduce students to financial officers and help the students apply for financial aid and scholarships. When ELLs’ parents are not available, lack transportation, or are too intimidated, the district’s ESL teachers even travel with students to visit colleges and advise families regarding their choices.

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Success of immigrant students depends upon many factors. One is equal access to all the information that American students have.

Creating an Engaged School Community

The Cohoes School District strives to create a safe space for ELLs, a place where they can succeed and feel confident that the educators are on their side as a support system and where their families are acknowledged as a valuable part of the community.

The district also provides professional development to mainstream teachers, teaching them the importance of maintaining the ELL students' native language. Many are surprised to learn that forbidding the use of their native language in the classroom is not the best approach to teach ELLs English. Time and again, studies confirm that strong native language skills actually contribute to the academic success of ELLs (Wright, 2010). That is why one can hear many languages in the cafeteria or playground of the Cohoes schools. Our ELLs are not afraid to use their native language when communicating with their friends or siblings.

Cohoes School District understands the importance of assuring the ELLs' parents that we respect their wishes and goals for their children. During the parent-teacher conferences, many teachers encourage parents of their ELLs to use their native language at home, whether through reading, in order to help their children's reading skills in English, or through conversation (Robertson, 2011).

The district also successfully addresses the issue of teachers' anxiety about working with ELLs and their families through professional development with experts on educating foreign students (Hwang, 2006). By providing support to immigrant families and their children, the district ensures that ELLs will develop the sense of belonging to our local community and our country.

The Cohoes School District strives to create a safe space for ELLs, a place where they can succeed and feel confident that the educators are on their side as a support system and where their families are acknowledged as a valuable part of the Cohoes community. Immigrant students come to America motivated to learn and eager to adapt to a new home environment. Sometimes they face multiple obstacles and it is the school districts' task to help them to overcome language, social, and academic obstacles and to adapt to the new way of life.

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A Voice for Writing: A Universal Language for Secondary ELLs

SUMMARY

A Voice for Writing is a universal approach that uses academic language anchored in content to help ELLs to become successful writers. Through the use of structured acronyms, visual cues, and language-based supports, students strengthen their ability to use cited evidence to do a deeper analysis of a given text while gaining a better grasp of new vocabulary. This formulaic method also draws upon students' prior knowledge and experience to help develop understanding while encouraging engagement in the learning process.

Helping English language learners

(ELLs) to analyze and think critically about difficult texts to meet the demands of the 21st century can be daunting for teachers. Cogent reasoning and evidence collection skills are required of our students. Such skills can easily be developed by tapping into a students' emotional intelligence and providing him or her with a universal, student-friendly language of structured and scaffolded resources for the writing process.

A Voice for Writing: A Universal Language for Secondary ELLs utilizes structured acronyms and language-based supports that represent cited textual evidence, interpretations, and other original thought drawing on prior knowledge and personal experience. It presents ELLs with visual cues and acronyms through a universal academic language anchored in content to achieve success on writing tasks.

A Voice for Writing aligns the criteria in the writing rubrics for Part 2 and 3 within the New York State Regents Examination in English Language Arts and the rubric for the QuickWrites with specific formulas and strategies that it provides for ELLs. The program frontloads academic, Tier Two and assessment vocabulary (to prepare a strong foundation of analysis through original, visual interpretations), develops sophisticated language, fosters a command of evidence, and scaffolds a method for cohesion, organization and style.

Writing and English Language Learners

Within the English language arts classroom, the stakes are higher than ever before. The number of English language learners continues to rise. "Over the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of ELLs enrolled in NYS public schools

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resulting in a current population of 214,378 students who speak over 160 languages (NYS Education Department, Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies. 2014, p. 1).”

As students learn to write, their instinct as writers is usually to summarize what they have read. But students are now being asked to move away from summaries and to improve their ability to produce meaningful *interpretations* and to cite quality evidence from their analysis of texts. Simultaneously, there is an added challenge for teachers of ELLs. According to the TESOL International Association Issue Brief, teachers of ELLs need to be able to do the following:

- Teach ELLs the academic language necessary so they can use evidence from literary and informational text in reading, speaking, listening, and writing; and
- provide ELLs with linguistic structures so that they can use evidence, cite sources, avoid plagiarism, synthesize information from grade-level

complex text, and create argumentative/persuasive speech and writing (2013 p.5).

Teachers continually encounter ELL students hitting obstacles when faced with writing tasks. To ensure success for ELLs, additional resources may be needed. Many provide isolated organizers, examples, and methods for them to be successful, but in many cases this is still not enough. According to Ferlazzo & Hull-Sypnieski: “There should be a strong connection between reading and writing. As students read in preparation for writing an argument, they should look for evidence they can use to inform their valid and logical claims and to critique other claims and evidence they might read. In their writing, students should use the structure, vocabulary, and style that best suits their purpose, topic, and audience. Teachers should provide ample opportunities to develop and use higher-level academic vocabulary (2014, p. 46).”

The interpretation of text is an essential skill ELLs need to acquire and

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Teachers continually encounter ELL students hitting obstacles when faced with writing tasks.

Perhaps their ability to remember song lyrics and achieve high-level gaming skills have already improved [students'] abilities to memorize for the purpose of self-improvement.

develop. It is a difficult and important skill to grasp because it is an interdisciplinary skill crossing all content areas. Scaffolding and subdividing steps into manageable parts are important parts of strategy instruction for ELLs. Since most of the texts lie outside of their personal life experiences and vocabulary base, words and their meanings have to be made more accessible to them.

According to current research regarding vocabulary acquisition, Goldenberg states: “ELLs learn more words when the words are embedded in meaningful contexts and students are provided with ample opportunities for their repetition and use, as opposed to looking up dictionary definitions or presenting words in single sentences (2008, p. 18).” ELLs will benefit from structured strategies including the practice of frontloading relative vocabulary. A report from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence concludes: “Focused and explicit instruction in particular skills and sub-skills is called for if ELLs are to become efficient and effective readers and writers (Goldenberg, 2008 p. 18).”

According to the study, Spanish speaking ELLs who received structured writing lessons outperformed students who received extended opportunities to do “free writing.”

A Voice for Writing: An Overview

The burden of analyzing texts and synthesizing responses on exams and in day to day classroom writing tasks is becoming more complex, requiring cognitive skills that can be mentally draining for ELLs due to their existing language demands. “. . . for ELLs, their progress depends greatly on the learning environment and the scaffolding provided . . . ELLs may need more help with vocabulary, spelling, and word order than English-proficient students do, but helping ELLs get started is an investment in their development (Education Alliance, 2015, p. 1).”

It is clear that many students, including ELLs, have a great facility for memorization. Utilizing this skill would appear to run counter to trends in teaching that have moved away from having students memorize information. However, using this skill as a starting point and teaching students to memorize helpful patterns of acronyms not only reduces the cognitive load associated within the writing process, but also gives them self-confidence, precisely because they are proficient in this technique. Perhaps their ability to remember song lyrics and achieve high-level gaming skills have already improved their abilities to memorize for the purpose of self-improvement. Certainly, their daily use of acronyms and condensed

language in texting and social media has made them receptive to applying the strategy of using the string of acronyms employed in this process.

A Voice for Writing arms ELL students with a writing toolbox that presents an extremely structured method for writing about difficult texts while simultaneously generating a purposeful and meaningful writing response. It provides them with the structure of acronyms and the opportunity to apply higher-level academic vocabulary. This universal method teaches ELLs to cite evidence from texts and to establish claims within their writing. The program's global design can also be implemented in the general education and special education classrooms to benefit all students.

Each step and resource that is provided in this program is directly aligned with the criteria set forth in the New York State English Language Arts Part 2 (Argument essay) and Part 3 (Text-Analysis Response) writing rubrics. The program is also aligned as a method to assist ELLs in their progression for learning to read difficult texts and write clearly about them. By providing students with explicit strategy instruction for writing, teachers can spend more time on developing comprehension skills and content knowledge. With this, students are able to begin applying the strategies that allow them to generate original thought and write

responses when the steps in the writing process are highly structured, scaffolded and differentiated.

Step One: Rubric Criteria: Content and Analysis

Visual Key Words

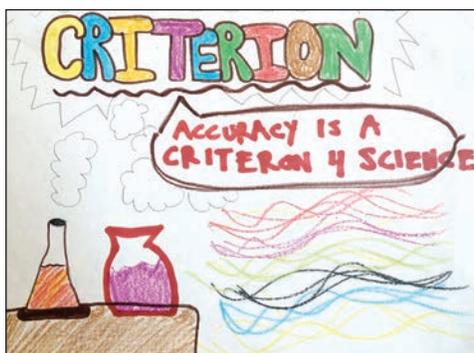
For ELLs, the unfamiliarity of Tier Two and academic vocabulary prevents them from climbing the ladder toward these higher-order thinking skills. Words such as *criterion, claim, valid, subsequent, alternative, technique, refute, acknowledge, analyze, and evidence* are not the language of their daily experience. The first step is to give students a list of words taken from Regents and daily writing tasks including Tier Two words found in texts. The teacher should provide definitions with the denotative meaning in class. This is important because many students left to their own would go directly to the Internet to look up words. The outcome is usually a cut and paste job which does not ensure comprehension.

In order to teach students to answer questions employing these words it is important that they develop a connection with the vocabulary used in text as well as examination questions. When students connect to words on a

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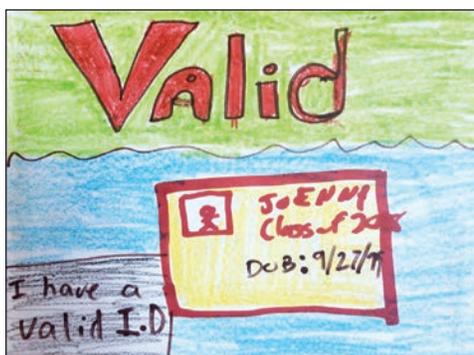
By providing students with explicit strategy instruction for writing, teachers can spend more time on developing comprehension skills and content knowledge.

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personal level, they are able to transfer and generalize the words to another context with great success. Drawing on a student's own associations promotes a greater ability to apply the words later on if students draw pictures that explain the meaning of these words

through their own lens. At first, this can be daunting for students until it



becomes clear that they can just draw stick figures. The goal is not to present a sophisticated piece of art but to create a visual symbol that will stick in their mind. Then, they think of a sentence using the word in context. Students are asked to connect the word to an emotion or

experience within their own lives.

Interestingly, while the pictures seem utterly rudimentary and childlike, the effect they have is enabling the students to absorb the meaning of the words and elevate their sophistication in the writing they produce in answer to questions containing these words. Without this connection, the content and analysis of texts can be inaccurate and unclear. The drawings create an opportunity for students to view the words in a visual context and then within context again in the questions, writing tasks, and texts. According to Bradberry and Greaves: "Emotions always serve a purpose. Because they are reactions to your life experiences, emotions seem to arise out of thin air,

and it's important to understand why something gets a reaction out of you... Situations that create strong emotions will always require more thought (2009 p. 25)."

Students are given specific words and definitions found in a text or within the task itself. Then, they use their own experiences to draw a picture of what the word represents. (See the two examples of student drawings to the left.) For instance, to visually interpret the word, "criterion," a student wrote, "*Accuracy is a criterion 4 science*" and drew a picture of flasks on a table in a science lab. Notice the use of the number "4" rather than the word "for." In our current world of texting and social media, this is evidence that students are already using abbreviated language to communicate in writing. This fact supports the successful use of acronyms within a universal language of writing as a part of writing formulas that ELL students can memorize and generalize. The next step is to use word association strategies to develop original thought. Students then learn acronyms and sentence starter patterns combined with the use of selected quotations, interpretations and their word associations to help them move an essay forward in a coherent manner.

The examples at left show how two abstract words, *criterion* and *valid* become concrete through an original

drawing. In both, we also notice the use of condensed “texting” language.

Step Two: Rubric Criteria: Command of Evidence, and Proper Citation of Sources

The Profound Thought Box

According to Walqui (2014), “Rather than simplifying the text or assuming that students can’t identify themes in text, teachers . . . draw on [students’] background knowledge and experiences to build new or deeper understandings of ideas in and beyond classroom texts (p. 2).”

We begin the process of teaching ELLs how to cite evidence and provide interpretations and details with a visual box to generate original thought with words that connect to whatever central idea is determined in a text, and with specific linguistic transitional phrases. Within typical writing tasks, students are required to understand the development of a “central idea” within a text while reading. They also need to cite evidence and create interpretations relative to central ideas. Concurrent to these requirements, this program provides a “Profound Thought Box” (PT Box) for ELLs as a precursor to a reading and writing activity. The focus is on skill application, being able to

generate details and further analysis through original thought. To introduce this important skill, begin with giving students an excerpt from an essay about friendship by Ralph Waldo Emerson to practice. Beginning with the central idea of friendship works well because it is one of the most basic human connections that will grow and deepen as they mature.

Students are provided with a template for the New York State Regents Text-Analysis Response that they will use to frame their response. In this exercise, students create their PT Box, which is a box containing the central idea word — e.g., friendship. The phrase “Profound Thought” tells students that they are capable of discussing and analyzing serious concepts such as *friendship, courage, compassion, perseverance, justice and fate* among others within nonfiction texts and literature. The PT Box provides a resource of personal associations with abstract ideas to develop original thought. Students are given time to generate phrases that explain the word from their own experiences and prior knowledge.

At first, they may encounter difficulty. As they are walked through the process it is helpful to look at the words with positive and negative associations. Placing a plus “+” sign on one side of the box and a minus “-” sign on the

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A Voice for Writing: A Universal Language for Secondary ELLs

Name _____ Period _____
Schmidt -English

Genre: Essay excerpt
Title: Friendship
Author: Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to you when you discover that someone else believed in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship..." - Emerson

Central Idea: FRIENDSHIP

Genre: Essay excerpt
Title: Friendship
Author: Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to you when you discover that someone else believed in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship..." - Emerson

Central Idea: FRIENDSHIP

Handwritten notes around the central idea:

- ⊕ good times happy
- Support
- have your back
- knowing someone will always be there
- ⊖ Sad times
- struggles loneliness

other gave them an additional visual cue to help them generate phrases. Once the PT Box is filled, students share ideas with a partner in order to expand their perspectives on what friendship means. Communicating and collaborating with a partner moved them to a higher level of critical thinking so that they could individually generalize the skill and strategy and then be able to move to new unfamiliar content by using their own impressions as their guide.

After the PT Box is complete, it will be used to assist in interpretations for the quotes as well as helping to generate other thoughts relative to the central idea and the literary element they selected. For the Part 3 Argument response, students should create an additional

PT Box for each of the four texts. Selected phrases that are relative to the central idea are interpreted. As they read the text, they should be

underlining possible quotes to use in their response.

Central ideas such as courage, compassion, perseverance and identity are universal. Through such instructional strategies that draw on emotional intelligence and prior knowledge within a visual framework including drawing pictures of the selected words and developing a PT Box, ELLs have an opportunity to analyze complex texts.

Sentence Starters

After students understand and apply the PT Box and select quotes relative to the central idea or topic, they receive Sentence Starters. The sentence starters help frame a short response with evidence and interpretations, using details generated from the PT Box. Using these specific language cues demonstrates proper citation of sources to avoid plagiarism when citing quotes and other material from the text. Simultaneously, the PT Box and Top Sentence Starters provide a framework that encourages evidence to support the analysis of texts. The method uses a word association strategy within the PT Box for students to present their interpretations and analysis of text. Memorizing the structure of the formula removes the obstacles of writing and enables them to focus on the analysis.

Step 3: Rubric Criteria: Coherence, Organization and Style

Using Acronyms

This design uses acronyms to create a formula for students to write responses. The purpose of the acronyms is to provide a universal code for ELLs that reduces the cognitive load.

Below is the *A Voice for Writing* formula according to the criteria set forth within the New York State Regents in English Language Arts Part 3 Text-Analysis Response.

When students memorize the formula for a specific writing task, they move away from simply summarizing and move toward alignment with the rubric requirements. Most importantly, the

1.	TAG (Title, Author, Genre)
2.	PT (Profound Thought)
3.	PT (Profound Thought)
4.	SS+ Q1 (First quote- Evidence)
5.	SS + I (Interpretation)
6.	LET (Connect Literary Element or Technique)
7.	PT (Profound Thought)
8.	PT (Profound Thought)
9.	SS+Q2 (Second quote- Evidence)
10.	SS+I2 (Interpretation)
11.	LET (Connect Literary Element or Technique)
12.	PT (Profound Thought)
13.	PT (Profound Thought)
* For the entire response, students would repeat steps 4-7 to include a third and fourth quote.	

TOP SENTENCE STARTERS TO PROVIDE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE, INTERPRETATIONS, AND DETAILS WITH COMMON CORE LANGUAGE USE	
<p>WITH A QUOTE</p> <p>Q</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author states "_____." According to the author "_____." In text ___line___ it states "_____." In text ___the graphic states "_____."
<p>WITH INTERPRETATION (my own words)</p> <p>I</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In other words, this means _____. From this perspective, this means _____. Upon close examination, it can be seen that _____. This is valid because _____.
<p>WITH DETAILS</p> <p>D</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Example:</i> For instance, For example, <i>To add more:</i> In addition, Additionally, <i>Go further:</i> Furthermore, + <i>Add similar detail:</i> Similarly, Likewise, - <i>Add opposite detail:</i> However, On the other hand,

SS	Sentence Starter	Students select a sentence starter for either a quote or an interpretation
Q	Quote	Students select a quote from a passage
I	Interpretation	Students put the quote in their own words
PT	Profound Thought	Students create a sentence from a word or phrase within their Profound Thought Box after determining the central idea of the prompt, topic, or question.
LET	Literary Element or Technique	Part 3 Text Analysis Response: Students memorize the LET sentence from the template and plug in the central idea and literary element or technique.
T	Topic question from Argument Essay Task	Part 2 Argument essay: Students rewrite the Topic Question as the first sentence of the Argument introduction
C	The Claim	Part 2 Argument essay: Students pick a side from the topic and create a claim

design allows them to think critically about the central idea; and how the author uses literary elements and techniques to develop the central idea. Generating text-to-world and text-to-self connections synchronizes the analysis of text through prior knowledge and experiences. Additionally, the PT Box creates an alternative for ELLs who have difficulty with the concept of annotating text.

Step 4: Putting it All Together- Application and Synthesis

The following is an example of a student response to the Emerson excerpt modeled after the New York State Regents Examination in English Language Arts and using the *A Voice for Writing* template.

TAG	In the excerpt "Friendship" written by Ralph Waldo Emerson the author develops the central idea of friendship through the use of characterization.
PT	In life, there are always struggles when you may feel lonely.
PT	When you have a true friendship, you know that person will always be there even in the sad times.
SS+Q1	According to the author, "The glory of friendship...it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to you when you discover that someone else believed in you..."
SS+I1	From this perspective, this means a friend will have your back.
LET	The author develops the central idea of friendship with the literary element of characterization by showing us that a friendship is a lot more than having good times together.
PT	A true friend will always support you.

Taking a Closer Look at the Regents Resources

The New York State Regents Examination in English Language Arts consists of two essay responses. Part 2 is the Argument essay, and Part 3 is the Text-Analysis Response. In addition, each lesson within the NYS modules contains a required short writing response at the end of every lesson called the QuickWrite. For the sake of organizational purposes, Part 3 will be discussed first since this response was introduced earlier.

Part Three: Text-Analysis Response

Promoting a Deeper Analysis

This essay requires all students to identify a central idea, but more importantly, to move beyond summarizing and analyze how an author develops a central idea with the use of a literary element or technique. These higher-order thinking skills can be difficult for some ELLs to master due to the increased burden of language learning coupled with content. The *Voice for Writing* method focuses on characterization and conflict from the set of literary elements and techniques provided within the Regents Text-Analysis Response task because these elements speak most directly to the ELLs' prior knowledge and life experiences. Teachers can and should

expand to include the other options of literary elements and techniques mentioned in the task (point-of-view, setting, structure, symbolism, theme, tone, etc.) once the students generalize the formula and sentences #1, 5, and 10. ELL students are increasingly successful when they are able to rely on the strategy resource of memorizing the universal acronyms. The acronyms provide a visual cue to forward sequence the task and create an opportunity for a response to be successful.

The following describes an example of how the Text-Analysis Response was able to become more analytical. At first, the Literary Element or Technique (LET) sentence began:

“The author develops the central idea of _____ through the use of _____. (Literary element)

Once ELL students were able to memorize the formula and this specific “LET” step within the formula, the phrase “by showing us that/how” was added. This small phrase challenged ELL students to think critically about strategically presenting a thoughtful analysis of the author’s use of either characterization or conflict to develop the central idea as required in the task. Students were able to go back to the Profound Thought Box and the text to figure out how to make a deeper connection that established the criteria for analysis.

For example, we see two examples at right regarding the excerpt from Emerson about the central idea of friendship. The first (A) is a more simplistic version to start with followed by

A. The author develops the central idea of friendship with the literary element of characterization.

B. The author develops the central idea of friendship with the literary element of characterization by showing us that a friendship is a lot more than having good times together.

A Voice for Writing Regents Common Core Text-Analysis Response Template

(TAG) In the passage _____ written by _____ the author develops the _____ of _____ (central idea) through the use of _____. (Literary element or technique)

PT (Profound Thought) _____
 PT _____
 SS+Q1 (Quote) _____
 SS+I1 (Interpretation) _____
 LET (connect literary Element or Technique): The author develops the central idea of _____ with the literary element of _____ by showing us that/how _____
 PT _____
 SS+Q2 _____
 SS+I2 _____
 LET - The author develops the central idea of _____ with the literary element of _____ by showing us that/how _____
 PT _____
 PT _____
 SS+Q3 _____
 SS+I3 _____
 LET - The author develops the central idea of _____ with the literary element of _____ by showing us that/how _____
 PT _____
 PT _____
 SS+Q4 _____
 SS+I4 _____
 LET - The author develops the central idea of _____ with the literary element of _____ by showing us that/how _____
 PT _____
 PT _____

a more thoughtful analysis (B) connecting the text to the author’s use of the literary element.

continued on following page

QuickWrite Short Responses

At the end of each lesson within the ELA Modules on the Engage NY website is something called a “QuickWrite.” A QuickWrite is a question about the text that requires students to write a short response at the end of the lesson citing a claim, citing evidence, and providing interpretations to support their analysis and inferences pulled from the text.

For example, in the 11th grade Module 1, lesson 3, the QuickWrite is as follows: *What is the impact of*

Browning’s choice of speaker on the development of the Duchess? What follows is a *rubric* that is directly aligned with the Engage New York rubric used for the QuickWrite. Utilizing this method, students learn the seven sentence response by memorizing the acronyms. Within each step of the response are the following skills: citing textual evidence, interpreting evidence and providing original thought and inferences with the Profound Thought Box, and stating the claim while directly responding to the prompt as TAG+R: Title, Author, Genre, plus Restating the QuickWrite prompt (see rubric below).

Name _____		Period _____	
Short Response Rubric			
Assessed Standard(s): _____			
Inference/Claims GTA+R	2-point Response Includes valid inferences or claims <i>directly related to the text</i> . Fully and directly responds to the prompt. 20 POINTS	1-point Response Includes valid inferences or claims <i>loosely based or related to the text</i> . Responds <i>partially to the prompt or does not address all elements of the prompt</i> . 10 POINTS	0-point Response Does not address <i>any of the requirements of the prompt or is totally inaccurate</i> . 0 POINTS
	Analysis/ Interpretation/ Profound Thoughts I PT	Includes at least 2 examples of reflection, analysis through interpretation and Profound Thoughts of evidence (quotes.) 40 POINTS	A mostly literal recounting of events or details from the text(s). Only one example of reflection, analysis through interpretation and profound thoughts of evidence (quotes.) 20 POINTS
Evidence/ Quotes Q	Includes relative and sufficient (2 pieces) of textual evidence to develop the response according to the requirements of the Quick Write. Provides two relative quotes. 30 POINTS	Includes <i>some</i> relevant facts, definitions, concrete details or other information from the text(s) to develop an analysis of the text according to the requirements of the Quick Write. Provides a <i>maximum of 1</i> quote. 15 POINTS	The response includes NO evidence from the text. 0 POINTS
Conventions	Uses complete sentences where errors do not impact readability. 10 POINTS	Includes incomplete sentences or bullets. 5 POINTS	The response is unintelligible or indecipherable. 0 POINTS

A Voice for Writing Quick Write Short Response Formula

TAG+R (Genre/Title/Author + Restate Prompt)

SS+Q (Sentence Starter + Quote)

SS+I (Sentence Starter + Interpretation)

PT (Your own words about central idea in Prompt)

SS+Q2 (Sentence Starter + Quote)

SS+I (Sentence Starter + Interpretation)

PT (Your own words about central idea in Prompt)

Part Two: Argument

The Regents argument essay requires a source-based argument on a specific topic. Within the guidelines for the task, students are required to read four texts, select three, and develop an argument with certain criteria. ELLs can learn to memorize an argument formula that will generate the requirements that are needed. ELLs are required to begin by creating a PT Box. For the argument response, students read the “Topic” and pick a claim. Rather than a central idea within the PT Box, they write down a few words or phrases from the “topic” question provided on the argument task within the box similar to a central/main idea found in the text-analysis response. When first faced with this argument task, students are given time to communicate and collaborate for a few minutes in order to generate additional words and phrases associated with that topic by drawing once again on their prior knowledge, and experiences. As they read each text and determine which three texts they wish to select, they label separate boxes for their selected texts. For example, the three out of four selected texts could be “Text 1” “Text 3” and “Text 4.” The purpose is to add more words or phrases (an alternative to annotation) within these boxes from the different texts that they will interpret to build a resource for assisting in original thought. According to the argument task, students need to provide evidence to support their own claim, but also provide evidence to

acknowledge and refute their opposing claim. While doing this, students should also be instructed to underline or highlight possible quotes in two different colors based on whether the evidence supports their claim or does not support their claim. The color coding can assist ELLs to determine their claim and differentiate the evidence supporting this claim or opposing this claim. While reading, students continue adding words or phrases to their PT Boxes (relative to the specific text) that can be used for their PT sentences. For example, if they select the following words from the texts — “*capacity to clone*” next to that they would write it in their own words — “*ability to create more.*” This interpretation in the PT Box will generate a PT sentence. For ELLs, this method is structured to mimic annotation. However, it strategically employs their ability to connect to complex texts with the words they know within these texts. These words become the PT sentences, and this becomes their voice.

Within the Top Sentence Starters sheet, the third and fourth sentence starters used with quotes are specific to this essay since there are four texts and students need to choose three texts.

[This method] strategically employs students’ ability to connect to complex texts with the words they know within these texts. These words become ... their voice.

A.	In text ___ line ___ it states, “_____.”
B.	In text ___ the graphic states, “_____.”

continued on following page

This is important because it aligns the language use to the specific task. Each body paragraph uses the same writing formula; however, in paragraph two, the acknowledgement of the opposing claim and the refutation of it are sandwiched between the support for the claim in body paragraphs one and three. This structured method can be memorized.

Promoting a Deeper Analysis in Argumentation

At first, the TAG sentence listed each author, title and then mentioned the topic. Once ELLs can generalize this step, instruction is scaffolded and the following phrase is added: "...it is clear that." Students are then required to add information from their Profound

Thought Box. By using the PT Box as a resource within the method, students were able to deepen their analysis by providing additional connections at the end of the TAG sentence. There are options for different level of abilities.

The PT Box becomes a place where ELLs add connecting phrases and words as they read the four texts rather than annotate. Each phrase is interpreted and put into different words. It is a structured location of condensed thoughts and ideas they will use as a reference as they write to develop their claim and acknowledge and refute their opposing claim. The additional acronyms (T) for Topic and (C) for claim are used in the argument essay template.

#1: In the passage _____ written by _____,
_____ written by _____, and _____ written by _____
_____ the authors discuss the argument topic of _____.

#2: In the passage _____ written by _____,
_____ written by _____, and _____ written by _____
_____ it is clear that _____

(PT) _____

A Voice for Writing Regents Argument Template

Introduction

(T) Write Topic question from Argument task _____
_____ (TAG's) In the passages
_____ written by _____,
_____ written by _____,
and _____ written by _____, it is clear
that _____

PT (Profound thought) _____

(C) Last Sentence (CLAIM- write thesis statement- a sentence that can be argued)

Body 1- Text#1 to support your claim

(TAG) In the _____ written
by _____ the author *supports* the claim that _____

SS+Q _____
SS+I _____
PT _____
PT _____
PT _____

Body 2- Text #2 that opposes your claim: acknowledge and refute the opposing claim

(TAG) In passage _____ written by _____ the author *does not support*
the claim that _____

SS+Q _____
SS+I _____
PT _____
PT _____
PT _____

Body 3- Text#3 to support your claim

(TAG) In the _____ written
by _____ the author *supports* the claim that _____

SS+Q _____
SS+I _____
PT _____
PT _____
PT _____

Conclusion

(T) _____
PT _____
PT _____
PT _____

(3 TAGS) In passage ____ written by _____, passage _____
written by _____, and passage ____ written by _____,
there is an argument presented about _____

(C) _____

There is intrinsic value of the tapestry of ELLs' unique cultural life experiences and the emotional intelligence ... embedded within their thoughts, and how they connect to the world.

Conclusion: ELL Skill Application-From Concrete to Concept

It is the goal that all English teachers can use the techniques and methods within *A Voice for Writing* as a steppingstone to help ELLs become confident with writing tasks by being able to rely on a highly structured, universally linguistic framework for these tasks.

This program provides ELLs with a foundational, scaffolded method encompassing a universal language of acronyms that simultaneously reduces the cognitive load in the writing process. ELLs and all students come to the classroom with varying levels of emotional intelligence, prior knowledge and experiences. *A Voice for Writing* provides a methodology that utilizes these resources that they bring to our classrooms to help students develop critical thinking skills and connect to texts with a user-friendly framework they can easily memorize. Therefore, this allows teachers to dig deeper into texts and be able to spend more time focusing on the quality of the students' selected quotes for support, and their interpretations for analysis when required to write about difficult texts.

Challenging ELLs to analyze and think critically about difficult texts requires more than highly structured strategy instruction. By tapping into the emotional intelligence and experiences of ELLs as they relate to universal concepts and themes within central ideas and claims of complex texts, students

may become more successful at writing critically and analytically. This approach to writing instruction utilizes the 21st century skills of communication and collaboration and gives students a toolbox to navigate the journey toward critical thinking within a creative and differentiated platform.

A Voice for Writing is appropriate for ELLs because its method integrates the current practices of strategy instruction but goes further to fill in the gaps based on its universal linguistically based approach clearly understood and easily remembered by ELLs. Overall, the process takes into account additional challenges faced by ELLs and utilizes a foundational framework of language use strategically weaved throughout the method.

A Voice for Writing gives ELLs a universal voice and language to achieve success as writers. There is intrinsic value of the tapestry of ELLs' unique cultural life experiences and the emotional intelligence connected to these experiences that are embedded within their thoughts, and how they connect to the world. Through these thoughts and the groundbreaking instructional methods provided, *A Voice for Writing* becomes a pathway for each students' voice to be heard, and through individual experience and emotion within a universal language that acknowledges how each unique voice relates to the world.

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Empowering ESL Students for Leadership and Literacy

SUMMARY

Middle school educators at Ditmas IS 62 use current events and social justice as a springboard to tap into ESL students' life, content and cultural expertise. While the following article shares how students expanded a unit on Malala Yousafzai into a forum on children's right to education, educators can use a great number of topics related to relevant cultural, historical, or social issues to initiate rich classroom discussion and to empower ESL students as learners and leaders.

Too often middle school content

teachers, and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in particular, are focused on making sure that their students show measurable academic score improvement in second language acquisition. For all students, literacy skills that translate to real-world situations may be more valid as they have the potential to lead to empowering social competencies. English language learner (ELL) students bring familiarity with international culture, and their political and educational life experiences are often different from those of their U.S.-born peers. Facilitated reflections that

incorporate individual life experience foster student empowerment and give students the opportunity to discuss important social issues while honing their language skills. Collectively, these experiences can be employed to develop real-world products for an authentic audience beyond the classroom. Such activities offer the ELLs tremendous opportunities for second language acquisition and personal achievement gains. And in the process, the students are also becoming advocates for social justice and crucial participants in an increasingly global society.

In devising an academic program that would build upon students' diverse

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backgrounds, we contemplated the following questions: *Can the study of a social justice issue using a literary analysis of digital texts work for ELLs in a Title 1 middle school? Is this a viable approach for staff who are evaluated on students' standardized test scores?*

At Ditmas IS 62, teachers have been able to address the rigorous academic English language skills by deliberately focusing on relevant social justice issues. In this way, they are not forced to sacrifice good curriculum for the sake of preparing students for mandatory standardized tests. Beyond just having ELLs read, analyze and comment on news articles and digital media sources, the educators encourage ELLs to exercise social justice and American citizenship rights by publishing their ideas in an online/print newspaper *The Ditmas Bulldog Buzz*. Students also lead discussions on these issues with their peers from the regular school population and with peers from other public and parochial schools. Students run events with their peers and for large audiences of adult community stakeholders as well. As they acquire

second language skills, they are able to immediately demonstrate and utilize the hard-won international life experience and cultural knowledge they bring to the table as citizens of the world.

A Diverse Student Body

Ditmas IS 62 in Kensington, Brooklyn is a Title 1 school and ELLs comprise more than 23 percent of its student body. The ELLs who arrive at Ditmas are not homogeneous. Thirteen percent of them are Newcomers from a range of diverse countries including Bangladesh, China, India, Uzbekistan, Russia, Haiti, Mexico, Ecuador, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Liberia. A majority of our students come from families receiving public assistance. Some live with guardians who are not their parents. They have had varying degrees of educational experience and language proficiencies can range.



Ms. Sofia Rashid and students.



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SIOP: Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

The SIOP method includes 8 interrelated components:

- Lesson preparation
- Building background
- Comprehensible input
- Strategies
- Interaction
- Practice and application
- Lesson delivery
- Review and assessment

(Center for Applied Linguistics, 2015)

In recognition of these students' differences, students with little or no previous schooling in their native countries are placed in "welcome classes" on each grade level. Others are placed in advanced beginners, intermediate and advanced classes. Each of these classes is taught by one licensed ESL teacher. Several of our ESOL staff members were ELLs themselves in elementary and secondary school.

Infusing the SIOP Protocol across the Curriculum

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is an instructional research-based model used to target the needs of English language learners. The model is focused on developing

multi-content vocabulary and building background so that content can be connected to the academic and linguistic needs of English language learners.

While our licensed ESL professionals work diligently and use the SIOP to achieve their goals, they do not work solo with their ELLs (Eschevarria, 2010). Validating the insights of Villegas and Lucas, our educators believe, "The knowledge of a child derived from personal and cultural experience is central to . . . learning (2002, p.25)." ESL professionals work on collaborative teams with English language arts partners, social studies partners, reading teachers, schoolwide media production teams and literacy support educators to engage international hard earned expertise in politics, comparable educational systems, human rights, and American dreams of the ELLs. This authenticates the research of Villegas & Lucas (2002) that drawing on students' experiences with opportunities to represent student background and life experience in the curriculum is meaningful for the students.

The SIOP system focuses on word knowledge and extensive analysis of content which is aligned to grade level subject curricula. Students are aware at the start of the lesson that they have a specific stated content objective and specific learning objectives. These learning objectives are posted in terms

In terms of social justice issues and American civil liberties/freedoms, the ELLs have tremendous comparative political systems knowledge which they can bring to the classroom.

of what students will be able to do. They include literacy tasks such as: take a position and defend it in a paragraph with two details, argue a position in words and defend it, develop an opening sentence for a paragraph, and develop a Venn diagram comparing two topics. Students are often put into groups and also work from and use rubrics to assess their work as well as direct comments from teachers. SIOP encourages the use of digital media texts, print texts, group discussions, project-based learning and individual student products.

Unlike other middle schools, where SIOP may be a well-researched teaching methodology for enhancing ENL vocabulary and content gains only, at Ditmas the SIOP structure is the schoolwide accepted lesson plan structure for every teacher. Since the SIOP structured lesson plan is common to all teachers at Ditmas, its use facilitates collaboration among ESOL educators and colleagues who teach native language speakers. But at Ditmas, team teaching potential is deliberately tapped by Principal Barry Kevorkian, other administrators and ESL Coordinator Toniann Hammel. Its goal is to build ongoing collaboration from all educators into regular academic programming. This approach favors student-centered, project-driven, authentic learning goals, and related student outcomes can transcend

traditional English academic reading and writing gains.

The SIOP approach explicitly connects each content objective as much as possible with the content knowledge the ELLs bring to the content. Often this is vast, but the ELLs do not yet have the English to express it. In terms of social justice issues and American civil liberties/freedoms, the ELLs have tremendous comparative political systems knowledge which they can bring to the classroom.

The Malala Unit

Over the last two years, ESOL, social studies, and literacy support teachers have tapped into one particularly relevant social justice issue by using Malala Yousafzai and her personal human rights movement on universal education for girls. Malala was shot in the head on a Pakistani school bus for advocating for girls to be educated. Two years later, at 17-years old, Malala became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

The study on Malala offered a readily accessible and visually recognizable focus for study. Of course, with every ENL class having at least two to three students from Pakistan or from countries where education is not free for all, Malala’s movement resonates far more

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Empowering ESL Students for Leadership and Literacy

Some of the key Malala quotes selected by the team of teachers for their powerful imagery:

“One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.”

“When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.”

“I raise my voice not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard.”

“I told myself, Malala, you have already faced death. This is your second life. Don’t be afraid — if you are afraid, you can’t move forward.”

deeply for some ELLs than for their U.S.-born peers who know education as something available to all.

The Malala Unit uses Yousafzai’s book as a core text in addition to the available online footage of her speeches and awards. Students first view the videos and then focus as readers, writers and thinkers on a selection of Malala’s quotes. They collaborate with peers to write their own news articles by taking a position on the issues presented in the interviews. Finally, they create a poster, and give an oral presentation about Malala’s social justice movement.

Although SIOP content objectives are all connected, in the units on constitutional freedom and Supreme Court decisions, the learning objectives ask students to explain or retell Malala’s short quotes. Some of the key vocabulary for the unit included: social justice, extremists, universal rights, advocacy, terrorists, and crusade.

Teachers used online American broadcast and print media sources to trigger ELLs’ prior knowledge. Sadly many have had experiences of violence close up. In addition, when *New York Times* video showed the Taliban publically beheading persons who violated their orders (which some students thought was a staged film component), the students from Pakistan — two from Malala’s Swat Valley region said they did not think the footage was staged

for a feature. The students from Swat shared that they had witnessed beheadings. Of a class of 14 students, at least six had seen killings close at hand with guns and knives. One mentioned seeing, when he was only 8 years old, a person attacked and bleeding. Educators Rashid and Reissman exchanged telling glances as they both reflected on how these comments highlighted the way that student prior knowledge can result in authentic ownership and sometimes painful student sharing. Several students from Pakistan talked about Malala and mentioned the fact that she was not always viewed positively by some native Pakistani; the attack on her and her international presence ultimately brought negative attention to Pakistan. Many of the students — beyond those from Pakistan but including those from Uzbek, Bangladesh, and Haiti watched the CNN interview and footage after Malala’s shooting intently.

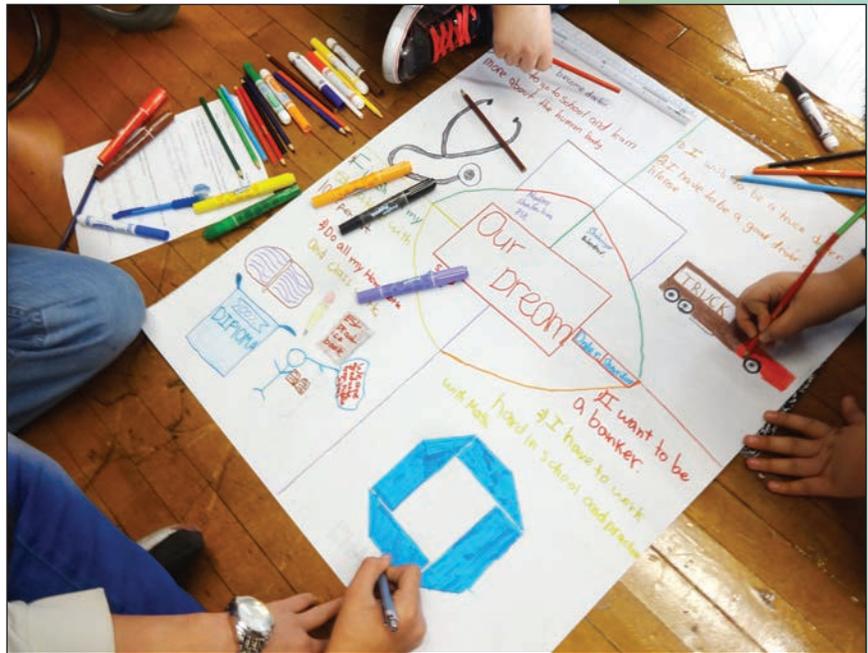
The important element here, as with all discussions that bring to surface the pain students have suffered outside the classroom and in their native countries, is to allow them to voice their emotions using their own words. By respectfully and sensitively allowing this expression, emotions and experiences are dignified and to some extent let out for sharing. Often the teacher can comment that having seen and experienced this at a young age makes the student all the stronger and wiser about the

realities of life. The respect students give one another within the classroom and the respect with which the teacher acknowledges this sharing concretizes and deepens the true life lesson component of this unit. ESOL educators Helms (born in Russia) and Reissman infuse current events content with their own autobiographies to bring content to life in a personal context for students and assure them that like the teachers, students are part of a world social justice community.

Social Justice Leadership

- After viewing different videos or her speeches and interviews, students discuss the selection of Malala quotes, which are then printed on the large chart paper.
- Students were then divided into groups of no more than four per group (classes had a maximum of 20 students) and were asked to focus as a team on the quotes.
- Student teams spent five minutes at each poster chart, talking about the quote and creating an artistic or written reaction to it.

The type of commentary to be placed on the chart was left up to the team. Some teams chose to reword the saying. Individuals in other teams wrote or drew their graphic responses to the quotes. Next, team teachers did a



“gallery walk” which served as an Expo of learning.

The final half of the lesson was spent discussing and reacting to the written and graphic responses presented on the poster charts. Because some students were too self-consciousness about their ability to communicate in English, Rashid developed special prompts encouraging them to expand on their arguments for or against Malala’s key social justice ideas. Reissman (who told the students that their work would probably be the centerpiece of the biannual Ditmas Writing Institute Expo and might be included in the Ditmas Bulldog Buzz newspaper) also asked students to respond in writing to selected prompts:

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Students create a graphic response to a selected quote.

Writing Prompts:

1. Do you, based on your life experience agree or disagree with Malala that one voice rose to protest and use of writing or communication can change the world? Malala is saying that she believes young persons can be involved in making social justice happen. Do you agree with her or not? Explain why or why not? There is no single correct answer to this question. Many adult citizens agree with Malala and many do not. In addition to using writing to voice your position, you can also create a graphic illustration or poster to express whether you agree or disagree with her about the ability of one young person to change the world.
2. Malala paid a price for her belief in social justice and use of her voice, pen, and books to fight for others. Malala was shot in the head. She took a bullet for her beliefs in social justice. While Malala had been threatened and did not believe that as a girl she would be shot, she resolved after coming through the shooting alive and competent (but physically disfigured because the bullets passed through her head), that she would continue to be physically and vocally visible as a fighter for social justice. She certainly knows that even though she is a celebrity, her speeches to the

United Nations and meetings with leaders make her even more of a target for those same extremists who would want to kill her because she is such a well-known symbol of social justice. In light of what she has already suffered while she is still a teenager (even in 2015, Malala is just 18 years old), should Malala continue to make potentially dangerous appearances or should she return to private life and studies? Should she save her own life (she and her family now live in the United Kingdom) or continue on her mission without thought for her safety? Again there is no correct answer but use at least two to three details to support your argument. You may also make a graphic art display. You may also pose this question to your family members living here with you or to those living abroad and do a presentation based on their life experience and perspectives.

The students had a few days to work on their arguments for Malala's positions to which there are really no clear cut correct answers. Just as citizens in our global world grapple with their individual positions on social justice and the value of one individual's ability to effect change, so did the students produce writings and art that expressed their diverse views on this issue.

Poetry Response to Prompt 1

Grief

I awoke in the night.

In a terrible fright,

I stay still-

Careful not to move

Listening to the silent thumping of the hearts.

I continue to think-

To link-

A nightmare to the reality,

When I get up-

I feel like giving up.

“He is dead”

: Deep words

That make you sink

And think-

Is this really grief?

Then over time you realize

To accept an evil-

That you can change.

It helps you to stop reaching.

— By Ifa F.

Impact beyond the ENL Classroom

Our ELL students had additional opportunities to share their learning after the Malala Unit. The students

and their ESL teacher Rashid were invited to share their responses and poster gallery to a sixth-grade social studies honors class who were asked to connect Malala’s thinking with other advocates of social justice. The students also took their poster boards and their jigsaw approach to the younger peers and shared their international perspectives on Malala and some of their first-hand experiences in societies where beheadings in a public square are not unheard of or access to free public education was not a right but a paid privilege. They explained that access to education was usually based on economic, social and gender status. Educators Rashid and Nolan developed a feedback survey so that the ELL presenters not only experienced the immediate positive interaction of their younger sixth-grade peers, but also had written responses as concrete evidence of their leadership experience. The younger peers were excited to be taught by the older ones. They recognized and were thrilled to hear that some of the older students actually were from Pakistan. They asked questions and applauded. Several wrote that they would like these eighth graders to return and “teach” them again.

Inspiring a Ditmas News Network Broadcast

The ELL student leadership and peer teaching experience at Ditmas did not end with a visit to one regular

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education classroom. These student leaders were then interviewed by the Ditmas Network News team for a broadcast. The question was: *Would you be a single voice for social justice as Malala is, even if you had been shot in the head?* Student reporters distributed this question to a sampling of students at Ditmas, adults and



Ms. Rashid teaching

neighborhood community members. Afterward, the ELLs had a chance to reflect on the reactions of their American-born peers. The survey showed that the majority would not take a bullet for social justice as Malala did. The survey also showed that most would not be inclined to continue advocating for universal rights to education after surviving a traumatic shooting. Clearly, the ELLs had a deeper appreciation of the mandatory public education system in the United States than did the American natives. For many of the ELLs, even those from China and Mexico, mandatory sustained regular school attendance was not a given. Some came from families who could not afford to pay for their private schooling. Some came from families where they attended

school sporadically or were kept home because they had work to do for the family. Many came from cultures where they had experienced the social, financial, and emotional consequences of not having an education. They had a deeper prior experience, life knowledge grasp of what the consequences of no schooling or limited schooling were in the context of their societies.

Leading and Networking

At Reissman's schoolwide Writing Expo, which featured displays produced by more than 475 Ditmas students, participants met with local community parents and adults. Their interactive discussions with adult visitors (including educators from a Jewish Special Education High School) and the poster board presentations were an extension of the classroom-based project and validated their leadership work.

The adult members were asked to respond to the same questions students had wrestled with in Ms. Rashid's class. Students heard firsthand from adults about how the issues pose threats that are real for all citizens. They helped to develop artifacts of multilingual responses to their classroom work. Among their artifacts were editorial cartoons of social justice issues and graphic illustrations/posters using images of education from Malala quotes. They used their own native

language and comments from their neighbors and families in tandem with English language responses. In addition, alongside the other leaders of Reissman's Writing Institute, the ELLs teamed up with their American native student peers (as did Rashid, Reissman, Nolan, and Downes) in running a general Expo using classroom developed displays of learning to converse with adult parents, community members and civic leaders.

But the ELL leadership in literacy did not end with the Expo. When Reissman and Downes developed a print/online student newspaper, the ELL leaders used their Malala project to react to world events as journalists do. With that leadership and citizenship experience, they contributed stories on how the collapse of a Pakistani school, the spread of Ebola, and the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks affected them as citizens of the world and also as young leaders bringing international perspective to the issues of appropriate reaction to terrorist actions in face of religious values. Just as world opinion did not offer a single clear cut and justifiable response, nor did that of the students (see excerpts from *Ditmas Bulldog Buzz* Issue 3). It was clear that the Malala study for ELLs set the groundwork for lifelong social justice and leadership engagement in global and local news.

Student Work Samples:

More Mental Health Facilities Needed

Having more mental health facilities will prevent teen brawls. Most of the students who are arrested for violent crimes have smiles on their faces. These smiles show they are not functioning properly in terms of mental and emotional health.

When you are mentally ill, it is difficult to comprehend the borderline between right and wrong.

— *Jasmine C.*

Pro Immunization

I remember getting shots as a child. I was screaming the whole time. But my mother forced me to get them. . . . Various parent and citizen groups whose children attend public schools want to opt out of shots.

While I screamed as a 6 year old, now as a 12 year old journalist who has done the research, I want the adult world to opt into having children get these shots in the arm to keep them from harm. My mother was on target!!

— *Starlin V.*

Cross Curricular Connections

The Malala story focused on education rights and Yousafzai's reaction to

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Sample expo visitor comment:

"It is so awesome to be talking about international issues with students and to hear their passion! I am touched by how I see so many commentaries and works of art about international freedom, rights and children's needs. It was great not only to visit the Expo but to hear how proud the students were of their work and see how the team from many different classes worked together."

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being barred from school by the Taliban. So it was natural for students to share some prior life experiences from different international cultures. Students compared the United States with their native school systems (if they had gone to school in these countries).



Student Javariya B. works on the Ditmas News Network.

ESL teacher Rashid asked them to compare other school disciplinary policies with those of Ditmas.

During the 2014–15 school year, changes in New York City public school suspension policies added a relevant contemporary layer to this discussion. Rashid, Helms and Reissman had the students draw, act out and then

write about school punishments and suspensions in their native countries. School administrators came in to class to share first-hand the details of their school discipline code responsibilities.

Students read articles about the changes in the city department of education suspension policy and compared them to punishments administered in Uzbek and other students' homelands. In comparing and contrasting the systems' differences, many admitted sharing a preference for the stricter expulsion rich policies of their native countries.

Conclusion

Citizenship starts in your middle school classroom and is boundless; one voice expressed, one piece of artwork, one written response or discussion at a time. Malala Yousafzai's experience with terror and her efforts to launch a global education campaign for girls serves to inspire all of our ELLs to express, examine, and investigate what they can filter through the mosaic of their own perspectives. Although this paper has focused on one unit of study, engaging students to study Malala Yousafzai is not the sole focus of this strategy. Any Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages can use the day's news to find a local or international event that may serve as a relevant springboard for a literacy- and content-rich investigation for the classroom. ELLs bring so much prior international life experience to our schools. This experience can help to initiate rich classroom discussion on a great number of topics related to relevant cultural, historical, or social issues.

Sometimes we as teachers seem to stay focused on improving only the measurable gains of English language acquisition and students' test taking abilities. With that, it is easy to miss the rich content and authentic learning experiences that invite students to grow both academically and socially. A curriculum rich in social justice issues does not detract from the goal of improving

Through content-rich experiences ... seamless literacy gains will be accelerated by authentic speaking, listening, and discussing, and through writing and artistic expression.

measurable learning outcomes. By focusing on content that is relevant to students as adolescents and aspiring citizens of the world, we allow students to express their life experiences, connect these to ongoing social issues, and serve as school/community proactive leaders. Gay notes that the goal of culturally responsive education is to “connect in-school learning to out of school living (2010, p.4).” Through such content-rich experiences like running an Expo, partnering with U.S.-born school peer leaders, and serving on a schoolwide newspaper, seamless literacy gains will be accelerated by authentic speaking, listening, and discussing, and through writing and artistic expression.

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Speaking with Two Bilingual Educators

SUMMARY

Bilingual education is not a passing fad in the United States but, rather, has been part of the educational landscape since early immigrants settled in North America.

This article briefly explores the hot-button issues around bilingual education and highlights two devoted teachers who took unusual paths to reach their destination at the helm of their dual language programs.

*Throughout the world, bilingual education is the norm, as countries strive to educate their children for global citizenship, in which fluency in two or more languages is paramount. In contrast, in the United States, bilingual education is a lightning rod for opinion among parents and educators, politicians and voters. Many Americans would be surprised to learn, however, that bilingual education has been part of our country's legacy since early colonial times, according to a recent article in our sister publication, AFT's *American Educator* (2015). At one time, conservatives balked against losing the right to educate their children in their native German, Spanish or Polish; fast forward 100 years, and traditionalists advocate for *English only* in schools, fearing that using other languages in*

school “will somehow fracture the national identity” (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). Recently, however, bilingualism is increasingly associated with positive benefits, both neurologically and educationally; research indicates that older bilinguals experience a fortunate delay in the symptoms of dementia (Valdes, 2015) and younger bilinguals have better problem-solving skills and attention control than monolinguals (Brisk & Proctor, 2015). Furthermore, studies show that English language learners (ELLs) who are educated bilingually actually out-score ELLs in English-only programs on academic tests in English (Parrish, Linqunti, Merickel, Quick, Laird & Esra, 2002).

Bilingual education is a tool for current policymakers to embrace, given the fact that by the year 2020, the majority of all school-aged children will be a

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Teresa Bashant, NYSUT Staff

“minority” and that “the proportion of the total U.S. child population being raised in immigrant families is projected to *continue to increase regardless of future immigration*” (Rumbaut, 2015). With recent press about all the advantages of bilingualism, more school districts are returning to their real American roots by offering their students dual-language programs, which are as varied as the career paths of the two bilingual educators profiled here.

Bilingual Educators Take Roads Less Traveled to Bilingual Classrooms

Ana Banda-Wemple is at the helm of the bilingual prekindergarten in Albany, while Suzy Malone teaches third grade in a dual-language program in Ossining. Both New York public school teachers help their students acquire academics and social skills in Spanish and English, but they took disparate paths to reach their bilingual classrooms.

Banda-Wemple always dreamed of teaching our youngest learners and earned her degree in early childhood education in her native city of Lima,

Peru. Two years later, she moved to Albany, and began her career teaching Spanish as a Second Language to fourth, fifth and sixth graders. Eight years later, Banda-Wemple helped to start Albany’s dual-language program, teaching grades two and three, until the city opened its first prekindergarten classroom in 2008. With her background in and love for early childhood education, Banda-Wemple was a shoe-in for this program and reports with pride (and some astonishment) that she is now teaching the children of her former students. Her full-day class includes nine native Spanish speakers and nine native English speakers, who were selected by lottery for this popular program. While her students come from a range of economic circumstances and cultural backgrounds, Banda-Wemple’s welcoming classroom brings children and their families together to form a nurturing and supportive community. It warms Banda-Wemple’s heart that parents from opposite ends of Albany step forward every day to bring their children’s classmates to and from school, since transportation is not provided for pre-K. She explained, “One of my students was unable to come to school

With the recent press about all the advantages of bilingualism, more school districts are returning to their real American roots by offering their students dual-language programs.

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Engagement with community, and generous interaction from other parents enabled a student with limited resources to return to the classroom.

and was about to be forced to leave the program. Her family is going through a pretty rough time, so they had no transportation, odd working hours, and so on. After the other parents found out, they got organized, made phone calls, donated a car seat, and volunteered rides to and from school. We are so happy to have her back in school!”

Malone took a more circuitous route to her current third grade dual-language assignment. Growing up in Rochester, she loved her Spanish classes and decided to immerse herself in the language by living in Mexico and Costa Rica. After completing college, she joined the Peace Corps as a special educator on the rural Santa Elena peninsula near Guayaquil, Ecuador. After attending graduate school at Columbia

University, Malone was a bilingual special educator in an inclusion program at a Bronx elementary school. The world again lured her away from New York for a stint teaching high school English as a Second Language and Spanish in Thailand. Malone returned to the U.S. to teach for six years at Public School 165 in Manhattan, located near Columbia University and in a predominantly Dominican neighborhood. “What made that school so special at the time was the pride and collaboration among teachers and the support of administrators. She went on to say, “At P.S. 165 I learned how vital partnership is to dual language programs and the hard work, grit and delicate dance of having a successful side-by-side team. The sharing, planning, coordinating, continual passing of tidbits of information, and communicating with parents in the language that works best, go much beyond being solely team members.” After that influential experience in Manhattan, Malone moved to the Galapagos, off the coast of Ecuador, where she taught ESL and first grade. She is now in her sixth year of teaching elementary dual-language in Ossining. With more than half of Malone’s students hailing from Ecuador, her experiences in that country and culture are integral to building her class community, just as Banda-Wemple’s Peruvian upbringing and college preparation are to her.

Parent engagement is key to student success, agree Malone and Banda-Wemple. Especially at the preschool age, parents need to know and be able to communicate on a daily or regular basis with their child's teacher. Banda-Wemple counts on seeing most parents every morning, when they bring their children to class and pick them up after school. She feels this is a wonderful opportunity to chat briefly about each child and to share anecdotes or touch on more serious issues a child may be having at school or at home. Parents often stay for morning circle time, which is always conducted in Spanish, and they often help out in centers in the classroom. She also hosts frequent family breakfasts, including special ones for Mother's and Father's Day, and a mid-year celebration in February.

Banda-Wemple's entire school celebrates Latino culture in a Cinco de Mayo potluck, in which families come together in the school cafeteria for food, music and dancing. Malone hosts a similar family gathering for Dia de los Muertos, or Day

of the Dead, at Halloween time. This celebration of ancestors encourages families to continue to share their own traditions with their children in their new environment.

In addition, parent involvement helps fuel her students' enthusiasm for learning, says Malone. "Every year I invite each child and his or her parents to share with the class something that is important to their family. Last year, one father showed pictures and described in English his trip to the Taj Mahal. This year, a mother came to school and made a drink called colada morada with the class... If you could have seen all the proud, beaming faces of that child and that mother — and of all the other children who know and love colada morada!"



Sharing the tradition of colada morada.



Classroom projects tie in to cultural traditions.



Families are engaged with invitations to special events, and encouraged to continue their own traditions of celebrations.



Music and dancing for Cinco de Mayo.

Speaking with Two Bilingual Educators



Families are encouraged to share and participate in classroom celebrations of cultural traditions, helping to foster a sense of understanding and community among those from different backgrounds.

Malone contends that it doesn't really matter what topic or activity parents share; what is important is the sharing between the child's world at home and school.

Both Malone and Banda-Wemple find the occasional challenge in being a dual-language teacher in a monolingual school. The other bilingual teachers at Banda-Wemple's school have higher grade levels, so she sometimes feels the absence of colleagues who share her passion for pre-K. Both educators lament the lack of bilingual teachers in the arts, in music, and in physical education, since this means that students only speak Spanish in their own classrooms. The teachers also stressed the importance of administrative support and the overall school culture for embracing and enhancing their dual-language programs and students. Malone feels fortunate in that her current principal recognizes the importance of communicating with her students' parents and supported a "split curriculum night, during which parents could attend the presentation only in Spanish, rather than sitting through the English program first."

Because their programs are small, it is a challenge meeting the specific needs of the Spanish zone teachers during weekly professional development meetings, as most curriculum and materials are geared toward monolingual classrooms. Malone recalls the optimal professional community that she experienced working in Manhattan, where "... all of our professional development was created to support our program. We did a lot of work with the reading and writing project from Teachers College at Columbia

University, through which we entered each other's classrooms to observe and learn from one another and mentored many bilingual student teachers. . . ."

Malone concluded, "Dual-language teachers created and ran our own study group, meeting before school. We invited the administration occasionally, but the agenda was ours, and we had full attendance."

Both educators are active in bilingual education outside the walls of their classrooms. Banda-Wemple meets monthly with her school's Dual Language Parent Committee, while Malone serves as a regional delegate for the New York State Association of Bilingual Educators (NYSABE). She attends monthly meetings with bilingual educators from across the state, presenting at professional conferences and collaborating with teachers, administrators and professors in the field, such as professor Zoila Tazi Morell, who shares her expertise in pre-K bilingual education in this issue of *Educator's Voice*.

Despite the challenges, both teachers sing the praises of bilingual education, which is clearly shared by parents, as their programs have long waiting lists for seats in their classrooms. Community members from Albany to Ossining see bilingualism as an asset for their children. Banda-Wemple and Malone's students reap the benefits from the unusual paths that these exemplary bilingual educators took to New York State.

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Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for ELLs

SUMMARY

The number of English language learners in public schools has increased significantly. This study describes one approach to reading instruction that helps to build students' abilities to collaborate successfully with their peers.

Correction made on 2/4/19: This research was supported in part by a Memorandum of Understanding between the New York State Education Department, Office of Special Education and the State University College at Buffalo, Project Title: NYS Response to Intervention Technical Assistance Center, Contract Number: C009953 Extension, Principal Investigator: Dr. Theresa Janczak.

English language learners (ELLs)

constitute one of the fastest growing student populations in the United States. Nearly one in five students in public schools are ELLs, and the numbers continue to increase (Chu & Flores, 2011). Currently, about 70 percent of ELLs are Spanish speaking (Klingner, Boardman, Eppolito & Almanza Schonewise, 2012). ELLs also represent one of the lowest academically achieving student groups. In New York State, 1 percent of ELLs in eighth grade perform at or above proficient on the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core exam (NAEP, 2013). This is alarming as it means 99 percent of ELLs failed to read at a level to fully and deeply comprehend informational and narrative text at their grade level.

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards

(CCSS), expectations for adolescent literacy achievement have increased (Reed & Vaughn, 2012). The expectations now include knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness (Reed & Vaughn). Some ELLs with reading difficulties are unable to gain proficiency in the content knowledge they require to successfully earn a high school diploma (Klingner, Boardman, Eppolito, & Almanza Schonewise, 2012). In New York State, only 31.4 percent of English language learners graduated from high school in 2014.

Earning a high school diploma is vital to successful participation in today's global economy. Yet, English language learners with reading difficulties are unable to compete in today's workforce, as they are required to apply levels of academic literacy well beyond the basic level (Klingner, Boardman, Eppolito, & Almanza Schonewise, 2012). In order to obtain better paying

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jobs, ELLs require a higher level of reading proficiency. Unfortunately, too many ELLs fail to graduate from high school because of substandard reading performance.

Substandard academic achievement may also contribute to the disproportionate representation of ELLs in special education. English language learners who struggle with reading have an increased likelihood of being referred for special education placement (McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, Leos, & D’Emilio, 2005). This is problematic as research indicates ELLs who are inappropriately placed in special education regress even further academically (Huang, Clarke, Milczarski, & Raby, 2011). Despite the mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) to minimize cultural bias in special education, disproportionality still exists (Liu, Ortiz, Wilkinson, Robertson, & Kushner, 2008).

The raised expectations and high-stakes assessments have also resulted in an increase in expectations for teachers’ instructional practices. Teachers are

are also facing an increasingly diverse student population. Many teachers, however, still find it challenging to address students’ literacy needs particularly in the content areas (Reed & Vaughn, 2012).

Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies

English language learners in middle school require instruction that simultaneously supports acquiring content area knowledge while supporting language acquisition and reading comprehension (Klingner, Boardman, Eppolito, & Almanza Schonewise, 2012). Approaches to teaching ELLs should target multiple components of reading (Cirino, Romain, Barth, Tolar, Fletcher, & Vaughn, 2013). Reading intervention for this student population should serve a dual purpose and address literacy skills while simultaneously increasing content-area knowledge. The causes of reading difficulties in adolescent students are numerous. Therefore, multicomponent programs that integrate instruction in fluency and comprehension are recommended (Cirino, Romain, Barth, et al., 2013).

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Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for ELLs

The use of a partner who is more fluent in reading and English language skills may be a viable option for supporting language acquisition and reading in content area classes.

Peer-assisted learning strategies or PALS is a program that incorporates multiple components using partner reading with three different comprehension strategies; paragraph shrinking, prediction relay and retelling (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Simmons, 1997). Components of PALS can be implemented in content-area classrooms without the need for formal training on the commercial PALS program. This is particularly important as teachers require approaches that can be readily used in the classroom.

Paragraph shrinking is one example, and can easily be used with partner reading without using the commercial PALS program (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003). Paragraph shrinking with a partner, allows struggling readers to identify the main idea, a comprehension strategy, while engaging in repeated oral reading practice, a fluency strategy. Implementing this modified version of PALS using content-related text may simultaneously support acquiring content area knowledge and reading comprehension.

Partner reading, as one component within a reading curriculum, is an effective strategy for adolescent readers (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003). Partner reading allows middle school students who struggle with reading, to connect with peers. It encourages student engagement, and includes

comprehension strategies (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon). The use of a partner who is more fluent in reading and English language skills may be a viable option for supporting language acquisition and reading in content area classes.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of two peer-assisted learning strategies on specific reading skills and content knowledge of middle school ELLs. More specifically, the study examined the effects of a partner reading and paragraph shrinking strategy on the oral reading fluency and science and social studies content knowledge of ELLs with and without disabilities. The current body of research literature on PALS with ELLs is limited. This study will add to the research base on effective literacy interventions for adolescent ELLs with and without disabilities.

It should be noted that while there was a heavy focus on fluency via standardized measures, comprehension of content area text was also a focus. Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading and the purpose of this research project was to incorporate both reading fluency and comprehension as they are part of the five essential components of reading (phonemic

awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). All five elements are integral to the reading process and the primary researcher does not claim that fluency is the most important, they are all essential for successful reading.

Research Questions

1. Does the use of modified peer-assisted learning strategies improve the oral reading fluency of middle school English language learners with and without disabilities?
2. Does the use of modified peer-assisted learning strategies improve science and social studies content knowledge (comprehension) of middle school English language learners with and without disabilities?
3. What is the feasibility of the implementation of modified peer-assisted learning strategies in a middle school classroom?
4. How socially valid is the use of modified peer-assisted learning strategies?

Participants and Setting

The study took place in an urban elementary school in Western New York serving students in grades K-8. The sample for this study included 35 ELLs in middle school, 22 students were in seventh grade general education classrooms and 13 students were

in an eighth grade bilingual self-contained classroom. The students ranged in age from 12 years to 15 years. Of these participants, 54 percent were female and 46 percent were male. Of the 35 ELLs, 16 (46 percent) were classified as both ELLs and students with disabilities. Finally, 100 percent of the participants were Hispanic whose native language was Spanish. The current study was part of a larger study which examined a middle school reading intervention for students struggling with reading.

Procedures

Teacher Training. Prior to the start of the intervention, teacher training involving the standard administration of AIMSweb assessments and for classroom implementation of the two modified learning strategies occurred. Teachers were given a tutorial on the use of the Web-based AIMSweb program. The teachers then practiced together until 100 percent inter-rater reliability was obtained. For the classroom implementation of PALS, an outside consultant visited the school and modeled the PALS procedures using an eighth grade classroom that was not participating in the study. After the presentation, a debriefing session was held with the literacy coach and consultant to answer any questions the teachers had.

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Five essential components of reading:

- phonemic awareness
- phonics
- fluency
- vocabulary
- comprehension.

ReadWorks Non-fiction: The Industrial Revolution – The Legend of John Henry

The Industrial Revolution The Legend of John Henry

During the Industrial Revolution, machines started doing the work of people. They were used to make yarn, weave cloth, and saw wood. They were even used to make furniture. However, the changes taking place filled some people with sadness. Many craftsmen, who took pride at their trade, suddenly couldn't find work. They resented that machines were replacing men. This famous American legend tells about one man determined to prove he could beat a machine.

No one's really sure where John Henry came from. Some people say Alabama. Some folks say West Virginia. But one thing's for sure. John Henry was a big man. He could tackle anything, even Big Bend Tunnel. That is where he died.

John Henry was a steel-driving man. That means he helped make railroads. He used a big ol' hammer and a stake to punch holes clean through mountains made of solid rock. He would whistle and sing all day working away. But ol' John Henry was stubborn as an ornery¹ mule.

One day John Henry showed up at a camp yonder in Virginia. A team of men was building a railroad up the East Coast. The team's captain was a wiry², little man. He says to John, "What can you do?"

John Henry took a deep breath and puffed himself up just like a rooster. "I'm a steel drivin' man," he said. "I'm goin' to take my hammer and my stake and work for you. If you give me a chance, I'll work from 8 to 5. I can crumble more mountain than any man you've ever seen."

¹ Ornery – stubborn and mean
² Wiry – thin but tough

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Example of expository text.

Student Training. Student training occurred for three instructional days in social studies. Using expository text or passages, teachers modeled the use of

PALS, including the error correction and paragraph shrinking procedures. Students were then given guided practice for each step of the modified PALS procedures. [See Appendix 1 for a detailed script the teachers used during the training sessions].

Intervention. After the training sessions, the intervention was implemented across 15 instructional sessions within seventh and eighth grade science, social studies or ELA classrooms. For seventh grade, the science teacher provided intervention in the science class; the social studies teacher in the social studies class, and the ESL or grade-level special education teacher in the ELA class. For eighth grade, the special education teacher provided all interventions. If there was a teacher absent, the primary researcher provided the intervention. The classroom periods for the middle school were 42 minutes each. Each instructional session lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Seventh grade received eight instructional sessions in science. Four of these sessions were in science class and four were in the ELA class using science content. Seventh grade also received six instructional sessions in social studies; four of the sessions were in social studies class and two in the ELA class using social studies content. Eighth grade received nine instructional sessions using science content, four sessions in science class and five sessions

in ELA class. For social studies, eighth grade received six instructional sessions. Four of the sessions were in social studies class and two in the ELA class using social studies content.

Students from the same classroom were paired into two-person teams and cycled through two specific peer-assisted reading activities, 10 minutes per activity. The students were listed based on reading Lexile levels. The Lexile level is a scale for measuring both reading ability of a student and the text complexity of materials he or she reads. As with any other measure, however, there are limitations. The Lexile measure is not directly related to the curriculum or state standards. Subsequently, a Lexile score may not be a measure of the components of reading being taught through the grade-level curriculum (i.e., identifying main ideas and author's purpose, understanding idioms, locating details in a passage, etc.). A teacher's knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses usually contributes significantly to the selection of appropriate curricular materials. The Lexile scores used in this study merely provided a measure of the students' reading ability on a basic scale. The Lexile scores were automatically provided along with the AIMSweb oral reading fluency scores, thus this measure was used for grouping but other grouping options should always be considered.

Next, the list of students based on Lexile levels was split in half. The highest student from the first list was paired with the highest student from the second list and so on. [See Appendix 2 for sample pairs]. The students participated in partner reading and paragraph shrinking of expository text. The texts were written at the reading level of the lower student to accommodate the instructional reading levels of students who were not performing at grade level expectations. Descriptions of each PALS strategy are provided below.

Materials. Materials included informational texts that reflected current units of study in seventh and eighth grade science or social studies. Each pair received a folder with their names written on the outside, expository texts, and mini posters for the error correction and paragraph shrinking procedures as well as the PALS rules. Large foam posters of the PALS rules were also posted in plain view so all students could refer to them as needed. (See example at right.)



Rules are posted in plain view so students can refer to them as needed.

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Correction Procedures



STOP. That word is _____

What word?

Good Job!

Go back and read that line again.

Partner Reading.

Each student took turns reading content-related text (in science or social studies) for a total of 10 minutes (five per partner). The more proficient reader or the “first reader” read for five minutes. While the first reader read aloud, the second reader (lower performing student) coached or monitored the student. If a mistake was made, an error correction procedure was used to correct the errors.

The error correction procedure consisted of the second reader saying “STOP. That word is _____. What word? _____. Good job! Go back and read that line again.” (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Simmons, 1997). After five minutes, the students switched roles. (See example at left for Correction Procedures.)

Paragraph Shrinking. Each student again took turns reading content-related text. The first reader began reading content-specific text in science or social studies. After reading one paragraph, the reader restated the main idea of the paragraph in 10 words or less. After five minutes, the students

switched roles with the second reader reading new content and identifying the main idea of each paragraph read.

Measures

The content knowledge in science and social studies was measured via the same pre- and post- teacher-made tests. The science test consisted of 20 items, composed of multiple choice and short answers. The topics were related to unit of study currently being taught. For both seventh and eighth grade, the unit of study was chemistry (e.g., periodic table, atoms, or molecules). The social studies test consisted of 16 items, also multiple choice and short answer. The unit of study for seventh grade was The Constitution and Bill of Rights. For eighth grade, the unit of study was The Industrial Revolution.

Oral reading fluency was measured using AIMSweb Reading-curriculum based measurements (R-CBM). The AIMSweb assessment, data management, and reporting system accommodates multi-tiered systems of support for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade (AIMSweb, 2012).

AIMSweb includes nationally normed assessment tools for universal screening and progress monitoring in the areas of reading, language arts, mathematics, and behavior (AIMSweb, 2012).

Baseline Data. Baseline data were

gathered by administering content specific, teacher-developed tests in science and social studies (pre-test). AIMSweb R-CBM probes were individually administered over a period of four days in order to determine baseline oral reading fluency scores. After baseline data were established, the intervention began.

Post-intervention. Once the instructional period ended, AIMSweb R-CBM probes were again individually administered over a period of two days in order to assess oral reading fluency. Additionally, post-tests for content knowledge in science and social studies were administered.

Data Analysis

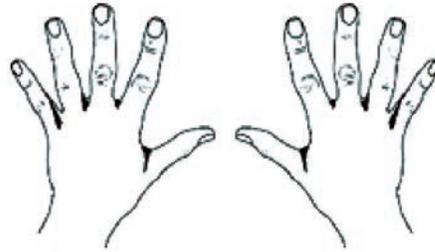
The functional relationship between PALS and the reading skills of ELLs was determined via a review of graphed data. Visual analysis determined whether there was a magnitude of change from baseline data to post-intervention for both oral reading fluency and content area tests.

Additionally, the rate of improvement (ROI) for oral reading fluency from baseline to post-intervention was examined.

The rate of improvement demonstrates how students are responding to the intervention (Shapiro, 2011). The students' performance on the AIMSweb R-CBM probe was

PARAGRAPH SHRINKING

- 1. Name the most important who or what.**
- 2. Tell the most important thing about the who or what.**
- 3. Say the main idea in 10 words or less.**



compared to the normative population. The difference between participants of the study and the normative sample was determined by comparing their scores to the benchmark scores expected for a student of that same grade, at that same time of the year.

Three different rates of improvements were examined. First, the typical ROI that students typically attain was determined. Typical ROI is based on the normative sample at the 50th percentile. Second, the targeted rate of improvement was determined. The targeted ROI is the needed growth a student needs to attain in order to meet grade level benchmark. Third, the attained rate of improvement was

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examined. The attained ROI is the actual rate of improvement the student achieves as a function of his/her particular progress across the year (Shapiro, 2011).

Results of the Study

1. Oral Reading Fluency

The results indicate all student groups increased in oral reading fluency over the course of this three week study.

The total intervention group increased the number of words correct per minute (WCPM) by an average of 10.36

words. The ELLs increased the WCPM by an average of 10.56 words. The ELLs with disabilities increased the WCPM by an average of 7.08 words. [See Figure 1]. When looking at grade level, both seventh and eighth grade students increased the WCPM with an average of 10.11 and 5.94 words, respectively. [See Figure 2].

The rate of improvement refers to the increase or gains in the number of words students read correctly on a weekly basis. According to AIMSweb (2012), the typical or average weekly growth at the 55th percentile for students in the seventh grade ranges from .67 to .82 words per week from winter to spring. The typical weekly growth for students in the eighth grade ranges from .48 to .60 words per week from winter to spring.

The results indicate all student groups in both seventh and eighth grade exceeded the typical rate of growth. [See Figure 3]. The attained ROI for seventh grade was 3.37 words per week. This exceeds the typical rate of growth of .82. When looking specifically at the ELLs and ELLs with disabilities in seventh grade, both groups also exceeded the typical rate of growth with an improvement of 3.52 and 3.33 words per week. The attained ROI for eighth grade was 1.98 words per week. This exceeds the typical rate of growth of .60.

Figure 1: Oral reading fluency results by student subgroup

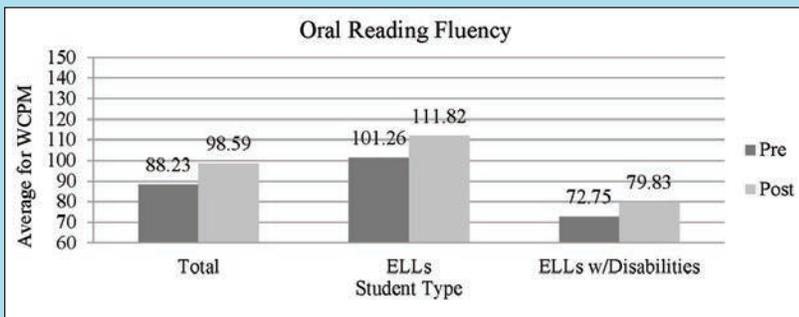
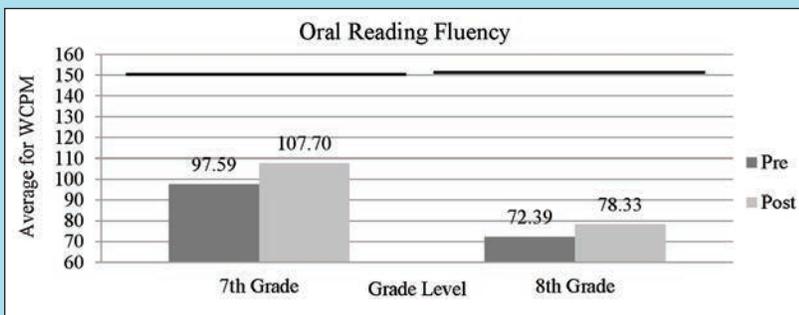


Figure 2: Oral reading fluency results by grade level



The target rate of improvement was also calculated for this study. In order for the seventh grade students to ultimately meet the benchmark of 150 words correct per minute they would need to make an improvement of 2.91 words per week. Both the ELLs and ELLs with disabilities in the seventh grade exceeded this target ROI. In order for the eighth grade students to meet the benchmark of 151 WCPM, they needed to make an improvement of 4.37 words per week. The ELLs with disabilities in the eighth grade did not meet or exceed this target ROI.

Content Knowledge

2. Science Scores.

The results indicate all student groups increased in science knowledge over the course of this three-week study. The science scores for the total treatment group increased by 20 percent. The science scores for ELLs increased by 22 percent. For ELLs with disabilities, the science scores increased by 16 percent. [See Figure 4]. When looking at grade level, both seventh and eighth grade students increased in science knowledge with an average increase of 22 percent and 15 percent, respectively. [See Figure 5].

3. Social Studies Scores

Overall, the social studies scores for the total group increased by 6 percent. [See Figure 6]. The results indicate only ELLs with disabilities however, increased in social studies knowledge

over the course of this three-week study, with an increase of 21 percent. The social studies scores for ELLs without disabilities decreased on average by 1 percent. When looking at

Figure 3: Rate of improvement results

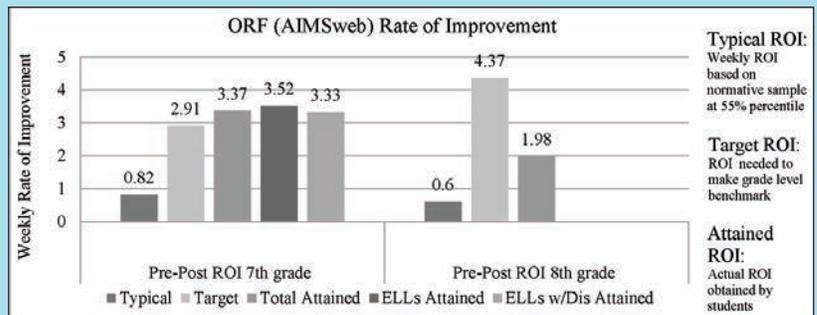


Figure 4: Science scores by student subgroup

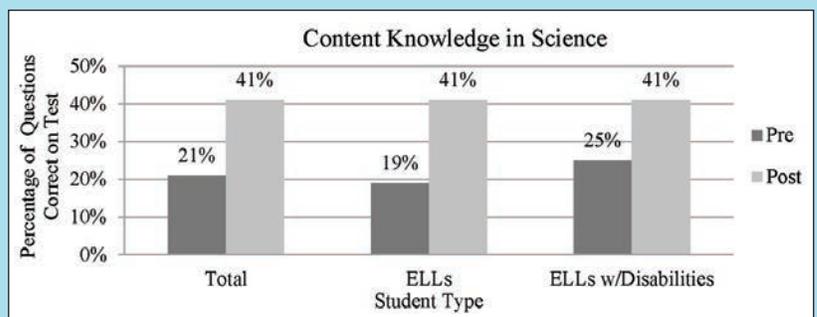
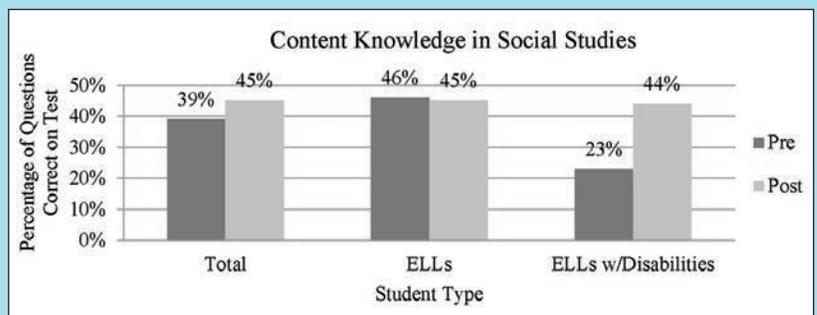


Figure 5: Science scores by grade level



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grade level, the social studies scores for seventh grade remained the same while the eighth grade students demonstrated an increase of 23 percent. [See Figure 7].

The results of this study indicate the modified PALS intervention had an overall positive effect on the reading skills of middle school ELLs with and without disabilities. All student groups, both ELLs with and without disabilities in the seventh and eighth grade made gains in oral reading fluency. Additionally, both the seventh and eighth grade groups exceeded the

typical or expected rate of improvement as a result of the modified PALS intervention. While neither group achieved an average passing grade for the content-area tests, both groups increased their performance from baseline to post-intervention. More specifically, the students made greater gains in science with an increase in test scores of 20 percent, whereas the overall increase in social studies was only 6 percent.

Students engaged in repeated reading with error correction procedures. The use of reading materials at the instructional reading level of students also proved to be beneficial. For English language learners in particular, the opportunity to read with a more fluent reading role model provided these students with language support embedded in content instruction. More specifically, the increase in gains in content knowledge may be attributed to the alignment between reading materials, curriculum, and assessment. The use of a reading comprehension strategy, in this case identification of main idea, simultaneously supported literacy instruction and content knowledge instruction.

The third research question addressed the feasibility of implementation of the PALS intervention. The teachers were given a questionnaire to fill out during a focus group meeting. [See Appendix

Figure 6: Social studies scores by student subgroups

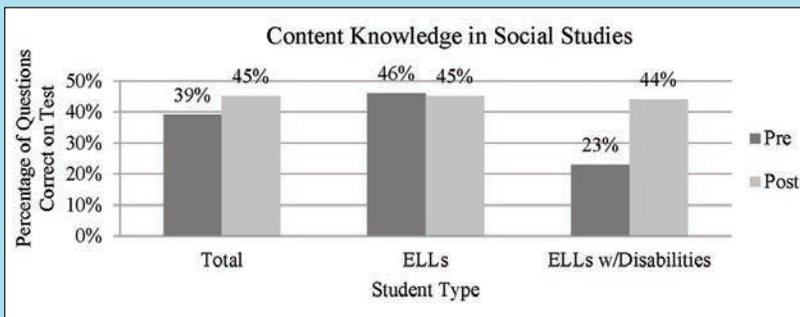
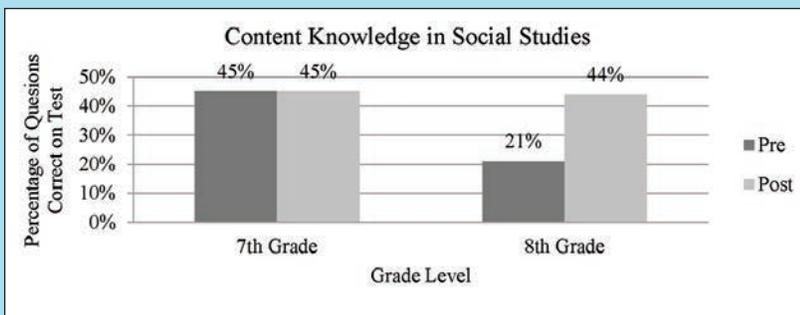


Figure 7: Social studies scores by grade level



3]. Seven questions on the teacher questionnaire addressed the feasibility of implementation.

Results indicated five out of the six teachers agreed the PALS intervention was easy to implement in a reasonable amount of time. All of the teachers agreed they possessed the skill level to implement the PALS intervention. The middle school teachers also agreed their participation in the PALS intervention was relatively easy and agreed PALS fit into their regular schedule. Four out of the six teachers agreed they had the necessary materials to implement this program accurately.

The final research question addressed the social validity of the PALS program. The students were asked a series of questions post intervention by the primary researcher and a graduate

student. [See Appendix 4]. The answers were then recorded on the student questionnaire. The remaining 13 questions on the teacher questionnaire also addressed social validity.

4. Student Questionnaire

The results of the student questionnaire (see Table 1) indicate the majority of students who received the PALS program liked it and believed they were taught important reading skills and strategies that can be used in other classes. While many of the students did not believe reading was difficult, most agreed both understanding what is read and identifying the main idea of a paragraph are important skills.

The students also provided feedback by giving additional comments or thoughts on the modified PALS. Comments from students included:

Table 1: Student Questionnaire Results

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. The PALS intervention taught me important reading skills.	93%	7%
2. The PALS intervention helped me do better in science and social studies.	63%	37%
3. Reading is difficult for me.	44%	56%
4. The PALS intervention helped me feel better about my reading in English.	81%	19%
5. If my friend were having trouble with reading, I would tell him/her to try the PALS intervention.	86%	14%
6. I liked the PALS intervention.	68%	32%
7. It is important to understand what I read.	95%	5%
8. It is important to identify the main idea of a paragraph.	96%	4%
9. I would use the paragraph shrinking strategy in other classes	70%	30%
10. Did you use skills or strategies while reading before the PALS intervention?	53%	47%

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“I liked working with partners closer to my reading level.”

“It helps us read better, helps us take time to read, the paragraph shrinking helps.”

“It helped me with my science test!”

“Paragraph shrinking helped a lot.”

“Being pre-taught reading information about the reading helped. Example learned about atoms, then read about atoms.”

“It worked, what I didn’t know my partner would tell me and vice versa.”

The interviews revealed a little more than half of the students reported to have used some type of reading skill or strategy prior to learning PALS. The

most commonly used skills or strategies were rereading the text and asking a friend or teacher. Table 2 provides a summary of all of the reading strategies identified by the students.

5. Teacher Questionnaire

Analysis of the remaining questions from the teacher questionnaire indicated five out of the six teachers agreed the PALS intervention quickly improved students’ reading skills. All of the teachers agreed the PALS intervention focused on important behaviors, specifically oral reading fluency and content knowledge. The middle school teachers believed the intervention was beneficial for students with disabilities and for ELLs. More specifically, they felt the intervention increased the reading fluency of ELLs and provided

Table 2: Reading skills or strategies used by students

Student Answers:

Underline important words	Reread	Say the word in Spanish
Point out details in a paragraph	Color coded paragraphs	Main idea
Use pictures	Think of one word to describe the	Topic sentences, body, details
Take notes on the side/highlight	whole paragraph	Ask an English speaking friend
Self-correct	Paraphrase	Read carefully
Break down unknown words	Looking for synonyms	Sometimes use dictionary
Use a dictionary	Use vocabulary	Track reading
Ask a friend		Ask a teacher for help
Ask the teacher		keep trying
Use context clues		Use vocabulary words

these students with appropriate models for reading. All of the teachers agreed the PALS intervention improved the students' overall reading performance, and reported observable gains. The teachers also agreed the PALS intervention was acceptable to students given the classroom culture. Finally, when asked if they will use PALS in the future, all of the teachers agreed they would use it again and recommend the modified PALS intervention to other teachers, classrooms, and schools.

The additional comments written by the teachers further corroborate their positive feelings about the PALS intervention. The teachers made comments such as:

“Thank you —Look forward to start working with students in 2015–16.”

“Thank you for the training and support during this pilot program.”

“I love this intervention and continue to use elements of it.”

When listing any concerns or additional comments, the teachers suggested the PALS intervention begin at the start of the school year. The teachers also suggested planning time to make sure the materials used are in direct correlation with content, particularly for the ESL teachers. The teachers also agreed data should be provided to plan partnerships throughout the year and share results with students.

Conclusions

Oral Reading Fluency

The results of this study demonstrate modified PALS was effective in increasing the oral reading fluency of English language learners with and without disabilities in both seventh and eighth grade. More specifically, ELLs who received PALS, exceeded the typical rate of improvement expected for an average student in the same grade at the same time of year (Shapiro, 2011). When looking specifically at the target rate of improvement, the ELLs in seventh grade both with and without disabilities did exceed the target ROI. The ELLs with disabilities in the eighth grade did not meet or exceed this target ROI. This is particularly noteworthy as ELLs must make greater gains in order to close the gap in reading achievement.

The increase in oral reading fluency can be attributed to several factors. The modified PALS intervention provided students with opportunities for repeated reading of instructional level text. Repeated reading has been proven effective for increasing the oral reading fluency of adolescent readers (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003; Begeny, Ross, Greene, Mitchell, & Whitehouse, 2012; Castillo, 2011; Denton, Wexler, Vaughn, & Bryan, 2008; Malloy, Gilbertson, & Maxfield,

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2007; Ross and Begeny, 2011). Additionally, the repeated reading with a peer provided the ELLs with a more fluent reading role model.

The modified PALS intervention also included error correction procedures. This technique provided ELLs with immediate feedback and opportunity to practice reading with less errors. Similar to past research, this most likely contributed to the positive gains in oral reading fluency (Begeny, Ross, Greene, Mitchell, & Whitehouse, 2012; Castillo, 2011; Malloy, Gilbertson, & Maxfield, 2007; Ross and Begeny, 2011).

Content Knowledge

The English language learners in this study increased in science knowledge as reflected by the increase in test scores across both grade levels. The increase in science knowledge can be attributed to several factors. First, the reading materials reinforced the science content being taught. The units of study were reflected in the instructional level passages. Second, there was alignment between the reading materials, curriculum, and final assessment. Finally, the identification of the main idea through paragraph shrinking provided the ELLs with a comprehension strategy they could apply while reading. Multicomponent interventions that integrate strategies for fluency and comprehension are effective, specifically for adolescent readers

(Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003; Cirino, Romain, Barth, et al., 2013; Wanzek & Kent, 2012).

The results for social studies knowledge were less favorable. While the social studies scores for the total group increased by 6 percent, only ELLs with disabilities increased in social studies knowledge over the course of this three-week study. The social studies scores for ELLs without disabilities (7th grade) actually decreased by 1 percent. These results may be attributed to less coherence between the reading materials, curriculum, and assessment. The units of study differed for both seventh and eighth grade. The eighth grade bilingual special education teacher was able to align her reading materials with the curriculum and her final assessment. The reading materials and assessment were less aligned to the seventh grade curriculum being taught. Another possible cause for the limited gains in social studies knowledge may be the fact that students received less PALS sessions covering social studies content. This was a result of the student training only focusing on social studies content as well as scheduling conflicts and school events. It should be noted, while the final scores for science and social studies were still below passing, the ELLs in this study who received the modified PALS treatment outperformed the group that did not receive the treatment in the larger scale study.

Implications for Practice

Overall, modified PALS is an effective reading strategy for increasing oral reading fluency and science content knowledge of middle school ELLs with and without disabilities. This intervention can be easily implemented in a middle school setting, specifically in context of content-area classrooms. The feedback was positive from teachers and students alike and validate modified PALS is easy to implement and not very time-consuming. Additionally, modified PALS can be an alternative to traditional textbook reading and allow for differentiation of content and materials based on students' reading levels.

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the limited gains made by ELLs with disabilities and the limited gains made in content knowledge overall, it is recommended future research on modified PALS embed a vocabulary component. ELLs with disabilities may benefit more from pre-teaching academic vocabulary prior to engaging in the partner reading activities. Additionally, future research should last longer as this study lasted only three weeks. ELLs with disabilities may require longer and more intense intervention before any significant gains are noticed.

It is imperative to understand the difficulties adolescent ELLs face when

acquiring English reading skills. The current body of literature on the research on PALS with ELLs with and without disabilities is limited. This study will add to the research base on effective literacy interventions for adolescent ELLs with and without disabilities.

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Appendix 1: Teacher Script (part 1 of 3)

Teacher Script

This script is intended for research purposes only.

Did I do this?

Yes	No	Intervention Procedure
		1. GATHER AND ORGANIZE MATERIALS: Classroom should already be split into dyads (pairs).
		<p>2. ARTICULATE OBJECTIVE: “It’s time for PALS! “PALS” stands for Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies.</p> <p>Today, we’ll read about _____ multiple times to work on increasing our fluency. Fluency is the rate, accuracy, and expression that we read—not just how fast we can read. At the end of the passage, we’ll answer some questions together.</p> <p>Please get your materials ready. Remember, First Readers, you are getting the materials from _____. Second Readers, you are putting the materials away after the lesson.”</p> <p>Place a checkmark in their folders for good transitions or award class dojo points.</p>
		<p>3. INTRODUCE PARTNER READING: Explain to each student that they will be reading together for 10 minutes (five minutes each).</p> <p>“You will read this passage for five minutes. While you read, your partner will read silently and help you with any errors you make (Review error correction procedure). “When you get a word wrong or you don’t know a word, your partner should say: STOP. That word is____, What word? Good Job! Go back and read that line again.</p> <p>Then you will switch roles. I will be here to monitor the reading and help correct errors.”</p> <p>REVIEW EXPECTATIONS: Review the PALS Rules by referring to the poster and the rule note card in student folders.</p> <p>“The rules are: 1. Talk only to your partner and only about Partner Reading. 2. Keep your voice low. 3. Help your partner. 4. Try your best!”</p>
		4. CHECK FOR STUDENT UNDERSTANDING: “Does anyone have any questions?”
		DURING TRAINING ONLY - 5. MODEL THE ACTIVITY: Model as follows: Model reading the passage to the students, explaining to them that they will be working in partnerships to practice rate, accuracy, and expression, “Follow along by reading silently as I model reading the passage fluently (have an example passage projected for all students to see). Model the error correction procedure.

Appendix 1: Teacher Script (part 2 of 3)

		<p>6. PARTNER READING: Explain that it is their turn to practice reading. Start with the first student(s) or First Readers. “The First Reader will be the reader and the Second Reader is the coach. Ready...begin.”</p> <p>Interventionist starts stopwatch/timer. At five minutes, say “Stop”. Students should mark the last word read.</p> <p>Partners should assist with unknown words using error correction procedure.</p>
		<p>7. GIVE SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: Circulate around the room and provide feedback or praise. BE SPECIFIC! “Good job correcting that error”, “I noticed you _____, great job!”, “Remember, you must follow along as your partner reads”, etc.</p> <p>Place a checkmark in their folders for on task behavior or award class dojo points.</p>
		<p>8. PARTNER READING REPEATED: Explain that it is time to switch roles. “The First Reader will now become the coach and the Second Reader will become the reader. Remember, the Second Raeder will re-read what the First Reader read during the first five minutes. Ready....begin”</p> <p>Interventionist starts stopwatch/timer. At five minutes, say “Stop”. Students should mark the last word read.</p> <p>Partners should assist with unknown words using error correction procedure.</p> <p>Remember to provide feedback and praise.</p>
		<p>9. INTRODUCE PARAGRAPH SHRINKING: “Time to move to the next PALS activity. It is called Paragraph Shrinking. In Paragraph Shrinking, you’ll shrink the information in each paragraph into a main idea statement using 10 words or less. The main idea statement tells the most important idea in the paragraph. What does the main idea statement tell us?”</p> <p>Remember, you will follow these 3 steps: “The most important who or what in the paragraph is...”, The most important thing about the who or what is...”, The main idea statement is...”</p>
		<p>DURING TRAINING ONLY - 10. MODEL THE ACTIVITY: Model as follows: Model reading the passage to the students, explaining to them that they will be working in partnerships to identify the main idea statement in each paragraph, “Follow along by reading silently as I model reading the passage (have an example passage projected for all students to see). Model Paragraph Shrinking by using a Think Aloud. After each paragraph say “The most important who or what in the paragraph is...”, The most important thing about the who or what is...”, The main idea statement is...” Have students count as you say each word to ensure it is 10 words or less. Continue to model several more paragraphs as necessary.</p>

Appendix 1: Teacher Script (part 3 of 3)

		<p>11. PARAGRAPH SHRINKING: Explain that it is their turn to read and shrink the paragraphs. Start with the first student(s) or First Readers. “The First Reader will be the reader. As in Partner Reading, each reader will read for 5 minutes. At the end of each paragraph read, the Reader will stop to create a main idea statement. The Reader will go through the 3 steps to create a main idea statement that is 10 words or less. Ready...begin.”</p> <p>Interventionist starts stopwatch/timer. At five minutes, say “Stop”. Students should mark the last word read.</p> <p>Partners should ensure main idea statement is 10 words or less.</p>
		<p>12. GIVE SPECIFIC FEEDBACK: Circulate around the room and provide feedback or praise. BE SPECIFIC! “Good job identifying the main idea”, “I noticed you _____, great job!”, “Remember, you must say it in 10 words or less”, “That is more of a detail and not the main idea”, etc.</p> <p>Place a checkmark in their folders for on task behavior or award class dojo points.</p>
		<p>13. PARAGRAPH SHRINKING REPEATED: Explain that it is time to switch roles. “The Second Reader will now become the reader. The Second Reader will pick up where the First Reader left off. Ready....begin”</p> <p>Interventionist starts stopwatch/timer. At five minutes, say “Stop”. Students should mark the last word read.</p> <p>Partners should ensure main idea statement is 10 words or less.</p> <p>Remember to provide feedback and praise.</p>
		<p>14. WHOLE GROUP SHARE: “Let’s review what we read.” Call on volunteers to share their main idea statements. Connect what they’ve read to the content being taught/covered in class.</p>
		<p>15. PUT MATERIALS AWAY: End the lesson and give directions: “Great job class! Please put your materials away. Remember, Second Readers, you are putting the materials away after the lesson.”</p> <p>Place a checkmark in their folders for good transitions or award class dojo points.</p>

Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for ELLs

Appendix 2: Student Lexile Pairs

	Lexile® Measure		Lexile® Measure
Reader 1	1055L	Reader 2	670L
Reader 1	1030L	Reader 2	640L
Reader 1	1020L	Reader 2	605L
Reader 1	955L	Reader 2	585L
Reader 1	950L	Reader 2	580L
Reader 1	945L	Reader 2	575L
Reader 1	920L	Reader 2	520L
Reader 1	840L	Reader 2	490L
Reader 1	755L	Reader 2	455L
Reader 1	725L	Reader 2	455L
Reader 1	720L	Reader 2	405L
Reader 1	675L	Reader 2	400L
		Reader 3	365L

Appendix 3: Teacher Questionnaire (part 1 of 2)

Teacher Questionnaire

Date: _____

Teacher Name: _____ Subject: _____

Directions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding PALS by circling a number that most closely reflects your opinion.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. The PALS intervention focuses on an important behavior (oral reading fluency and content specific knowledge in science and social studies).	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I feel my students with disabilities benefited from this intervention.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. The PALS intervention did not take too much time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. English language learners do NOT benefit from this intervention.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. The PALS intervention was NOT easy to implement and maintain.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. The PALS intervention was within my skills level to implement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The time requirements of this intervention are reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. The PALS intervention was acceptable to students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I believe this intervention provided English language learners with good "models" for reading.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix 3: Teacher Questionnaire (part 2 of 2)

10. The PALS intervention did NOT improve students' overall performance in reading.

1 2 3 4 5 6

11. My participation in the PALS intervention was relatively easy.

1 2 3 4 5 6

12. The PALS intervention is one I will recommend to other teachers.

1 2 3 4 5 6

13. I would recommend other schools/classrooms implement the PALS intervention

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. I do NOT have the necessary materials to implement this intervention accurately.

1 2 3 4 5 6

15. The PALS intervention quickly improved the students' reading skills.

1 2 3 4 5 6

16. The PALS intervention does NOT fit into my regular schedule.

1 2 3 4 5 6

17. The PALS intervention is one I will use again when needed.

1 2 3 4 5 6

18. I believe this intervention helped increase the reading fluency of English language learners.

1 2 3 4 5 6

19. The PALS intervention will have lasting positive effects.

1 2 3 4 5 6

20. The PALS was suitable given the classroom culture.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please list any other comments or concerns: _____

Source: Adapted from K. L. Lane and M. Beebe-Frankenberger. *School-Based Interventions. The Tools You Need to Succeed*. P. 118

Appendix 4: Student Questionnaire

	Yes 	No 
1. The PALS intervention taught me important reading skills.		
2. The PALS intervention helped me do better in science and social studies.		
3. Reading is difficult for me.		
4. The PALS intervention helped me feel better about my reading in English.		
5. If my friend were having trouble with reading, I would tell him/her to try the PALS intervention.		
6. I liked the PALS intervention.		
7. It is important to understand what I read.		
8. It is important to identify the main idea of a paragraph.		
9. I would use the paragraph shrinking strategy in other classes		
10. What kind of skills or strategies did you use while reading before the PALS intervention?		

What else do you think about the PALS intervention? _____



Community Building in the ENL Classroom and Beyond

SUMMARY

Relationship building among students, teachers, staff members, and parents, is very important to the overall success of the greater school community. In this practical and innovative project, English language learners create a virtual video tour of the school community using a variety of learning activities. This project enables ELLs to work on language skills and enhance their writing, listening, speaking, and reading skills in English, while motivating and building their confidence.

In 1916, John Dewey said, “If we teach

today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow,” this is true today as much as it was then. The role of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has progressively changed over the past two decades. Over time, the cultural origins and population of students in New York has drastically altered and our public schools have become increasingly diverse.

According to the New York City Department of Education’s 2013 Demographic Report, more than 41 percent of students enrolled in public schools speak a language other than English at home (NYC DOE, 2013). The numbers appear to be on the rise; currently, approximately half a million students qualify for English as a New

Language (ENL) services and accommodations in the five boroughs. These numbers only reflect New York City and do not include the recent massive influx of undocumented minors on Long Island. Our school district is a small district on the East End of Long Island, where nearly half of the students in the district speak a language other than English at home. Given the recent changes in the school population, students and teachers are challenged to keep up with the pace.

Education is constantly evolving and in this age of technology things are moving at a much faster rate. Teachers, especially ESOL teachers, are now feeling even more pressure to do it all: implement the Common Core State Standards in our daily lessons, prepare our students for the NYSESLAT and other state tests, and utilize technology in our teaching techniques. ESOL

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Alexandra McCourt, East Hampton Teachers Association
Sylvia Schumann, East Hampton Teachers Association

teachers not only have to teach language skills, prepare students for rigorous academic content, utilize technology, but at the same time help students to adjust to their new environment and adapt to both their school and greater communities. Partnerships and outside communities can translate into productive interactions among students and bring the kinds of improved learning outcomes that education reform seeks (Zacarian, 2015). To this end, we created a project in which the English language learner students would utilize technology to develop academic and language skills, while at the same time promote their knowledge of and interaction with the greater school community.

Speaking English Can Be Scary

Sometimes ELLs, because of their language limitations, feel isolated and lack the self-confidence needed to interact with their peers and members of the community. Likewise, native English speakers can be reluctant to engage with ELLs because of their own possible difficulty communicating. ELLs are often reluctant to speak in English

for fear of making mistakes, mispronouncing words, and speaking with an accent. However, being able to communicate with others, communicative competence, is far more important than perfect grammar and pronunciation (Gass, 2001).

Focusing on interpersonal communication outweighs speaking with native-like proficiency, since the primary goal of language is communication (Lessow-Hurley, 2003). Additionally, ELLs often do not know the roles of various school community members and/or how to appropriately interact with them. Some language varieties can be construed as less socially acceptable than others, what is appropriate to say to a friend or peer might not be appropriate to say to an adult or a stranger. ELLs may also be apprehensive about approaching unknown people in their new surroundings.

Getting students motivated to converse in English with native English speakers can be challenging. Varying pedagogical practices in the classroom increases the levels of students' motivation to complete tasks. While students can be reassured by consistent routines in the

continued on following page

Being able to communicate with others is far more important than perfect grammar and pronunciation.

Community Building in the ENL Classroom and Beyond

classroom, if not diverted from time to time, they can also lead to inattentiveness and boredom. In order to improve students' enthusiasm and self-confidence, cooperative projects allow all students to participate in the activity and contribute to the final product (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

When teaching, increasing enthusiasm and getting students motivated is often half the battle. Motivation is one of the strongest indicators of

success, only second to intelligence (Skehan, 1989). Additionally, today's students get excited by and want to interact with technology more than ever. Creating a high level of interest leads to better participation and better language output (Swain, 1985).

With the variety of technology available teachers can differentiate for each student's individual needs and the ease of mobility allows for interaction outside of the classroom with

Common Core State Standards addressed in this project:

Comprehension & Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Text Types & Purposes

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Production & Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. Research to Build and Present Knowledge
7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

the greater community. Having the students interact with members of the school community gives the students higher levels of comprehensible input by exposing them to various native English speakers and helps students to gain knowledge about and connect with people outside of their classroom (Krashen, 1985). Teaching can be done more effectively and meaningfully when all the community members are working collaboratively to make learning much more successful for all involved, by drawing from various strengths and knowledge of the community as a whole (Zacarian, 2015).

The Project: Encouraging Intercommunication

The School Community project was created to enable the ELLs to navigate their new language, culture and community by creating a virtual video tour of the school, interviewing various members of the school population and relating information about the places around the school building and grounds.

The project began with discussion about the important people and places in the community. Students were given a blueprint of the school building and grounds, a photo directory of key people for the students to refer to, along with key vocabulary directly related to the project. An important part of the learning process is involving



parents as partners to make a connection between home and school.

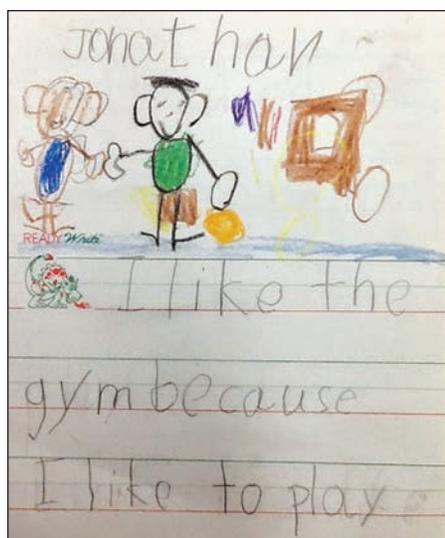
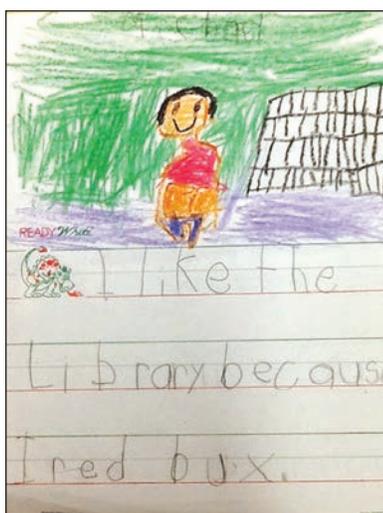
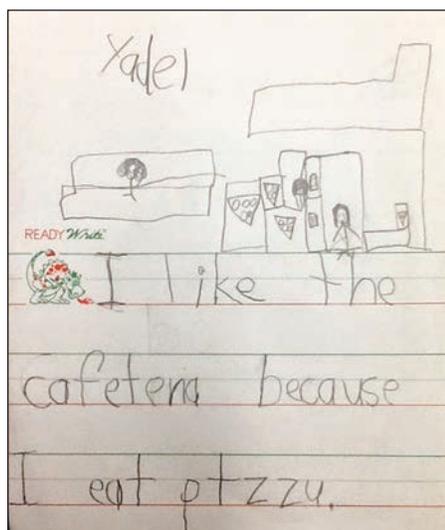
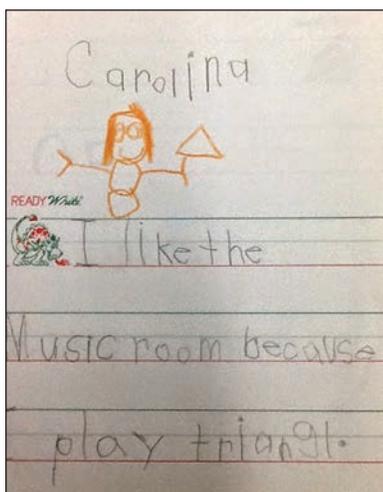
Parents were notified about the school community project and information was sent home for them to review as a family. The discussion was a precursor to having the students interact with the greater school community. Prior to engaging with the people outside the classroom, students went on a scouting mission where they were able to view, photograph and record the people and places they encountered. They then took their digital data back to the classroom for discussion and analysis.

Scouting the targets before engagement assisted in developing background knowledge of the various roles and purposes of people and places around the school, and helped the ELLs to obtain a familiarity, in order to make their experience less intimidating.

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Students prepare to record their video.

Community Building in the ENL Classroom and Beyond



Kindergarten students completed informational pieces about areas of the school they had visited.

The project was divided into different activities that were scaffolded for different language ability levels, each with a content and language objective, ensuring that all tasks and lessons were observable and measurable. The activities included a photo scavenger hunt, creation of a photo-map of the school, vocabulary building through class discussions of people and places around the building including their roles and uses, writing summary reports of their

favorite people and places, creating interview questions, conducting and filming interviews, peer editing and reshooting as needed, as well as giving each other constructive feedback. Heterogeneous partnerships were formed and the work was differentiated to meet the individual levels and needs of each student.

The students were split into groups, each with their own goal, which would form a piece of the final project. The first task required the students to write an informational piece about several places around the school that they had visited. See examples of student work at left.

The groups were given choices of several different writing activities of varying levels, from completing a graphic organizer, writing one or two paragraphs, to writing an essay, in order to describe what they had learned about each location and the people within it. For example, "Mrs. C is from Ecuador. She speaks English and Spanish. She works in the office talking to people on the telephone, she is the lady that calls my mom." or "The bus driver is important to all kids, he gets us to school on time and takes us home. He also is in the cafeteria at lunch time to help."

The students then used their writing as reference in creating monologues for a virtual video tour of the building, or

compiling a list of questions for interviewing school community members.

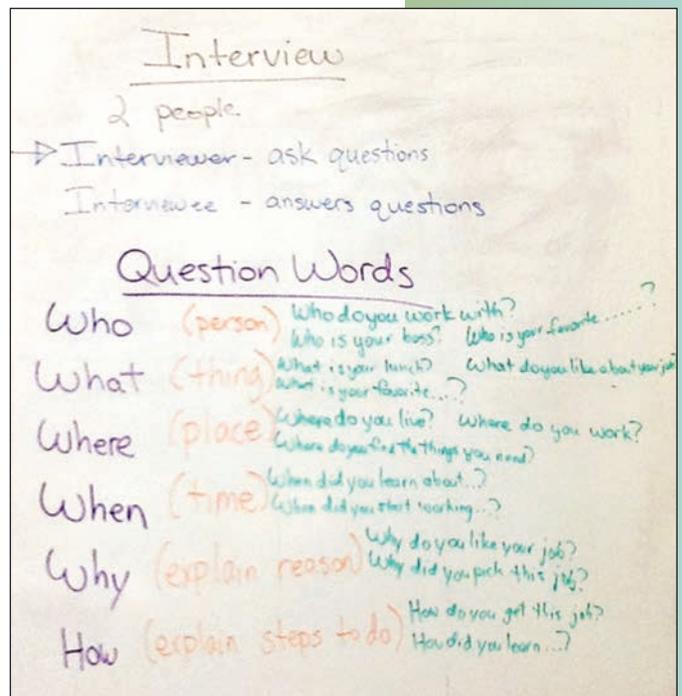
The groups were given tablets or allowed to use their personal devices and assigned the task of going to the different locations around the school to film segments for a virtual tour. Each group was in charge of writing, filming, and editing their own segments. The students visited their favorite places and people in the school and reported on them, explaining the purpose of each place, the reason to go there and why they like it.

Edwin, for example, chose the office: “You can go there to talk to the principal or call home. In the office I can talk to staff. I like the office because it’s a nice place and there are nice people.” Another student, Michael, visited the science lab: “I can learn about science in the science lab with magnets and microscopes. I like doing experiments with my lab partner.”

After filming, the groups then came together to view and analyze their work, score the segments on a rubric and give constructive feedback. Students were able to reshoot and edit their segments as needed. Each group compiled a pool of potential interview questions which were later narrowed down (see sample at right). For example, Danesha asked the art teacher, “Why do you like teaching art to kids and who is your favorite artist?”

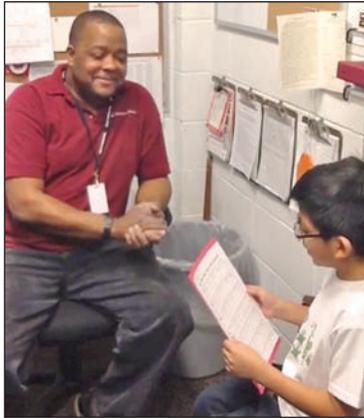
The students first recorded mock interviews of each other in order to practice oral fluency, projection and pace, as well as consider possible answers and follow up questions. By recording themselves, the students were able to self-critique and give peer feedback, which helped to build their confidence and was a valuable tool in preparing them to engage with native English speakers.

Once prepared, the groups interviewed the targeted people from the photo-directory, who conversed with them at higher levels of comprehensible input compared to their peers. The students even learned the expression, “Top of the morning to you!” from an Irish staff member. The students were allowed to film as many retakes as needed and felt reassured knowing that they would be able to revise their work until they got it right, which allowed them to relax and have fun, while at the same time yielding a higher output level.



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Community Building in the ENL Classroom and Beyond



A student interviews the school custodian.

Screening and Critiquing

After the filming was completed, students came together to view all of the segments together to evaluate and critique each other's work. The students then discussed, debated and decided on the proper sequencing of the segments for the virtual video tour. The segments were compiled into both an interactive presentation (Prezi), as well as a video to be viewed by the greater school community. The final project was made available on a link for the school community to view and comment upon.

Students, parents and adult community members alike were amazed at the depth of knowledge and fluency the students displayed. Students involved in the project felt a better connection to the community and were no longer hesitant to go to different places in the building or approach people in the school community. Furthermore, the project's interactivity and synthesis allowed the students to use critical thinking skills, while at the same time promoting their language development and aligning with the Common Core State Standards.

Throughout the project, the multitude of tasks the students participated in and performed allowed them to converse and collaborate with diverse partners, build on each other's ideas and express themselves clearly in an organized manner, while using a range

of academic and domain-specific language.

Assessment

The ELLs were assessed on oral language proficiency, pronunciation, syntax and grammar throughout the project using an assortment of methods and techniques, and given a rubric to guide the content and progress of the project.

Assessments ranged from vocabulary games (matching words with places and the objects found in them, school vocabulary bingo and word clouds), quizzes (using traditional quizzes combined with Quizlet online, identifying objects, places and occupations around the school community), grammar and syntax worksheets focusing on present tense, nouns and adjectives, rubrics as project guidelines and for peer review, written texts summarizing the various locations, people and purposes around the building, to ongoing teacher observation and discussions giving oral feedback of video recordings of their performances and interactions.

For the final project, the class discussed the specific guidelines for the video, and was given a rubric to guide the content and expectations of the project (see appendix). Throughout this project the students were required to work cooperatively, both with each other and members of the larger

school community, which promoted engagement and increased student-initiated talk, as well as encouraged students to communicate at a pushed output level.

Throughout the course of the project, students gained insight into the function and members of the school community, while improving upon their vocabulary and language (syntax and delivery). At the same time, they were able to build relationships with community members, and create their own individualized learning communities. The cooperative learning groups allowed students to communicate and share information as the ELLs learned and developed both content and language in a nonthreatening manner.

Feedback

Upon completion of the virtual video tour project, we asked for student feedback on the entire process. The overall feedback from students, parents, and community members was positive. One student said, “I really liked that I could practice and do retakes to make my project perfect.” The school greeter commented, “I thought that these kids didn’t speak any English, but I was impressed by how they talked to me.” The parents were amazed at the final video that students produced and felt that they had made huge gains.

The students stated that they had been very nervous and reticent about interacting with people outside the ENL

classroom, but that the step-by-step process of the project allowed them to build up both their language skills and confidence. This in turn, prepared them for the face-to-face meetings with native English speakers. Likewise, community members were astounded by the ELLs’ abilities to communicate, especially when they had not been able to engage in conversation with them prior to the project. The staff and parents were impressed with students’ usage of technology and the fact that they could see the progression of student learning throughout the course of the project, as they practiced and reviewed their takes.

At the beginning of the project, the students had difficulty creating and speaking in complete sentences. As the project progressed, the students were able to speak with fluidity and detail, even using slang and expressions. What started out as a few difficult to understand words for some, ended in polished verbal exchanges.

The students enjoyed working cooperatively, each with different roles, directing and editing their own work until they were comfortable sharing it with the class. This project demonstrated that students who were lacking self-confidence in their language abilities were able, through the use of technology and cooperative learning, to build their vocabulary, develop their fluency, and interact with people outside of the ENL classroom.

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Student collaborating with school nurse.

Feedback

A few comments received from parents, students, and community members upon viewing the final project: "How amazing!", "That's so good!", "This was a cool project, don't you think so?", "My Jose did this?!", "Wow, but I thought these kids didn't speak English yet."

The virtual video tour project is now shown to the new ELLs in the district and their families to not only acquaint them with the people and places around the school, but to also inspire and demonstrate how they, too, will be able to communicate and interact within the school community.

As the years progress, the ELLs will continue with the project to both keep the video current and engage the new ELLs and community members cooperatively in their environment. The other teachers and staff members are eager to get involved in the next edition and found that the entire experience was both fun and helpful in getting to know and communicating with the ELLs.

We found that the students were extremely proud of their hard work and wanted to share their accomplishment with their peers, and family members. We feel that overall the project was a huge success, in that it met the students' academic goals while at the same boosting their linguistic confidence and engaging them with entire school community. Whereas previously there had been little interaction between the ELLs and the outside community, the project helped remove the walls around them and fostered a deep connection within our whole school community.

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Appendix 1

Video Rubric

Category	Oscar Winner	Oscar Nominated	Cult Classic	B Movie	Score
	4	3	2	1	
Facts & Info	Gives more than five facts	Gives three to five facts	Gives one or two facts	Does not give any facts	
Clarity	Crisp and clear easily understood	Mostly audible and understood	Somewhat audible and understood	Inaudible / Cannot be understood	
Editing	Limited errors, many attempts to make corrections	Some errors, several attempts to make corrections	Many errors, some attempt to make corrections	More than ten errors or no corrections made	
Organization	Amazes audience with introduction and explanation	Grabs attention of audience and clearly introduces and explains topic	Somewhat introduces and explains topic	Does not introduce or explain topic	
Team Work	Effectively shares work	One member does most of the work	One member does all the work	No one talks	

Peer Review Rubric

	Excellent 4 points	Good 3 points	Average 2 points	Poor 1 point
Fluency	Speech flows smoothly and evenly without interruptions.	Speech flows smoothly with only a few pauses and restarts.	Some speech flows well, but other parts stop and go.	Speech doesn't flow easily, many stops and restarts.
Pronunciation	Pronunciation is clear with almost no errors.	A few pronunciation errors, but can be understood.	Some incorrect pronunciation makes dialogue difficult to be understood.	Difficult to understand, because of mispronunciation.
Word Choice	Uses appropriate and varied words.	Makes a few errors in word choice.	Makes some errors in word choice.	Makes many errors in word choice.
Grammar	Uses present tense verbs, nouns and adjectives correctly.	Makes only a few errors in verb tense, nouns and adjectives.	Makes some errors in verbs, nouns and adjectives.	Makes many errors in verbs, nouns, and adjectives.
Total Points				



Collaboration and Partnerships for ELLs' Success

SUMMARY

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages collaborate with others in a variety of ways to provide support and access for English language learners in their classes. In this commentary, one educator shares her insights.

The current focus on collaboration

among teachers is interesting. Teachers have always shared ideas informally, perhaps with a student teacher, mentee or colleague. Now administrators and state officials are asking us to continue collaborating in a formal manner to provide evidence for accountability. The moment we step into our first teaching positions we know collaboration is a part of our profession. We can share research-based practices to select those which work best in our assignment and for our students. We can share knowledge we have about students to help focus on specific needs they may have.

My first experience with collaboration in education was during my first teaching assignment, teaching biology in the U.S. Peace Corps. My principal drove me to our school from the island's tiny airstrip and warned me about teaching

in a rural school with words like, "We have a small problem with water." I got out of the truck and saw a group of men sitting on the ground in a semi-circle ready for the official greetings and ceremony. I realized I was about to meet the local board of education. I thought about the noon heat and the uncertainty of everything, and really wondered what it would be like working closely with teachers in a culture and setting so different from what I was used to.

Would I be misunderstood? Would I find a colleague who could help me navigate so I could view my students appropriately through my own set of lenses? How would I get to know the families if I lived on the school compound and they lived in their villages? How involved were the community members? And how would I answer these questions knowing I had a steep learning curve ahead of me with curriculum and assessment. Many years later I still ask the same questions.

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Teachers spend days engaged in numerous tasks and are asked to record every decision, assessment, movement, reflection and piece of instruction. Now we have collaboration as another task not only to engage in, but also to record. We often wonder if we are doing “enough” and this has led me to reflect on the many ways in which we collaborate with others.

I know I am responsible for collaboration and that my students will benefit. If teachers and support staff share information they know about an English language learner (ELL), a more complete picture of the student comes into focus. Is collaboration the actual goal? It isn't really. The goal is improving instruction and learning. But when the term now becomes a part of data we must record the original purpose can get lost. For example, one teacher may see a student who is easily distracted, while another sees the student as one who is tired from trying to understand the language or because the acculturation process is causing strain in the family and home. If the teachers communicate together they will be able to address the needs of the student.

Would it be better to use terms such as partnerships? (Does that sound like we need a contract?) Networking? (Does networking sound as if we meet and share ideas simply to get ahead or to promote ourselves?)

Sitting with a classroom/content teacher, discussing curriculum and student progress is a partnership that supports ELLs. In *Necessary Conversations about English Language Learners*, Helene Grossman (2006) encourages us to participate in difficult discussions. For example, she offers suggestions about topics to discuss such as cultural and linguistic background, but also strategies to identify issues that may come up in communicating with colleagues and how to discuss ELLs with each other in non-confrontational ways.

Finding time to communicate effectively can create added stress to professionals who have only 30 minutes per day for planning. Just as our ELLs communicate in ways based on their cultures and world view, we do as well. Miscommunication, as well as differences in opinions, can deter colleagues away from discussions. Does

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If teachers and support staff share information they know about an English language learner, a more complete picture of the student comes into focus.

Collaboration and Partnerships for ELLs' Success

One of the greatest sources of information and enjoyment is spending time with students and their families in nonthreatening situations, including home visits, cultural celebrations, attending sports events, etc.

the struggle to find ways and time in which to collaborate diminish its effectiveness? Can we do it with authenticity if we don't sit face to face with colleagues? Should our 1:1 work with students be seen as part of the collaboration process?

I would like us to think about all the other ways we, as professional English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instructors, partner with others to learn more about our students and to help provide access to a sound education.

Families. Research and experience shows if families are engaged in the students' learning and schooling that the children perform better. Balen and Moles report, "Studies of individual families show that what the family does is more important to student success than family income or education. This is true whether the family is rich or poor, whether the parents finished high school or not, or whether the child is in preschool or in the upper grades. (p.1 , 1994)."

Of course, this is also true for our ELL families. I can recall a new grade one student from Vietnam whose mother did not know English and was not literate in her native language. The student's father knew some English but worked nights so he was unable to do the things we might hope a parent would do — help with homework, read together each

night, etc. However, the family ensured the child knew school was important, that she had access to materials necessary for school (I remember her first day she arrived with a massive water bottle and reams of lined paper in her backpack), and did her homework, etc. In time, the student reached English proficiency and graduated. So does this engagement and partnership mean PTO meetings? Is it relegated to asking a family to attend a math night? We should not confuse engagement and participation. Just as my grade one student's family could not attend evening meetings and learning sessions, they were engaged in her education.

Many of our families are as busy as we are, working, taking care of elderly family members or children while trying to navigate this new culture. And this navigation doesn't occur overnight.

One of the greatest sources of information and enjoyment is spending time with students and their families in nonthreatening situations, including home visits, cultural celebrations, attending sports events, etc. As ESOL professionals it is often second nature for us to want to attend an event or accept an invitation to a home, a wedding or a graduation. We can learn about these things as students write in journals, discussions before or after school and in our one to one feedback meetings with them. Oftentimes relationships with the family can be developed and a parent

Technology should *not* diminish our relationships and replace in person meetings, but can certainly expedite discussions ideas and concerns.

may then feel more confident attending school events and asking questions.

¡Colorín Colorado!, an education website supported by the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association offers tips on successful parent teacher conferences, hosting a bilingual family night, and how to reach out and empower ELL parents. For example, when hosting a bilingual family meeting, allow parents to bring the younger children and have a place for them to play. Make sure that you begin and end on time and have a specific agenda in place. Suggestions include recruiting volunteers and providing a short orientation and tour, with an interpreter, for newcomers and their parents.

Colleagues. We are asked to keep records of occasions in which we collaborate with the classroom/content teachers and support staff who work with ELLs. But how do we do that when we work with so many grade levels, teachers and students? There are myriad ways in which to hold meetings and to spend time with individuals to discuss curriculum and students. It helps us, as professionals, to remember we process information and solve problems in as many ways as students do.

In the book *Data Wise* teachers are encouraged to use protocols. One example is the use of Compass Points to examine our work styles (Protocols & Harvard Data Wise Project, 2013).

At first it seems like a task that takes away precious time. We looked at it in a workshop and we decided that the three ESOL teachers in our school were at different places on the Compass. We are aware of our differences and focus when we communicate and problem solve, but we also said that perhaps it strengthens us as a department.

Some teachers feel we are shirking our duties if we don't sit down almost daily with each other to discuss students. Time is precious, so why not use technology to assist us? We are asked to use technology effectively with students, why not with colleagues? Let's use email, texting, Dropbox, Google docs, and every other kind of application and technology to work for us. For example, in my school the three ESOL teachers sat down and wrote exit tickets we could use throughout the year for our primary grades. We share it in Dropbox so we can access it from home and add/delete if needed.

Technology should *not* diminish our relationships and replace in person meetings, but can certainly expedite discussions ideas and concerns. In fact, it may work to help us sort out our thoughts and to think through ideas. For example, in an online class offered by the NYSUT Education & Learning Trust, you experience the process of writing for a discussion board. All

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participants read your writing and your words need to be supported by research.

This leads us to the expanding of our definition of colleagues. First, we can look beyond our own school and district. We may form collegial relationships with colleagues at local workshops, New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (NYSTESOL), and TESOL International conferences.

Local college professors and instructors, especially community colleges, have the experience of teaching our former ELLs. Their insight can help us better understand what our students need to succeed, oftentimes skills that are not measured on standardized assessments. We can meet ESOL college professors at conferences and meetings. Professors are an integral part of student teaching. This is an appropriate time for practitioners to share what is happening now in the classroom with colleges so they can better prepare future teachers.

ESOL teachers truly have colleagues all over the world. Now, with technology, we can attend webinars when traveling to a conference is cost prohibitive. Many ESOL professionals do this and we should add this to our system of partnership. Consider joining professional TESOL associations or keeping up with websites such as the Center for Applied Linguistics and ¡Colorín Colorado!

Joining professional organizations not only provides me with additional resources, research articles and a way to meet colleagues, but also assists in providing a voice for the TESOL profession. In order to advocate for our students and families, we need to participate in professional organizations that can help us advocate.

ESOL teachers have a variety of experiences that seem to lead us all back to similar struggles and successes. I taught in Malaysia many years ago and was able to reconnect with a good friend and colleague through social media. Dr. H is very involved in training teachers and part of her community work is with Burmese refugees in Malaysia. Fast forward to 2014 where I was teaching a cultural orientation/ENL class for incoming refugees and I had two students who are Burmese but only speak Bahasa Malay. My colleague and I communicated about my forgotten phrases in Bahasa Malay and I received more informative details about what the students' previous schooling may have entailed. I know I never imagined when Dr. H and I taught many years ago that she and I would still be using social media to share information.

Social media and the Internet can be used by all teachers to share information. A school can have a *Facebook* page to get information to students and families. Teachers use numerous websites and share information through writing blogs and *Pinterest*.

Students. Collaborating with students can mean a two-way system of essential feedback. If collaborating means working together on shared goals, this is another example of how teachers collaborate throughout the year. When we sit with a 10-year-old and develop behavior or academic goal-setting together, this is collaboration. Such interactions add more to the complete picture of the student and can be just as valid as a parent survey about the child.

Field trips, now a luxury in schools, offer insight to students as well. We can take that time to get to know students in another setting. During these out-of-school events there are teachable moments and times when students ask you for advice. It may be as simple as a conversation about ENL class and what they can do to get to the next proficiency level. For example, a student may say something in passing like, “I don’t read very good.” Or “My teacher talks fast and I don’t understand all of it.” They may not state that in ENL class in school when you work individually to help the student complete a goal sheet and action plan. But when comments like this are made we can refer to it the next time we are in class writing down goals and plans with that student. If we need to collect data on collaboration then unplanned, anecdotal information should be a part of that.

Former students. One of the most rewarding parts about being an ESOL teacher is you often get to know the students for more than a year. Along the way you may also get to know their families, or teach their younger siblings, and get invited to family celebrations. Each time we meet former students we can get feedback about what was important to them in their academic journey. Each time we meet a family at a celebration, local shop or their home we get more information and a better understanding of our students. While we might not record talking to a former student for APPR purposes, it is an important part of feedback for an ESOL teacher and such encounters continue to push us to do our best. We can invite those students to assist us at some point or help us develop new ideas. Not only do they have the benefit of hindsight, they have developed linguistically and are usually further along in understanding U.S. culture.

At one point my school developed a family literacy program and two of my former ENL students volunteered to help older students with math and science work. Although their first language was different from the students in the program one of them said he knew what their challenges were linguistically and culturally and was able to scaffold content.

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With strong leadership, the school can be a welcoming place for families of ELLs.

Administrators. For practitioners, our principal is the immediate administrator we see on a daily basis. If you are in a school with an approachable principal who looks forward to feedback and new ideas to support students, and not just evaluation purposes, wonderful things can be accomplished for ELLs. Perhaps those teachers who aspire to become school leaders can reflect on what a building leader can do for ELLs. You can take chances and try new ideas that your faculty, including ESOL teachers, want to try. If they don't work you can revise or scrap them altogether.

Our principal, Ms. Gerling, ensures that an ESOL teacher is on the School Based Intervention Team and that data for ELLs is appropriately addressed. In addition, our K-6 school has had parent meetings for bilingual families for several years and the principal has encouraged the ENL department to set the agenda, decide on the best time for the meetings, and to appropriate monies to pay interpreters.

This helps to ensure as much participation as possible from the families. We don't just talk *to* the families, but *with* them. We encourage their children to come with them since childcare may be a problem. Questions and suggestions are welcome and after the large meeting we all go to our ENL classrooms so they can see our materials, sample assessments, etc. If we select days and times when parents are available we fill

the library to capacity. The parents ask many questions and provide feedback for new ideas to help their children. With strong leadership, the school can be a welcoming place for families of ELLs. In addition, leadership requires a principal to know students' names, languages and backgrounds. It is not an easy task in a K-6 school of more than 600 students, but our administrator personally greets students every morning. The parents are well-aware of who leads the school and helps take care of their children. This is important for all students but for ELL families, who often see the school community as an extension of their own parenting, it is especially important.

Ayanna Cooper offers four specific steps for administrators to strengthen their program for ELLs: know your population collectively and individually, know the curriculum, include the data, and know best practices for ELLs (Cooper, 2012).

Bilingual nonteaching professionals. Teachers can use community resources to assist students, such as volunteers, parents and interpreters who can be invaluable to a school with one ELL or many. Volunteers can work one on one with a newcomer or assist at the school open house to interpret. It is essential to reach families in a language they comprehend while they are learning English and some bilingual community members might be willing to translate

very short documents. It is important that we remember volunteers and community members have skills to supplement the work we do.

In our district we are fortunate to have bilingual academic coaches from our community whose main focus is to work in the classrooms with newcomers, to assist with content such as math. This support is especially important with entering and emerging students who miss content because they are just beginning to acquire English.

We address the coaches as Mr., Ms., Miss or Mrs. and not by their first name. This shows the students we see them as colleagues and someone with authority within the system. One bilingual coach told me that many students address the coaches respectfully by using the term “teacher” in their native language. “We know we are not teachers,” he told me, “But it encourages respect for adults and if we have their respect we can help them and their families even more.”

We need to be cognizant of our relationship with the coaches. The students are watching how we relate to each other and we are providing a model for students and families: people from diverse backgrounds working together toward a common goal. Such positive relationships reinforce to students that everyone cares about their well-being and education.

Community. Connections may involve volunteers, leaders in our students’ communities and nonprofit organizations. One aspect of an ELL’s education that is sometimes overlooked is that of acculturation. The process may be different if a student is a refugee, immigrant or migrant.

As the student and his/her family begins life in the U.S. the differences between their home culture(s) and that of the U.S. becomes apparent. It may be as obvious as language, paperwork for school, and food. It can be less obvious such as understanding how cooperative learning is useful in school — it looks like play and chatting. Or it can be a gesture. Standing with your arms crossed as a teacher talks to you is a sign of respect in several cultures. For someone in the U.S., it might signify defiance.

At one time, addressing the acculturation process was a part of the NYS ESOL Standards. While the ELA Standards include multi-cultural texts, they do not specifically address this important part of ELLs’ learning. For example, Collier states that educators need to ensure they obtain correct information about a student, namely education, home language, language proficiency, English proficiency, behavior and acculturation rate (Collier, 2010). The author also points out the importance of this process as it relates to response to intervention (RTI). ESOL

One aspect of an ELL’s education that is sometimes overlooked is that of acculturation.

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teachers integrate U.S. cultural topics in classes, but with the stress placed on assessments the focus on it has begun to wane.

It is important for us to remember that acculturation is cyclical and the process may repeat itself over time. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may contribute to behavior concerns in some ELLs. This may be a result of something the child experienced in his or her home country or in a refugee camp. Understanding PTSD in children is important as well as understanding how a family is affected if a parent has PTSD (NIMH).

We can work together with each other, and administrators, to assist ELLs in the acculturation process. Our district offers cultural orientation classes to ELLs on weekends and during breaks. Part of this program includes some field trips as well as inviting community personnel to meet our students, such as police officers and firefighters. The speakers discuss safety rules with the students. Our city's police chief noted that one aim is to have the students, especially those who lived in refugee camps or lived under police/military regimes to see officers as "People to go to for help and assistance."

Our bilingual coaches ensure the message is comprehensible to all students. Presentations could also be done after

school, with two schools working together if needed. The classes provide students with information in their native language, basic English skills, and explicit lessons that offer students strategies to cope with a new language, culture and classes. Teachers of ELLs may want to work together to consider how this can be addressed in their schools and district.

Conclusion

Teachers are asked to collaborate in a formal manner for accountability. Teachers of ELLs have myriad ways in which to partner, collaborate and celebrate student struggles and successes. This includes colleagues, students, families, and community members (both local, statewide, nationally and globally). These forms of collaboration help us get a clearer picture of each student. We can see not only a student's challenges, but his/her strengths, resiliency and what is important to him/her.

We live in a data-driven, competitive world. Partnering should not encourage competition, which can sometimes be an unintended consequence related to data driven decisionmaking. We should ensure that as much accurate information about ELLs is obtained and used appropriately to support their varying needs. These associations are not the end product or a way to move ahead on the APPR scale, but another means of reaching ELLs to support so they fulfill their aspirations.

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Narrative Autobiography in the Video Diaries of Ecuadorian Immigrant Youth

SUMMARY

In this commentary, the author discusses the use of film as a pedagogical tool to foster cross-cultural dialogue and increase civic engagement while nurturing student voice. The *LIFE through My Eyes* project, a filmmaking and human rights program, was developed in response to a hate crime on Long Island in 2008. Through this project, immigrant students employ their talents as digital natives to share and document their own life narratives.

The decision to immigrate is more than an economic one. Immigrant families interviewed for the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation (LISA) study revealed that 70 percent came to the United States to provide better opportunities for their children and 18 percent emphasized the opportunity for a better education (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). However, research shows that our education system doesn't always meet all of their needs. Studies of immigrant children have shown that grade point averages decline the longer the students are in school (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Latinos, the largest single immigrant population, also suffer the highest dropout rates. Many of the children of these immigrants are also second language learners who require additional support.

The U.S. immigrant population has increased considerably since 2000. By

2008, the Ecuadorian population was double that of 1990, becoming the fourth largest Latino population in New York City. More than two-thirds of these Ecuadorians reside in Queens, N.Y. (Caro-Lopez, 2010). In the top 10 U.S. counties with the largest Hispanic population, Ecuadorians rank first in Queens and tenth in Suffolk (Pew Hispanic, 2012). In Suffolk County, the 2010 U.S. Census reported that there was a 64 percent increase in the Latino population from 2000–10. The village of Patchogue is home to the largest population of Ecuadorians on Long Island.

In Patchogue, as in other districts on Long Island and across the country, immigrant communities have changed the faces of the students in the classroom, but educators are still working to reflect those changes in their classroom practices. This raises the question of cultural competency in teaching, as in the need to have an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about

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Linguistic, racial, cultural and class differences between students and teachers have been documented as playing significant roles in the achievement gap.

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difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families (NEA.org, 2015). In education, cultural competency is being given a more critical role due to the acknowledgement that the linguistic, racial, cultural and class differences between students and teachers have been documented as playing significant roles in the achievement gap (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

Narratives

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) has been suggested by Ladson-Billings as a way to improve teachers' receptivity to our increasingly diverse student populations. She proposes that pedagogy focusing on student achievement, acceptance and affirmation of cultural identity, as well as the development of critical consciousness, can challenge inequities in education and society (p.469). She documents how CRP provides a way for students to achieve academic success while maintaining cultural integrity. As part of the process, she proposes that students need to identify and critique social inequities which plague their communities.

CRP aims to develop a learning environment in which the following are constitutive elements:

- “(a) Students must experience academic success;
- (b) Students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and
- (c) Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 160).”

The most current CRP has been framed within a critical race theoretical framework and addresses issues of relevance to education through curriculum, instruction, assessment, funding and desegregation. According to Ladson-Billings, school curriculum is a culturally specific artifact that can sometimes downplay the experiences of students of color, although extensive research shows that including students' culture, language, and experiences can lead to academic success (Nieto, 2002).

Many stories of youth marginalized by race and class are, however, reconstructed as counter stories (Delgado,

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Retelling stories is used as a tool to analyze, expose and challenge the stories of racial privilege and racial discrimination found in the dominant discourse.

1989; Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). Culturally relevant pedagogy supports and encourages the retelling of stories by those people whose experiences have not been told from the perspectives of those who have lived the discrimination directly. Retelling stories is used as a tool to analyze, expose and challenge the stories of racial privilege and racial discrimination found in the dominant discourse. It is from this tradition that many scholars have used the genres of storytelling, biography, and autobiography and other methods to challenge dominant stereotypes (Yosso, Villalpando, Delgado Bernal, & Solórzano, 2001). Vasudevan (2004) has named counter-storytelling as a site of discursive possibilities for learning how youth experience, live, mediate, and embody race and other subjectivities across their everyday social practices.

Over the past few years we have seen how social media, specifically video, has been used successfully as a tool in mobilizing communities. Examples include the following: transmitting the democratic uprising of the Arab Spring; documenting verbal abuse toward an Uber driver which led to the resignation of a New York City officer; the recorded death of Eric Garner resulting from an illegal police choke-hold in Staten Island and the recordings of a Suffolk County police officer caught stealing from undocumented immigrants during unauthorized stops. These recorded actions have all lead to a call for action once viewed by the public.

Several studies have documented how participatory media can be used as a tool to empower children's voices. New York's Educational Video Center offers documentary workshops to students and teachers at its own facility and at schools. Its founder, Steve Goodman, strongly defends the use of digital media as a legitimate and productive pedagogy, especially for impoverished districts, to foster critical media literacy and civic engagement, supporting the state standards.

Goodman conducted a case study in a documentary workshop, inviting a team of students to engage in a sustained video-based inquiry into a social issue within their community. The student-produced short video 'Young Gunz,' highlighting gun violence in the neighborhood, allowed students to voice ideas, questions and possible solutions regarding issues that were affecting them personally or at the systemic level.

Children in Immigration about Migration, was an action research project funded by the European Commission from 2001–04, that involved young people in cinema clubs in Sweden, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Greece and the UK. It was created to give children a voice and to promote intercultural communication through filmmaking (de Block, L., Buckingham, D., & Banaji, S, 2005). The various clubs were composed of refugee and migrant students ages 10–14, one researcher and one facilitator. Not only did participants create

short films, but the films were then shared with their international counterparts via the Internet.

The ethnographic research project, Video Culture, explored how audiovisual media production can be used to communicate between young people in different regions. This research focused on how the form of transcultural symbolic language can overcome cultural and linguistic differences. The project was conceived and first implemented in Ludwig, Germany in 1997. It included groups of young people ages 14–19, from different socioeconomic backgrounds in Germany, England, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the United States. These students produced, exchanged and interpreted thematically oriented videos based on work from different educational settings. Selected students had no previous media production experience and were given five days to complete a three-minute short film based on a specific theme (Niesyto, Buckingham, & FisherKeller, 2003).

LIFE through My Eyes

LIFE through My Eyes, is a student-led video project focusing on film and human rights. The project was implemented shortly after the death of Ecuadorean immigrant, Marcelo Lucero, who was the victim of a hate crime in 2008. The participating families are originally from Azuay, Ecuador, which is the

largest province in Ecuador experiencing an exodus of emigrants.

Today they reside in Patchogue, a suburb of Long Island located 60 miles east of New York City, where the immigrant population has doubled in the last 10 years. Their children, the 1.5 generation Ecuadorean youth, also called DREAMERS, are currently or previously enrolled in an English as a New Language (ENL) program.

Many of these young people speak Spanish at home but English is the language of instruction at school and for socializing with friends. Although some of them scored below average on the New York State ELA test, their reading and writing skills in English are stronger than in their mother tongue. Across the board, many of these young people have experienced struggles with different types of discrimination in their community and schools and they do not know how to harness political and social capital to address the social maladies they encounter.

Mills (1959) proposed that the first step in social change is to mobilize communities with similar issues, which is one reason why the project LIFE through My Eyes was implemented.

This innovative educational project has been running in the Patchogue community as an after-school program, summer program and parent workshops and its

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DREAMers

DREAMers are young immigrants who, in most cases, meet the criteria for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM). These individuals:

- are under the age of 31;
- arrived in the US before the age of 16;
- have lived continuously in the United States for at least five years;
- have not been convicted of a felony, or “significant” misdemeanor;
- are studying in school or college;
- received a GED or have served in the military.

Source: American Immigration Council

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success over the years is attributed to its past funders W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; support from principals and staff, co-facilitators, the Film and Educational Research Academy at Teachers College, and the Long Island Teachers Association; and most importantly, parental support and collaboration.

The relationships with each family, nurtured through family dinners, graduation and confirmation parties, group excursions, soccer tournaments and *LIFE through My Eyes* activities, were strengthened over the years. During the project, as their confidence increased, students had no hesitation about approaching strangers in the streets to interview or investigate concerns directly affecting their lives. “I got to say my opinion and how I feel,” a student shared, “and I actually got to speak up.”¹

These participants attended several filmmaking workshops held at the Patchogue-Medford library after-school, on the weekends, and in the summer. The workshops captured the collective stories of these youth on film. These digital narratives were inspired by human rights addressing religion, language, culture, family, education, and immigration. They have been screened in film festivals at universities, local

theaters, libraries, cultural centers and recently in conjunction with the United Nations Plural + film festival. Last spring, the Suffolk County Inter-Faith Anti-Bias Taskforce recognized the program, and its facilitators through “Immigration and Diversity,” a short film created by a participant of *LIFE through My Eyes*.

Through participation in filmmaking over the past six years, my interest grew in studying how 1.5 generation Ecuadorian youth develop voice and engage in civic action. The project wouldn’t have been successful without the support of the parents. Their trust is critical for educators to successfully advocate for students. As parental approval increased so did the desire for community organizations to become more involved.

From the beginning, parents and students had input on how to organize the program and over the years they have taken on leadership roles. To run a successful program it is crucial to empower parents to become community leaders and to identify globally aware, competent educators to serve as liaisons between the community and the school. The ability to receive independent funding also allows educators more freedom to implement programs through a grass-roots framework.

¹ Student shared after film workshop addressing womens’ rights, May 2015.

In today's global community, it's important for us as educators to include the diverse perspectives our students bring to the classroom. Many of our immigrant youth can be recognized as digital natives who are capable of sharing narratives about how life is experienced through their eyes. I encourage my colleagues to support the use of film as a pedagogical tool to foster cross-cultural dialogue between our educators and newcomers. I hope through the lenses of critical pedagogy and critical race theory more teachers will explore how the process of creating digital narratives nurtures student's voices and increases civic engagement in a target population whose voice is limited by their immigration status.

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Videos and more information on the program LIFE through My Eyes can be found at the following site or email Regina.Casale@longwoodcsd.org

http://reginacasale.com/?page_id=95

<https://vimeo.com/user40117279>



The First Days: Engaging Newcomer ELLs in the Classroom Community

SUMMARY

Newcomer ELLs, or children who arrive at school knowing very little English, can face many challenges during their first days of school. In this commentary, the authors describe some of the social and linguistic issues that face newly arrived ELLs, such as culture shock and the silent period. Suggestions for helping newcomers access content, establishing connections to parents, and recognizing the learning resources that newcomers bring to their peers and to their teachers are explored.

Five years ago, the school courtyard at JHS 1234 (a pseudonym) in Queens was transformed into a pumpkin patch to celebrate Halloween. As part of the celebration, each student had the chance to select a pumpkin from the patch. Shinwoo, a sixth grade student from Korea, chose his pumpkin and started to make his way to the bathroom where he was intercepted by an English as a New Language (ENL) teacher in the hallway. The teacher quickly scolded him without knowing why he was headed to the bathroom with his pumpkin. Feeling confused and defeated, he returned to the courtyard. Later, the teacher learned that it was Shinwoo's first day of school and that he had been given permission from another teacher to wash the pumpkin. An obvious crosscultural

miscommunication had occurred: what Shinwoo saw as a logical solution to cleaning a dirty pumpkin, the teacher quickly assessed as silly behavior.

When we ask current and former English language learners (ELLs) to remember their first day of school in the U.S., they share vastly different memories. Some students remember sitting quietly and doing nothing, or even falling asleep in class. Others share that they were alert and nervous, ready to learn a new language or a new system for learning. Without a doubt, the first days in a new school are exciting and anxiety producing for any child, but for children just arriving to a new school in a new country where a new language is spoken, these days are especially critical to developing a sense of comfort and confidence in a new academic environment.

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Beth Clark-Gareca, Columbia University
Christine Olsen, United Federation of Teachers

It is understandable that teachers may also feel a level of anxiety in finding even one newcomer ELL in their classrooms. Teachers may think, “How can I incorporate a student who is only just learning his/her first words in English into the curriculum when I have 30 other students to think about?” They also often lack the strategic tools or techniques required to include newcomers both academically and socially into the classroom community, which can easily and unintentionally lead to these new, vulnerable students getting lost at the periphery of classroom activities.

In this article, we hope to expand teachers’ repertoires of tools and training with regard to ELL newcomers. Here, we discuss some of the social and linguistic issues that face newly arrived ELLs when they come to school. Developing an understanding of culture shock and the stages of language development can help teachers understand students’ experiences to a greater extent. We also incorporate suggestions of how to ease the integration process for these new ELLs, and offer ideas for activities that can be easily implemented in any classroom.

Language Acquisition and Culture Shock

It is commonly stated that children “pick up language like a sponge”; however, there is ample evidence that even for the youngest children, language learning can be a taxing cognitive task (TESOL, 1997; 2006). Though their brains are arguably more flexible than older learners, and thus, certain aspects of language may be more easily acquired (Lightbown & Spada, 2006), to say that developing English language proficiency is easy for children is to trivialize a very complex and lengthy process.

Children often experience high levels of anxiety in the first days and weeks of being immersed in a foreign linguistic environment. For newly immigrated students to the U.S., managing feelings of loss and confusion related to leaving their home country is one source of stress. ELLs who have come to the U.S. as refugees may be dealing with trauma and distress related to wartime experiences and friends and family members left behind. Other newly immigrated ELLs are learning to function in an unfamiliar culture, which involves negotiating all of the cultural rules and expectations that characterize that new country, new language, and new school.

Children often experience high levels of anxiety in the first days and weeks of being immersed in a foreign linguistic environment.

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Newcomer ELLs are not only faced with the task of learning a new culture, they also need to begin the process of learning a new language.

The stress that students feel related to coming to a new school can be, in part, attributed to what has been termed culture shock. Culture shock refers to feelings of disorientation when confronted with a new and unfamiliar culture or way of life (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Oberg, 1960; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

The stages of culture shock, first documented by Oberg (1960), have been described to include Honeymoon, Negotiation, Adjustment, and Mastery phases. Newcomer ELLs often begin school while still in the Honeymoon phase. They are excited and receptive to all the changes going on around them, and are willing to engage in school and with peers with enthusiasm for what their new lives have in store.

After a short time, however, children move into the Negotiation phase, also called the crisis phase, which is described as a time of evaluation, whereby children start to notice how things are different, and often hard, in their new environment. At this phase, immigrants can begin to feel nostalgic for their home country where things were easier in some sense, both linguistically and culturally. The Negotiation phase can linger for some time, and can be characterized by feelings of confusion, sadness, and homesickness. In young language learners, the stress of this phase can manifest itself through behavior management issues, e.g., opposition

to classroom rules, aggression toward other children, or being withdrawn from classroom activity in general.

With time and linguistic successes, children eventually move into the Adjustment period, in which they begin to find their place within this new cultural context, and feel increasing comfort in school. Adjustment is ultimately followed by the Mastery phase, where students have internalized some of the codes and conventions of their school journey and reach a level of stability and ease in the new culture.

Newcomer ELLs are not only faced with the task of learning a new culture, they also need to begin the process of learning a new language. When at the beginning phases of culture shock, ELLs may simultaneously go through a linguistic phase which has been termed “a silent period” — an undetermined amount of time when new learners of English may opt not to communicate productively through speech (Krashen, 1982). Though they may not speak, students are still actively acquiring English through more receptive modes during this phase. Teachers should be counseled to respect the silent period by not forcing ELLs to talk if they are not ready, however, newcomer ELLs should still be given opportunities to engage linguistically to the extent that they are willing or able to participate.

Interacting with students initially with simple yes or no questions or with

ELLs have many linguistic resources available to them in their first language, which can provide an outlet in their initial phases of English language learning.

formulaic question/response can help them to begin to construct a linguistic foundation in English. For example: Are you happy this morning? Did your dad bring you to school today? How are you today? Good. Is it sunny or rainy today? Rainy. These small but important interpersonal exchanges give students necessary confidence by providing a space for them to have their first successful interactions in English.

Teachers should also note that ELLs have many linguistic resources available to them in their first language, which can provide an outlet in their initial phases of English language learning. In a fourth-grade lesson about pollution, a newcomer ELL named Aamir could not yet read the school text about a contaminated water source, yet, he was able to translate the words that he understood into Arabic in his notebook as a way to engage with the material academically at a linguistic level that he could manage. Native language use at beginning acquisition phases should be encouraged as it supports children’s attempts to access content.

Translanguaging (García, Kleifgan, & Falchi, 2008; García, 2009; García & Sylvan, 2011), as illustrated in Aamir’s example, is a way for language learners to incorporate a wide variety of discursive strategies in all their languages as a vehicle toward learning. Translanguaging is a beneficial practice for all emergent bilingual children, and one that teachers can nurture by simply giving students

permission to use their L1s. Historically, there has been significant debate surrounding the issue of whether teachers should enforce an “English-only rule” in their classrooms; however, these policies served to encourage subtractive bilingualism (when a child loses proficiency in their L1 as they acquire English), rather than fostering their dynamic bilingualism where students can have access to all their linguistic resources in their quest to learn (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2011).

Even if the teacher cannot understand what the child writes or says, allowing first language content engagement is a beneficial practice since students often have content knowledge on the topic at hand that they can express in their first language. Through practice, students begin to recognize that their prior knowledge helps them learn English as they make use of the vocabulary and understanding that they already have. For example, students can write a response in their first language and follow up by writing a translation with the help of a peer who is able to write in their first language and in English (Fu, 2009) — such an activity is likely to be a challenging linguistic task for both students.

Pedagogical Techniques to Help Newcomers

Upon discovering a newcomer ELL in class, teachers should make a concerted effort to interact positively with that

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Speaking their first language with friends will not interfere in their acquisition of English, rather, it will help newcomer ELLs to connect with a warm, classroom community, which in turn, will help English language proficiency.

child to help him/her feel welcome in the classroom environment. Newcomers can feel invisible, and teachers play a pivotal role in helping students feel valued and supported in what is a new, and sometimes scary, world of school. Offering a friendly, daily greeting, for example, “Hello, Roberto. I like your shirt,” can make the difference between a child feeling included or excluded. Although at first Roberto may not respond, it is likely that within a few days or weeks, he will develop the confidence to say, “Thank you.”

Fostering a classroom environment in which newcomers can interact with other children through a buddy system is also a very useful technique.

Encouraging children to make friendships, and allowing them to speak in their first language with their peers are key practices. Same-language buddies can help enormously with translation and negotiation of the new school environment. Speaking their first language with friends will not interfere in their acquisition of English, rather, it will help newcomer ELLs to connect with a warm, classroom community, which in turn, will help English language proficiency to develop.

In the case that a same-language buddy is not available, an empathetic, kind, English speaking peer can also help a newcomer with the school transition. All of these elements contribute greatly to

newcomers’ feelings of connectedness. Like the case of Roberto, even many years later, most students are able to remember the names of the friends and teachers they met on their first day of school who spoke to them in their first language or who tried to engage with them on any level.

Print-rich environments, such as labeling furniture in the classroom, e.g. *cabinet, sink, whiteboard*, can help newcomers make associations that are helpful day to day. These vocabulary supports also give students something to think about when they are taking a mental break. A former student once said, “I remember that sometimes I would just shut down and read the signs that were posted around the class. That made me remember that I really was learning English, even when it felt like I wasn’t.” Common classroom requests, like — Can I go to the restroom? Can I go to the nurse? — can be posted on a bulletin board or written in a notebook for newcomers’ assistance in the case that they need these phrases urgently. By providing this language, the newcomer can begin to develop a sense of confidence and autonomy in class.

In an effort to help newcomers orient themselves to school, ENL teachers at JHS 1234 have collaborated to create a welcome video. The video includes pictures of teachers and school staff, important locations around the school,

students wearing the school uniform and classes participating in collaborative work. Current and former ELLs are working on creating versions in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Urdu and Arabic.

Establishing classroom routines is also a big comfort to a beginner level English learner. At JHS 1234, all newcomer ELLs participate in a fluency program during their ENL classes that allows teachers to assess students' decoding skills and fluency levels. Teachers match students who are at similar levels, and students practice reading a fluency passage at the beginning of each class. The task is at the appropriate level for each partner pair, so all levels of students can participate in the routine. Students also track their improvement using graphs, so it is very easy for them to set goals and monitor their progress.

Routines such as this fluency program that are student centered, engaging, and measurable are ideal for newcomer ELLs. Once a newcomer understands the daily procedures of class, incorporating him/her into classroom life by giving him/her a daily task, for example, handing out or collecting papers, gathering materials used during class, or sharpening pencils, can help to ease the anxiety that a newcomer may feel. These daily tasks can be explained to a newcomer without too much language, using gestures, a demonstration, or buddy support, and will help the

newcomer to know that he/she contributes in a meaningful way to class.

Of course newcomer ELLs, by definition, have linguistic limitations that affect their ability to take part fully at first within a standard, English language curriculum. It is very likely that newcomers will not be able to engage with the same grade-level material in English at the same pace as their monolingual peers; this, however, does not mean that they cannot be productive in class. A variety of separate activities can be implemented to help newcomers develop language skills during their first days in school.

One meaningful activity that students can complete without knowing English involves drawing pictures to match vocabulary words related to curriculum.



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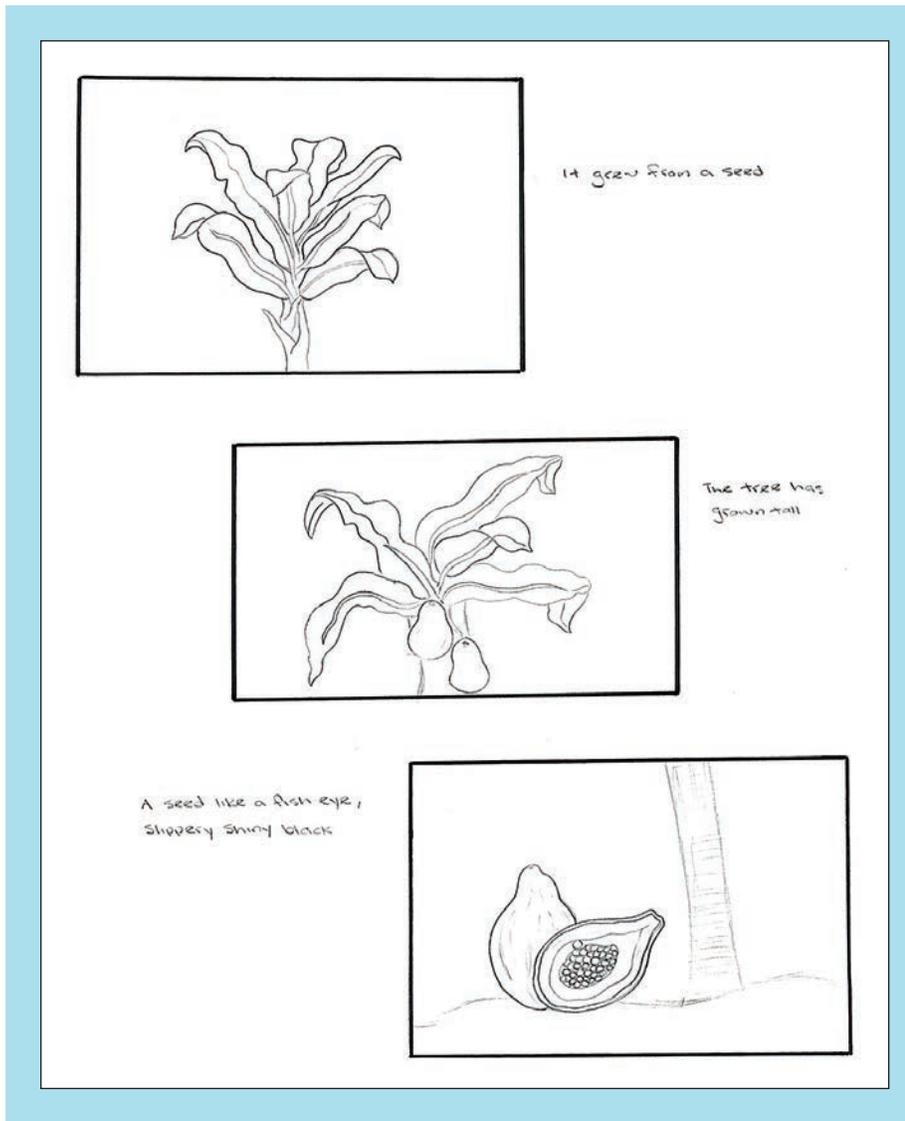
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A sketch-to-stretch assignment based on the poem "Papaya Tree" from Inside Out & Back Again drawn by an eighth grade ELL at the Emerging level.

These pictures allow newcomers to demonstrate their growing understanding of English without producing anything orally or in writing yet. Another example is by implementing challenging lessons through the sketch-to-stretch technique. Students visualize the events in a novel or historical event by drawing pictures and writing sentences in English or their native language to interpret their understanding.

Once newcomers have developed some English skills, they can work on separate, independent work packets designed to build beginning linguistic skills. Creating an "All About Me" book with fill-in information about family, country, language, personal information (address, telephone number), and food is always an appropriate activity for any newcomer, regardless of age. Teachers can also use the chunking technique which helps their newcomers increase access to complex and high-level texts. Through this technique, teachers break up the text by adding headings and focus questions, putting important words in bold, and adding a space for notes in the margin. Chunking helps beginning and low-intermediate ELLs to access the text at their level and engage in course lessons (Walqui & Strom, 2015).

Though parallel lessons for newcomers can be justified for a period of time, teachers need to carefully monitor students' progress and increase the level of academic and linguistic challenge until students are ready to be integrated into regular, adapted class lessons. Teachers should also be mindful that the cognitive demands that ELLs face in an English classroom are tiring, and newcomers may need more frequent breaks from classroom activity than an English-proficient student. For example, Carlos, an eighth grader, once walked out of class because his teacher would not allow him to get a drink of water. When



Communication with parents and caregivers is a critical part of establishing a connection between newcomers' families and their new school.

she questioned him later, he told her that sometimes in class he feels like “the walls are getting close.” He needed to take a break from class, but he did not know how to share this need with her in the moment when he was feeling stress.

Allowing newcomers to stretch, take a walk, or get a drink, can provide a much-needed respite from strenuous language acquisition processes.

Connections to Parents

Communication with parents and caregivers is a critical part of establishing a connection between newcomers' families and their new school. Teachers should make an effort shortly after the child arrives to the school to communicate with parents by phone. It may be that a phone call will not be productive because of linguistic barriers, but it also is possible that a family member understands English well enough to make a connection, give some information, or take a message. Teachers can also try to communicate in the home language, if possible, with the help of an interpreter. The New York City Department of Education's Office of Translation and Interpretation allows teachers and staff members to request over the phone interpretation to facilitate phone calls home in the family's native language.

At JHS 1234, the parent coordinator, office staff, administrators, deans, guidance counselors, and teachers are a

critical bridge between school and home for newcomer students. Office staff welcome the families during every visit and ensure that those requiring an interpreter are accommodated quickly.

Once ELLs have been identified, a trained pedagogue, the parent coordinator, and an interpreter host an orientation session for the families. The parent coordinator at JHS 1234 presents families with a parent handbook, which she wrote and had translated into Spanish, Chinese, and Korean. During this session, the families view a Parent Information Video that explains the program choices available to ELLs: Dual Language, Transitional Bilingual Education, and English as a New Language. The video, available in 13 languages, was produced by the NYCDOE Department of English Language Learners and Student Support.

This is also the time when the pedagogue and parent coordinator prepare newcomers by distributing bilingual dictionaries/picture dictionaries and content area glossaries, explaining school policies, and providing information on the state standards and state exams. All these efforts help families who are not able yet to communicate with their child's teachers, to know that their child is in a caring, nurturing environment.

Parent-teacher conferences are also an important venue by which teachers and

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[Newcomers'] experiences offer pedagogical possibilities for storytelling and narrative writing to expand all students' geographical and cultural understandings.

parents can build upon their mutual understanding. With the new, yearly ELL parent conferences that have been implemented through NYS CR Part 154, these school-home partnerships will have more opportunities to grow. During the first two weeks of inviting parents of ELLs to JHS 1234 for meetings with the teachers during the scheduled parent engagement time, the school witnessed an overwhelming response. In just two sessions of one hour each, teachers at the school met with more than 30 families of ELLs for 15-minute meetings. The bridges constructed between school and home are beneficial for all parties — not only does the child develop an understanding that a connection between school and home exists, but parents and educators also can come together on behalf of the child to contribute to the students' academic engagement and interest.

Newcomers and their Classmates: Learning from Each Other

Having newcomers in a classroom provides many beneficial learning opportunities for all students. Though it may seem obvious that newcomers learn a great deal from being in classrooms in the U.S., what is less obvious is that their presence is a gateway to develop their English speaking classmates' interests in different countries, cultures, customs, and geography. Newcomers by definition have rich experiences

associated with their immigration stories, and have traveled and learned more languages than many of their classmates. All of these experiences offer pedagogical possibilities for storytelling and narrative writing to expand all students' geographical and cultural understandings.

One technique that encourages this cultural exchange is linguistic show-and-tell. In this activity, newcomers bring in an item from their home country, and teach their classmates the word for the item in their first language. Depending on their English level, newcomers can give a basic description or demonstration related to the item for their classmates. These presentations can be individual, or facilitated by a teacher or parent, if necessary.

For example, in his kindergarten class, a young Japanese student presented a linguistic show-and-tell for his classmates to make a simple origami figure. With very little English, he was able to showcase his cultural knowledge while guiding his classmates through the steps of making the figure. His classmates were very impressed, and as a result of this activity, they included him more in activities in class and during recess, despite their communicative difficulties. Similarly, teachers can ask students to share pictures of their home countries, and use them as teaching materials about different parts of the world.

Though such activities can be very rewarding, teachers should consider the possible circumstances of immigration before undertaking these lessons. It may be that a newcomer's move to the U.S. was traumatic and not something that she should be required to share. A teacher with knowledge of these circumstances, can give students the option to share their stories if they so choose. Sensitive, welcoming classmates and teachers help newcomer ELLs become a part of the classroom more quickly, and these relationships can be enduring. Encouraging L1 English speakers to develop a sense of linguistic empathy allows them to develop a greater tolerance for cultural differences and, on a broader spectrum, teaches them to become citizens of the world.

In sum, newcomers should be afforded every consideration available during their first days at school. Developing language skills, working through culture shock stages, learning content area material, making new friends, while trying to understand the words coming toward them — all of these processes represent a very arduous task which teachers and students can make easier. Welcoming students when they come to school, immediately involving families in their child's education, designing instruction that they can take part in, and acknowledging that the early days are likely to be hard, can make those initial days in school decidedly easier. By planning for and providing positive classroom experiences for newcomers, teachers can take pride in their role in helping newcomers find their first linguistic successes in a new school.

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Glossary

ACRONYMS AND TERMS

chunking technique

Chunking is a strategy that helps students break down difficult text into more manageable pieces.

colada morada

This is a healthy berry and oatmeal drink that Ecuadorians traditionally serve during Dia De los Muertos in October.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally relevant (sometimes called responsible) pedagogy (CRP) aims to ensure that educators acknowledge and honor the diverse viewpoints of their student population and refrain from promoting homogeneous perspectives as universal beliefs.

emergent bilinguals

Individuals in the beginning stages of acquiring a second language.

ENL, ESL, ESOL, ELL, LEP

These terms all refer to students whose first language is not English, but who are learning English:

ENL- English as a New Language

ESL - English as a second language

ESOL - English to Speakers of Other Languages

ELL - English language learner

LEP - Limited English-Proficient

L1

Refers to the first language children learn, usually as infants. L1 is also sometimes called the home language.

L2

This refers to the second language or a foreign language.

multilingual learners

Multilingual learners are students learning the language of instruction at the same time they are learning academic content.

monolingual

Someone who speaks or communicates in only one language.

Prezi

A presentation software and storytelling tool. Prezi allows the user to zoom in and out of their presentation media.

SIFE

A term to describe students with interrupted or limited formal education.

TESOL

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

translanguaging

The ability of multilingual learners to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system.

Quizlet

A free website providing learning tools for students, including flashcards, study and game modes.

Resources

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Union Resources

New York State United Teachers

This portal provides fact sheets and lesson plans, links to state and national organizations, glossaries, translation and interpreter services, cultural and linguistic resources, classroom resources and webinar archives as well as updated news coverage about issues pertinent to English language learners and their families.

www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/filtered-resources/topic/english-language-learners?topic=English+Language+Learners%29%20seems#FactSheets

American Federation of Teachers

AFT's *Unlocking the Research on English Learners* discusses effective instructional practices, additional instructional supports, and how the home language can be used to promote academic development.

www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/summer-2013/unlocking-research-english-learners

National Education Association

NEA's website includes an extensive collection of downloadable resources covering a wide range of issues pertaining to English language learners and their families.

www.nea.org/home/37004.htm?q=resources%20for%20ells

State Organizations

New York State Education Department: Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

Provides support and technical assistance to schools, districts and communities. Documents include guidance, updates on program initiatives and department publications.

www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/

Regional Bilingual Education — Resource Networks (RBE-RNs)

Operated by NYSED's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages, the eight RBE-RNs provide free technical assistance and professional development to schools, providing professional development to improve educational outcomes for bilingual students and ELLs.

www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged/betac.html

New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (NYSTESOL)

This association of professionals is concerned with the education of English language learners at all levels. They publish the quarterly online newsletter *Idiom* for ESOL professionals, and the downloadable *NYS TESOL Journal*.

<http://journal.nystesol.org/>

New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE)

This state chapter of the national association provides advocacy, professional development, communication and dissemination of information, leadership and networking to educators, families, and private agencies concerned with English Language Learners and bilingual students in NYS.

<http://nysabe.net/conference/>

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Resources

National Organizations

Toolkit for ELLs

In 2015, the U.S. departments of education and justice issued an outline of legal obligations to English language learners under the civil rights laws. The English Language Learner Toolkit helps state and local education agencies help ELLs by fulfilling these obligations.

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html>

TESOL International Association

TESOL's international chapter website includes the latest news, upcoming events, and extensive resources on teaching English language learners. The site includes links to information on professional development, current blogs, bulletins, and reviews of featured publications.

www.tesol.org/

Colorín Colorado!

This website provides free research-based information in Spanish and English to educators, schools and the families of ELLs including: ELL basics, school supports, curricular materials for teaching ELLs, resources for families, booklists, videos, and an extensive resource library.

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/>

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instructional Educational Programs (NCELA)

Includes information about curriculum and instruction development, academic content standards and assessments as well as information about Title III.

www.ncele.us/#

National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)

National professional organization devoted to representing bilingual learners and bilingual education professionals.

www.nabe.org/

Content Area Instruction

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act is a welcomed change for educators. The reauthorized law promotes the restoration of a well-rounded curriculum and an end to more than a decade of curriculum narrowing that has eliminated so many vital components from our classrooms. Schools can now shift towards providing a robust curriculum that fully engages children with all disciplines for learning in New York State and prepares them to become active contributing members of our nation.

This volume will feature exciting and effective practices that bring back the joy of teaching and learning in social studies, science and other subject areas that invite students to think, inquire and probe, while building a more intricate understanding of the world, its peoples, and systems.

We call for articles that showcase best practices in content area instruction, including integrated teaching, from classroom teachers in PreK-12, content specialists, school-related professionals, and faculty in higher education.

Examples of submission areas include (but are not limited to):

- Science instruction
- Social studies instruction
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) instruction
- Library and media arts
- Health and physical education; family and consumer science
- The Arts
- Media Literacy
- Career and Technical Education
- World languages
- Integrated instruction (including content, literacy and/or mathematics)

Content Area Instruction

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

- Grade and Content Area:** Author(s) can describe practices in any grades (P-12) and affiliated with the content area instruction: For example, a fourth-grade teacher and special education teacher may address their approaches as a teaching team; a high school social studies teacher may co-author a manuscript with the school psychologist, a kindergarten teacher in partnership with a university professor may discuss their approaches.
- Audience:** This is a practitioner journal. Our readers include teachers, school-related professionals, pupil personnel services providers, union leaders, parents, administrators, higher education faculty, researchers, legislators, and policymakers.
- Deadline for Proposals:** June 13, 2016.
- Rights:** Acceptance of a proposal is not a guarantee of publication. Publication decisions are made by the Editorial Board. NYSUT retains the right to edit articles. The author will have the right to review changes and if not acceptable to both parties, the article will not be included in *Educator's Voice*. NYSUT may also retain the article for use on the NYSUT website (www.nysut.org) or for future publication in *NYSUT United*.
- Article Length:** The required article length is flexible. Please submit approximately 2,000 – 3,000 words (or 7-9 double-spaced pages plus references).
- Writing Style:** Please write your article to the practitioner. Authors are encouraged to write in a direct style designed to be helpful to both practitioners and to others committed to strengthening education. Education terms (i.e., jargon, acronyms) should be defined for a broad audience. For articles with multiple authors, use one voice consistently.
- Manuscript:** Authors must follow American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition style with in-text citations and references at the end of the article. Do not use footnotes. Please paginate the manuscript and include the lead author's name in the header. Graphics may be embedded in the manuscript initially but must also be submitted separately as JPEGs, TIFFs or PDFs. Please do not submit copyrighted material unless you obtain and provide permission from the publisher.

Content Area Instruction

AUTHOR SUBMISSION FORM

Name of Author(s) / If multiple authors, select one author as the primary contact. At least one author must be a NYSUT (or affiliate) member. Please spell out all acronyms.

Primary Author's Name: _____

Name of school: _____

School Location: _____

Current position (title and grade level/s): _____

Affiliation: _____

Author's Name: _____

Current position (title and grade level/s): _____

Affiliation: _____

Author's Name: _____

Current position (title and grade level/s): _____

Affiliation: _____

Do all of the authors work in the same school? If not, tell us where they work:

CONTACT INFO (all fields are required)

Primary author email address: _____

Primary author home address: _____

Primary author telephone number: _____

Alternate telephone number: _____

**Information can be
submitted electronically
by June 13, 2016, to:**

edvoice@nysutmail.org

Or mail to:

NYSUT Research & Educational Services

Attn: *Educator's Voice*

800 Troy-Schenectady Road

Latham, NY 12110

You can download
this document from
our website:
[http://www.nysut.org/
callforproposals](http://www.nysut.org/callforproposals)

Content Area Instruction

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Please tell us about your proposal by referencing each of the following nine elements (approximately 2–5 pages) and submit to NYSUT by June 13, 2016. Please include the element titles. Be sure to complete the author submission sheet.

- 1) **Title:** What is the working title for your article?
- 2) **Topic:** What do you plan to write about? What practice will your article focus on (please provide specifics about the content areas and grade levels involved)?
- 3) **Relevance:** Why is this practice relevant to the theme of this year's volume? Why is it important to you?
- 4) **Setting:** Describe your school setting and tell us a little about the student population that you teach.
- 5) **Practice:** Describe the practice and your approach to teaching (Do you use different grouping strategies, methods or materials)?
- 6) **Outcomes:** What evidence tells you that the approach has been effective? What are the student outcomes and how are they observed or measured?
- 7) **Research Base:** Describe the research base that supports your practice (please provide specific examples).
- 8) **Diversity:** How does your practice address the needs of diverse populations?
- 9) **Collaboration:** Does your practice involve collaboration with parents or other members of the school community?

Deadlines for Volume X:

June 13, 2016	Proposal submission deadline
July 11, 2016	NYSUT responds to proposal
Sept. 1, 2016	Completed article submission
April 2017	Publication

NYSUT Education & Learning Trust

The Education & Learning Trust is NYSUT's primary way of delivering professional development to its members. ELT offers courses for undergraduate, graduate and in-service credit, partnership programs that lead to master's degrees and teaching certificates, and seminars as well as professional development programs for teachers and school-related professionals.

NYSUT Education & Learning Trust offers the following professional development on the topic of English language learners:

Online Courses:

■ Teaching English as a Second Language

EDUC 505 Mercy College

Historical, legal, theoretical and practical aspects of teaching English to learners of English as a Second Language in pre-school through 12th grade. Course content includes language acquisition theories for children and adults, as well as for students with special needs. Student language assessment, identification, academic placement, and a variety of successful instructional approaches and strategies will be explored. Classroom discussion will include effective instructional models, assessment strategies, approaches and teaching practices used in teaching all language skills, the common core standards, and recognition of the psycho-social problems involved in second language acquisition and development. Ten hours of fieldwork required. Participants should log in daily to review and check assignments.

Meets NYS Standards I, II, III & IV

■ Theory and Practice of Bilingual Education

EDUC 508 Mercy College

This course is designed to prepare bilingual and ESOL teachers to successfully work with language minority students, in the context of bilingual/ESL programs. It includes the study of the historical, psychological, social, cultural, political, theoretical, and legal foundations of bilingual education programs in the United States. Students will examine and analyze different bilingual program models so that they may apply such knowledge to the implementation of pedagogically effective practices for second language learners using both the L1 and L2, in curriculum implementation. Communication with parents and families, concerning students' academic and social outcomes will be highlighted. In addition, the use of community resources, programs and services to effectively improve instruction in bilingual programs will be discussed. 10 hours of fieldwork required.

Meets NYS Standards I, II, III & IV

Seminars:

■ Instructional Supports for English Language Learners (ELLs) - Teacher

English Language Learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing student population in schools, and they must be considered when NYS ELA/Literacy and Math Standards are being implemented. Geared for general education teachers, this seminar will help participants design effective content-area instruction while they explore research-based strategies, instructional guidelines and resources for helping ELLs succeed.

Meets NYS Teaching Standards I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII

■ Increasing Comprehension of ELLs – School Related Professionals (SRPs)

Many SRPs work with English Language Learners on a daily basis. The seminar helps SRPs to understand the NYS regulations for identifying and providing services to English Language Learners on a daily basis. The seminar helps SRPs to understand the NYS regulations for identifying and providing services to English language learners (ELLs), examine cultural factors that affect instruction for ELLs, and explore strategies for making academic content accessible for ELLs.



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