

NORTHWEST EDUCATION

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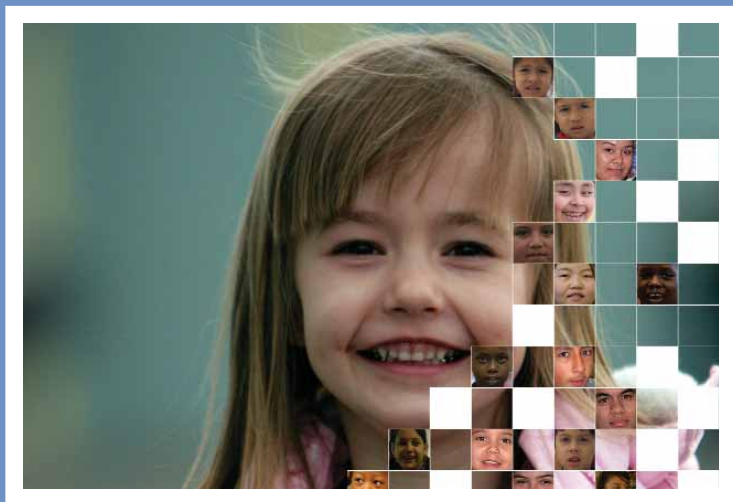


THE CHANGING FACE OF THE CLASSROOM

SERVING ELL STUDENTS

Measuring progress toward fluency 14
Building family ties 26
Connecting online to Mexico 34





ON THE COVER

Classrooms across the nation are becoming increasingly diverse with more than five million students identified as Limited English Proficient. Spanish is spoken by 79 percent of those students, while Vietnamese (at 2 percent) and Hmong (at 1.5 percent) rank second and third respectively. In the Northwest, the top languages spoken by LEP students vary from state to state:

State	% LEP	#1 Language	#2 Language	#3 Language
Alaska	16.3%	Yup'ik (38.6%)	Inupiaq (11.2%)	Spanish (10%)
Idaho	8.1%	Spanish (78.8%)	Native American (5.6%)	Serbo-Croatian (3%)
Montana	4.7%	Blackfoot (25.2%)	Crow (15.6%)	Dakota (10.6%)
Oregon	11.2%	Spanish (72.5%)	Russian (8.4%)	Vietnamese (3.6%)
Washington	6.9%	Spanish (60.9%)	Russian (7.5%)	Vietnamese (6.4%)

Source: Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (2002)

Main photo by Craig Völpe

FEATURES

6 Creating Believers

An Oregon school district with large numbers of Hispanic and Russian students strives to give everyone two languages.

14 The Next Step: Assessment and the English Language Learner

States follow their own paths in the scramble to meet new NCLB testing requirements.

★ The Role of Language

Educational consultant Gary Hargett shares his views on why many ELL students aren't making the progress they could.

20 Everyone's Child

Two school districts—Anchorage, Alaska, and Federal Way, Washington—take different approaches to serving children who speak everything from Aleut to Zuni.

26 Forging Family Ties

For parents who speak limited or no English, getting involved in their children's schools means conquering real and perceived obstacles.

30 Speaking the Same Language

In a school with the dual challenges of poverty and language, a bilingual staff provides personal proof of the transforming power of education.

★ Building a Bilingual Staff

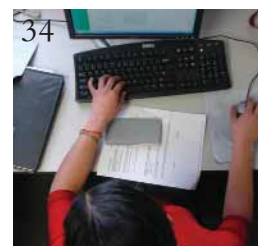
Principal Connie Strawn of Lewis & Clark Elementary in Wenatchee, Washington, offers practical advice on creating an award-winning, bilingual staff—even in the face of stiff opposition.

34 Portal to Opportunity

From remedial reading to calculus, an online program from Mexico connects Hispanic students in Washington's Yakima Valley with the courses they need.

★ Meeting the Need for Professional Development

In rural Montana and Oregon communities, ELL teachers tap into training crafted by partnerships of Educational Service Districts, universities, and providers like NWREL.



DEPARTMENTS

- 3 **Forum**
- 4 **Editor's Note**
- 19 **Region at a Glance**
ELL Enrollment Rate by County
- 25 **Q&A**
Oregon School Superintendent Susan Castillo
- 39 **Voices**
From Surviving to Thriving
- 40 **Research Brief**
What the Research Says About Effective Strategies for ELL Students
- 43 **End Note**
I Would Like You To Know
- 44 **NWREL News**
This new section brings readers up to date on the Laboratory's products, people, and services.
NWREL Launches Rigorous Scientific Studies
Training Blends SIOP and Equity Components
Culturally Responsive, Standards-Based Teaching
Helping ELL Students Grow in Math
What's New on the Web
Conference Call
Flashback
NWREL Products
- **What the Research Says (or Doesn't Say)**
Assessing the Benefits of K-8 Schools
In this new department, NWREL's Office of Planning and Service Coordination shares answers to questions from the field on timely topics like grade configuration.

On the Web

Northwest Education is available online in both PDF and HTML versions at www.nwrel.org/nwedu/. Look for Web exclusives, marked with ➤.

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Statement of Purpose

Northwest Education aims to promote a regional dialogue and to elevate teaching and learning by giving readers the best information, ideas, and personal stories from practitioners, researchers, and other experts.

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FORUM

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Struggling Readers

As a teacher with 15 years of experience, I know that the article (“Why Can’t I Read?,” spring 2003) was accurate in the three-tier approach, the PA mentions, the need for systematic phonics instruction, and the use of high-interest materials. I was originally looking for information on the correlation between poor letter formation and the ability to read and write. Why is it that when a struggling reader also writes poorly we think it’s an indication of a lack of literacy skills, but when a child who reads easily and writes well has poor letter formation we say it’s because of their genius?

Toni Morgan
*Bilingual Teacher
Plainfield, Illinois*

Dual-Purpose Libraries

Do you know of any cases in which public libraries have been placed inside elementary schools (“Community Connectivity,” fall 2003)? I’m working on a project in which the school district is interested in partnering with the local library system to build a library within a new elementary school they are planning.

However, there are a host of issues—security, accessibility, etc.—that we must address to make this work. Has this been done before? If so, where, and can you provide a contact?

Richard LeBlanc
*Architect
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania*

Northwest Education responds:

We’ve discovered a few resources. According to the following Web site, Alaska has explored this issue: www.library.state.ak.us/dev/aslld.html. Also, we recently had a visitor from Montana, who is both a county librarian and a school librarian: Julie Hainline, Seeley-Swan High School, Missoula Public School District, www.mcps.k12.mt.us/highschool/seeleyswan/library/library.htm.

Considering Individual Needs

The fact that smaller class size contributes to a closer relationship between a teacher and the students leads one to believe that behavior problems should lessen (“Tapping the Benefits of Smaller Classes,” winter 2000).

Behavioral problems are one of the major factors used in evaluating students, and too often students of various ethnicities are judged based on a traditional Eurocentric model of behavior. That is not to say that a child should be allowed to run all over the class whenever he/she feels like it, but rather that a multiplicity of learning styles need to be considered or the child could indeed suffer.

We are learning that we need to do more of what teachers used to do: Spend more time learning how a student responds to various teaching techniques.

Martin V. Tooley
*School Founder
Daytona Beach, Florida*

We want to hear from you! Send your letters to the editor, article ideas, and tips on places where good things are happening to nwedufeedback@nwrel.org. Letters may be edited for length or clarity.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Photo: Craig Volpe



"Language exerts hidden power, like a moon on the tides."

—Rita Mae Brown, *Starting From Scratch*

The power of language is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the classroom. It forms the basis of

learning and can be an almost insurmountable barrier for some children who enter our schools without English proficiency.

Ten years ago, the first issue of *Northwest Education* spotlighted "The Hispanic Child." Its stories provided descriptions of "teachers and administrators who are reaching across the cultural and linguistic divide to educate the newcomers." A decade later, the divide has grown wider and Hispanic students—who make up the largest minority group in Northwest classrooms—have been joined by growing numbers of newcomers from countries that were once just distant locations in an atlas: from Somalia and Sudan to the Ukraine, Cambodia, and Laos. Indeed, today one in 12 Northwest students has limited English proficiency—even if they were born in the United States—and the number of Hispanic students in the region is increasing by 7 percent each year.

Giving these children a strong foundation in the language of our education system has become not only an equity and social justice issue, but one with federal consequences. Under No Child Left Behind, states must meet "annual measurable achievement objectives" on students' progress toward English proficiency. In addition, the performance of these students on state reading, mathematics, and science tests enters into the mix when determining whether schools are making adequate yearly progress.

As Arlene Sandberg, an English as a Second Language (ESL) resource teacher in Anchorage, points out, "The classroom is changing. Before, it was, 'this kid's bilingual, that's bilingual's problem.' A lot of classroom teachers never saw their role as a stakeholder in a child's achievement if the child was bilingual or special education. You can't do that anymore. This child belongs to all of us."

State assessments in reading and math reveal that achievement gaps between English language learners (ELL) and all students range from 21 to 57 percent in the Northwest. How to attack the gap has spawned highly charged debates over program models and legislative policies at a time when tensions are rising over a national immigration bill. There is even disagreement over how to describe children who are not fluent English speakers: ELL, LEP, ESL, or EAL (English as an additional language). We have chosen to use the term English language learner throughout this publication, unless another term is used in an official capacity.

Rather than focus on the contentious issues, this *Northwest Education* edition looks at how schools and districts are tailoring ELL instruction to match their demographics and their resources; differences among the new state language proficiency assessments; and approaches to key concerns like parental involvement. Also in this issue, we introduce a new section—NWREL News—with information on the Laboratory's current research, products, and services.

As always, we welcome your feedback and information on how your school is meeting today's educational challenges.

—Rhonda Barton, bartonr@nwrel.org

NORTHWEST EDUCATION **FEATURES**

THE CHANGING FACE OF THE CLASSROOM

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- A rural Oregon district promotes biliteracy for everyone 6
- States try different approaches to language proficiency tests 14
- Urban school districts grapple with up to 95 native languages 20
- Schools work to engage families of ELL students 26
- A committed principal builds a bicultural staff 30
- Online courses link Mexico and Washington's Yakima Valley 34

Creating BELIEVERS

*Weaving
together English,
Spanish, and Russian,
an Oregon school district
aims at biliteracy
for all students.*

Story by RHONDA BARTON
Photos by CRAIG VOLPE

WOODBURN, Oregon—A bright blue band circles Walt Blomberg’s wrist. Etched in the hard plastic is one word—BELIEVE—in English, Spanish, and Russian. To Superintendent Blomberg, it represents both a promise and a challenge: to ensure that every child graduates from Woodburn schools literate in English and one other language.

Blomberg ordered 1,000 of the bracelets for teachers, administrators, students, and parents in December after conducting a staff survey that asked, “Do you believe our kids can be successful?” Blomberg admits, “I was disappointed with the results, and I challenged the staff to explore what came out of the survey and how we could change that. When I gave these [bracelets] out, I said, ‘This is about believing in our students and in each other. If we believe, we can succeed.’”

Signs of success are already abundant in the 4,700-student district, which is 73 percent Hispanic, 11 percent Russian, and 16 percent Anglo American. All but one of the district’s seven schools ranked satisfactory or strong in academic performance on the Oregon report card; one elementary school recently won a coveted state award for closing the achievement gap; the district has been a leader in attracting and retaining bilingual and bicultural staff; and a “grow your own” program is helping both teachers and educational aides ramp up their skills and credentials.

Still, the high-poverty district faces its share of problems: a middle school that is scrambling to dig out of Year 5 of AYP

sanctions; a high school striving to improve its graduation rate by breaking into four smaller academies; and a community where immigrant cultures are stratified into even finer layers based on religion, urban versus rural roots, and length of time in the United States.

Coming Together

Located 35 miles south of Portland, Woodburn is a study in contrasts. In the largely Hispanic commercial district, bustling *tacquerías* feature tripe, beef brains, and pork rinds with hot sauce. Newly arrived workers from Oaxaca and Guadalajara toil in the surrounding nurseries and food processing plants. On the edge of the fields, one of Oregon’s largest outlet malls offers pricey Ralph Lauren and Brooks Brothers labels in tastefully appointed shops. Across the freeway, a prosperous retirement community hugs the golf course. Russian Old Believers and Pentecostals till nearby farms, quietly keeping to themselves and adhering to centuries-old religious traditions.

The Chamber of Commerce promotes Woodburn as “The City of Unity.” But unifying the diverse groups and making certain that all are well-served by the school system is a complex juggling act—particularly as two-thirds of the students are English language learners. Meeting the community’s needs has required innovation, perseverance, and even a certain amount of proselytizing. “As many people who want access to foreign languages, there are others who say ‘if you



ВЕРИТЬ

CREO



First-graders take turns reading aloud in Spanish in Ronda Johnson's dual-immersion class.

come to America, you should speak English,” observes Blomberg. “I try to personalize the issue, and ask them if you could still speak the language of your grandparents, wouldn’t you make that choice? I’ve never had anyone say no. After all, why eliminate one language when you can have two?”

An Impetus for Change

Woodburn’s trajectory toward a bilingual system began nearly 10 years ago when Walt Blomberg’s predecessor gathered a strategic planning team of almost three dozen parents, staff, students, and community leaders. Sherrilynn Rawson, now principal of Nellie Muir Elementary, was one of the team members. She remembers “the real impetus for change” when she arrived at the district in the mid-1990s: “We recognized that the early successes we were having in elementary school weren’t translating to the middle and high schools, and if students even made it to high school, they were dropping out before graduation.”

The planning team delved into research and groups of parents and teachers fanned out, visiting schools in New Mexico, Texas, California, and Washington. “Rather than looking for a particular label or program, we were looking for those practices that seemed to be common to all schools that were effective in teaching English language learners,” says Rawson. The research and site visits were boiled down to lists of characteristics of successful programs, staffing, and instruction.

That formed the genesis of Woodburn’s English Transition Program, which offered five different models of teaching Spanish- and Russian-speaking students. The models ranged from English-only instruction to dual-language, sheltered English, and both early-exit and late-exit options combining native language and sheltered English. The program

helped students make the transition to English during a five-year period.

“We’ve continued to evolve in our thinking,” notes Rawson, “moving away from using native language instruction as an implicit way to get at English to having native language instruction explicitly as another goal.” And district leaders went one step further: They reasoned that if children in the transition program actually came out bilingual, why not extend that opportunity to every student?

Welcome to Woodburn

All newcomers to the district—whether they speak English or another language at home—begin their academic journey at the Welcome Center, a homey beige building with flower boxes and bright red shutters. Students and their adults are greeted by bilingual Russian and Spanish staff members who record all the important family information. English language learners are quickly assessed using the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey or its Russian counterpart. To help students feel comfortable, the tests take place just off the main waiting area, in a room with a large interior window so children can maintain visual contact with their family.

“We explain to the parents what we offer,” says David Bautista, director of bilingual education and a native of Guadalajara. “If you want your children to become bilingual, this is what we have. If you want a traditional English-only program, we have that, too.” Most pick the bilingual option.

It’s Bautista’s responsibility to make sure that each school has the tools to fulfill that agenda. He works with principals on professional development plans, locates resources, and manages the bilingual coordinators assigned to each building.

Although it’s not part of his official job description, Bautista also leads annual trips to Mexico where Woodburn staff members—including Superintendent Blomberg—get a glimpse of

their students' roots. Once the Woodburn faculty compares its resources with those of Mexican teachers, "the whining usually stops," Bautista confides with a sly smile. On a more serious note, he adds that the experience can be transformational.

Back in Oregon, Bautista urges his colleagues to recognize that "a bilingual program is everybody's work. You see examples of schools that are successful because of the teachers, or principal, or coordinators. But when you want a whole system that works, it takes all of the pieces together."

A Shining Example

One of the brightest stars in Woodburn's firmament is Nellie Muir Elementary, which pioneered the district's Spanish-English dual-immersion program. The program draws kindergartners who are English dominant, bilingual in English and Spanish, or Spanish dominant. Beginning in kindergarten and first grade, 80 percent of the instructional day is conducted in Spanish and 20 percent in English. Each year, the mix changes until instruction is evenly split between the two languages in fifth grade.

About a third of the school's current K–2 students are enrolled in the two-way immersion program. Another third follow a developmental bilingual program that works much the same as dual immersion but all students are from Spanish-speaking families. A third option is called "English-plus": Here students receive instruction in English with 30–40 minutes of Spanish three or four times a week. In grades 3–5, approximately two-thirds of today's students are developmental bilingual and one-third are in the English-plus



Superintendent Walt Blomberg believes in a "grow your own" approach to staffing; almost two dozen aides have become teachers with the district's support.

program, though dual-immersion enrollment is expected to grow in the next few years as the current K–2 students move up.

There's no question that the program is getting results. In March, Nellie Muir was recognized by the Oregon Department of Education as the state's top school for closing the achievement gap. The state based the award on a comparison of individual students' reading and math RIT scores in 2003 and 2005. Nellie Muir's fifth-graders showed improvement from their third-grade test results in a number of categories: Economically disadvantaged students grew an average of more than 16 points in math and 17 points in reading. Latino students were up an average of more than 17 points in math and 18 points in reading. And English learners gained more

than 18 points in math and 19 points in reading. "These kinds of gains are well above the state average gains for grades 3–5 (about 12 points)," notes Principal Rawson, "meaning that these students are catching up in terms of overall state achievement."

Ask anyone at Nellie Muir what makes the school work so well and they're bound to credit the collegiality and distributed leadership. Rawson agrees. "Every teacher here has the responsibility to be the resident expert in something," she says. "On our kindergarten team, one person is the math expert, one's literacy, and one is ESL. I know that if I'm the designated math person, I need to meet with the math experts in the other grades to make sure our programs vertically align. Because I focus on one area and trusted colleagues take care of others, it makes the work load manageable."

Rawson pays for substitutes during a half-day each month to provide time for team meetings and professional development. Teachers also have common time each week since special classes—like library and music—are scheduled during the same period for all students in the same grade.

Three-fourths of Nellie Muir's faculty is bilingual or bicultural, along with a similar number of classified employees. "Every link in the chain is strong," says Rawson, "including the cafeteria and janitorial staff. We all expect the best from the kids and create a culture of that."

More Than Classmates

Just down the hall from Rawson's office, there's the hum of two dozen first-graders simultaneously reading in Spanish in Ronda Johnson's dual-immersion classroom. In one corner, TJ and Ashley share a work table with Dulce and Cesar. Dulce points to each word as she mouths a poem, "Me Gusta Comer" ("I Like To Eat"). Ashley is reading a book in Spanish and English on veterinarians, while TJ attacks a counting book illustrated with "mariquitas" or mosquitoes. Cesar

THE NUMBERS

Total students:	4,778
Dollars spent per student (2003–2004 school yr):	\$6,577
Administrators (FTE):	24
Teachers (FTE):	343
With a master's degree or higher:	53.7%
ELL Students:	62%
Free and reduced-price lunch:	90%
Racial/ethnic make-up:	
Anglo	16%
Hispanic	73%
Russian	11%

For more information,
www.woodburn.k12.or.us

studies a notebook with photos of all of his classmates and their favorite things. He learns that TJ is “talentoso” (talented) and likes “las tortugas” (turtles). Taking a break from their books, TJ and Cesar head for the carpeted area to play a math game with pastel-colored, plastic eggs.

Johnson recalls that TJ, one of nine siblings, barely spoke a word of Spanish when he entered first grade—even though he was in the immersion program in kindergarten.

“He was in a silent period, but within a month of being in the classroom, it all clicked in. Now, he’s on grade level in both Spanish and English,” she reports. “With Ashley too—they make that jump all of a sudden and it becomes so natural now for them to be reading and writing in Spanish.”

In addition to the flowering of language ability, Johnson observes something else emerging in her students. “Friendship between the cultures is one thing I see now. It’s exciting to see blonde/blue-eyed children speaking Spanish and also to see more English growth in my Spanish kids. That surprised me because we don’t use any more English than in the bilingual classes, but the friendships have fostered that.”

Spreading the Word

Laurie Hoefer, the mother of a first-grader at Washington Elementary, is sold on the dual-immersion program—not only for its academic benefits, but for the social and cultural benefits. “Having the ability to read and write Spanish well will be a real asset in Gracie’s future,” she believes.

On a rainy winter evening, Hoefer is sharing her daughter’s experiences at a parent meeting at Heritage Elementary. The school, which currently has 12 mainstream English classrooms and a half-dozen Russian ones, will add Spanish dual immersion in fall 2006. It is the last of Woodburn’s grade schools to adopt the program.

About three dozen Hispanic parents, some still in work uniforms for local landscaping firms, have shown up for pizza and testimonials on the program. The school is looking to recruit up to 50 kindergarten and first-grade students, and



Parents fresh from work attend an evening meeting that offers information and testimonials about a new Spanish dual-immersion program. (At right) Anglo and Latino children mix easily in bilingual classes.

they’ve organized the meeting to answer parents’ questions. Both Superintendent Blomberg and Bilingual Director Bautista are on hand to show the district’s support.

To demonstrate how the program melds language and cultural elements, half the parents are given pictures of Mexican families engaging in different traditions. The other half receive printed stories about these rituals. Everyone circulates around the room, matching the illustrations with the appropriate stories. Then, each table reads the stories and looks for the characters and specific customs that are described.

The lesson underscores that while developing vocabulary, students also learn to value Hispanic culture—whether it is their home culture or that of their classmates. Señor Lopez, whose daughter is in the program at Washington, thinks this is one of the strongest reasons for parents like him to enroll

EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR ELL STUDENTS

Woodburn’s two-way or dual-language immersion program is just one of several program models that incorporate native language. There are other major instructional methods for English language learners that use varying degrees of native language or none at all. As the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, & Excellence (CREDE) points out in the 1999 publication *Program Alternatives for Linguistically Diverse Students*, “No single approach or program model works best in every situation. Many different approaches can be successful when implemented well. Local conditions, choices, and innovation are critical ingredients of success.”

Transitional Bilingual Programs (or Early-Exit Bilingual)—All students speak the same native language; instruction is in both native language and English, with quick progression to all or most instruction in English.

Developmental Bilingual Programs (or Late-Exit Bilingual)—All students speak the same native language; at first, instruction is mostly in the native language with more English instruction as students gain proficiency.

Two-Way Immersion (also known as Dual-Language or Bilingual Immersion)—Ideally, half the students are English-speaking and half are LEP students sharing the same native language; instruction is in both English and the native language.

Pull-Out English as a Second Language (ESL)—Students can share the same native language or be from different language backgrounds; students may be grouped with all ages and grade levels. Instruction in English is adapted to the students’ proficiency level and is supplemented by gestures and visual aids. Three common subdivisions of ESL instruction are:



their children in dual immersion. He explains in Spanish, “If we don’t maintain our first language, we get ‘Spanglish,’ and we lose our culture to ‘Americanismo.’ My daughter now comes home singing [traditional] songs and asking me questions about my experiences as a child. She’s excited and gaining self-esteem.”

Another Hispanic parent adds—through an interpreter—that even though 80 percent of the instruction is in Spanish, her kindergarten student is “learning a lot of English fast. She’s even able to translate for me at the store.”

David Bautista reassures the parents that their children’s skills in Spanish and English will continue to grow as they advance in the system. “Woodburn is bilingual K–12,” he tells them. “We’re one of the few districts that can say that because other districts just have bilingual support in elementary school.”

Meeting Individual Needs

Indeed, at Valor—the middle school adjacent to Heritage Elementary—the district’s commitment to serving three language groups is immediately evident. Signs and student work in Russian, English, and Spanish brighten the corridors, reinforcing the district’s slogan: “Diverse in culture, united in mission.” Newcomers with limited English build literacy skills and content knowledge in their native language, as well as English, while proficient students can choose from a variety of electives in English, Spanish, and Russian.

- Grammar-based—teaches about the language, including its structure, functions, and vocabulary
- Communication-based—emphasizes using the language skillfully in meaningful contexts
- Content-based—attempts to develop language skills while preparing students to study grade-level material in English

Structured Immersion (also known as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English, Sheltered English, or Content-Based ESL)—Students can share the same native language or be from different language backgrounds; instruction in English is adapted to the students’ proficiency level, and supplemented by gestures and visual aids. This method requires significant teaching skills in both English language development and subject-specific instruction; clearly defined language and content objectives; modified curriculum, supplementary materials, and alternative assessments.

In a conference room off the school’s library, named for Cesar Chavez, three science teachers and a bilingual language arts instructor collaborate on designing a biology lesson targeting all students’ needs. Guided by consultant Jody Wiencek, they work on incorporating state language objectives—like making predictions and describing things—into a class on genetics and heredity. The group agrees on the lesson’s content goal—“understand the transmission of traits in living things”—and discusses how students might relate to the word “transmission.” The goal will be posted prominently in the classroom, along with separate language and social goals.

Marcia Wood, who will teach the lesson while her colleagues and principal observe, hands out a classroom seating chart. It’s anything but random. Her students—Hispanic, Russian, and Anglo—are grouped in tables of four with a mix of English language proficiencies. Examining the chart, Wiencek tells the teachers, “To meet kids’ needs, we really have to think about differentiation and not be grey about it. We need to know if they’re at the intermediate level, early intermediate, and so on.” Wood fills the group in on which students are on IEPs, who just came back from an extended stay in Mexico, and who has health issues.

During the class, the observers will focus on different tables, determining if each student understands the lesson and performs at or above his or her English proficiency level. They’ll also check to see if the students are fulfilling their designated roles as table captain, facilitator, recorder, or reporter.

In a debriefing session after the class, the teachers feel positive about the lesson. Principal Bill Rhoades is impressed with the students’ ability to apply science terms they’ve previously learned. Erin Voelker observed kids helping each other stay focused on the task and says the class has inspired her to find more activities where her students can use different roles. Robert Shearer says he learned that “getting through the activity isn’t as vital as getting to the ending: You need to reach closure where you go through your goals again.” Jody Wiencek tells Wood, “It’s evident you have high expectations of your students and are getting them to develop as a learning

SOURCES

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Spanish, English, and Russian can be heard on the playgrounds of Woodburn schools.

community.” Wood agrees that her students “know there’s accountability because I revisit their daily goal.”

Principal Rhoades, himself a graduate of Woodburn schools, places a high value on professional development activities like this one—even to the point of substituting in the classroom to free up teachers. “Our notion is that every day can be a professional development day with our teams and our ability to interact.” He adds, “It’s a good place to be when you see people disappointed if they don’t get to go to professional development. It means that they understand the benefits and it becomes more likely it gets implemented in the classroom.” Rhoades uses federal title dollars and NCLB school improvement money to bring in consultants and purchase services, but his goal is to continue developing his staff’s capacity to do these activities on their own.

Restructuring

At the district’s other middle school, French Prairie, intensive professional development carries much higher stakes. It’s seen as the “major key to our school transformation” and a way to focus monthly on power standards. French Prairie is in the uncomfortable position of undergoing restructuring as a result of NCLB sanctions.

Principal Eric Swenson, who joined the school as a change agent in 2005, says, “One of the first calls I received was from an *Associated Press* reporter who wanted to know my thoughts on being a new principal at one of the few middle schools in the nation in the fifth year of corrective action. ... I replied that I honestly wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.”

Swenson, together with his new assistant principal and school improvement coordinator, have thrown themselves into battle with a religious fervor. They hired 10 new teachers—including four new bilingual teachers—and rearranged students in heterogeneous “small communities of learning.” They’ve adopted a collaborative leadership approach, increased the focus on authentic assessment, and added more dual-language instruction and targeted English language development classes.

They also went after parents in what Swenson calls an “unrelenting” way, showing up at Wal-Mart and local apart-

ment complexes to spread the word that French Prairie welcomed family and community involvement. As a result, 1,000 people showed up for the school’s first open house this fall.

Assistant Principal Edward Tabet admits that turning the school around involves working 12-hour days and “trying to build the plane as you’re flying it.” But with the support and resources provided by Swenson, Blomberg, and Bautista, he believes they can do it. School Improvement Coordinator Paul LaBarre, a former Jesuit volunteer, agrees that a lot is riding on their efforts. “Middle school is where we have to fight the fight,” he says. “We can’t just send them off to high school unprepared.”

Finishing the Journey

Woodburn High, the district’s only high school, is waging its own fight to hold onto students and to make their last years in school more rigorous and relevant. With the help of an Oregon Small Schools grant, the high school is breaking into four academies next fall. At a series of assemblies, Woodburn teachers try to drum up enthusiasm for small schools that will focus on international studies, business, communications, and arts and science. Each of the academies will offer advisories and the opportunity to enroll in International Baccalaureate classes. Currently, about 20 percent of Woodburn’s students take at least one IB course, but the faculty hopes to see those numbers grow.

David Winterburn, the school’s bilingual coordinator, describes the student body as very heterogeneous—from recent immigrants to Spanish speakers born in Oregon. Students come from Mexico or Eastern Europe with grade-level academics or barely any formal schooling. “Our biggest challenge is trying to meet all their needs and making sure teachers have the proper training to work with students whose first language isn’t English,” says Winterburn, whose own language skills include Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and Cape Verdean and Guinea-Bissau Creole.

Tom Gazzola, the assistant vice principal for curriculum, sees the restructuring as a way to make huge changes that will benefit all students—no matter whether they’ve just arrived from Moldavia or are Woodburn born and bred. “Breaking into small schools shakes everybody up,” he says. “It makes them think about what’s possible. And while it’s possible to take an ocean liner of a school and make changes, it’s easier with a rowboat.”

In the front hallway of the high school—right under the banner that says welcome in Russian, Spanish, and English—senior Yesenia Chavez reflects on what it’s like to be a product of the Woodburn School District. “The best thing is you become more open to people because it’s so diverse,” she says. “You get to experience three cultures together.”

Superintendent Blomberg would be happy to hear that. It’s an affirmation of his vision of Woodburn students as the cultural brokers of tomorrow, believing in themselves and each other. ■

TO DREAM THE POSSIBLE DREAM

In a bilingual Russian classroom, literacy lessons reach out to the Woodburn community.

The question—What do you want to be when you grow up?—is a common one for young children. But, Heritage Elementary teacher Mavjuda Rabimova was troubled when her second-graders gave answers like “housekeeper” or “construction worker.” It wasn’t that these were poor choices, but simply that her native Russian students were limited by their lack of exposure to other options.

This realization launched Rabimova on a literacy project designed to broaden her students’ worldview. At Heritage, 16 percent of the 768 students are Russian, 36 percent are “English-only,” and 48 percent are Hispanic. The Russian speakers are taught in their native language and sheltered English in a “late-exit” model: As students progress through the grade levels, more of their day is devoted to English instruction. Rabimova’s second-graders receive 70 percent of their lessons in Russian and 30 percent in English.

To kick off the literacy project, Rabimova introduced her class to the concepts of biography and autobiography, examining what facts and experiences would be interesting to learn about a person if you were writing about his or her life. Armed with a list of questions, they went home to interview family members. This information later found its way into written family histories. Students practiced the art of autobiography when Rabimova asked them to recall and write about a “bright memory” of their own.

After helping the youngsters understand where they and their families had come from, Rabimova expanded the project to the outside community. She invited parents and other Russian-speaking community members into the classroom to share their interesting talents and

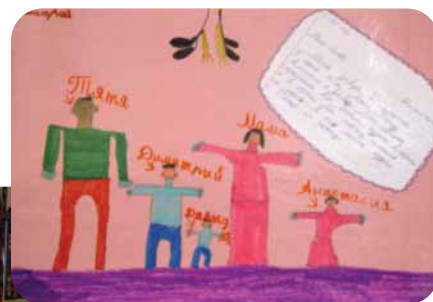
jobs. Students developed interview questions for their guests, concentrating on such topics as childhood, occupation, and hobbies. The first visitor was both a poet and a parent of one of the students. She gave a harrowing account of her emigration from Russia to the United States. Subsequent visitors included a policeman who had learned to speak Russian to better serve the community. The children were thrilled when he let them explore his squad car. An electrician talked about the benefits of his job and even popped off a light switch in the classroom for an impromptu lesson on electricity. A local artist not only talked about his life, but led a two-hour art lesson.

After each visit, students discussed the interview and their notes. They were surprised to learn that they each had recorded different things than their peers. Students turned the visits into written biographies, moving from rough drafts through peer and teacher reviews to a final composition.

At the end of the year, Rabimova

“And then finally we said, now we can dream about these and it’s possible. I want them to know from the beginning that it is possible in America. Everything is possible with education.”

This is an excerpt from a recent NWREL resource guide, Tapestry of Tales: Stories of Self, Family, and Community Provide Rich Fabric for Learning. The book provides examples of how teachers can use personal and community stories to motivate students to write and to reinforce reading, speaking, and listening skills. It can be purchased at www.nwrel.org/catalog/ and is available in PDF format at www.nwrel.org/tapestry/.



Meeting poets, plumbers, and policemen helps Russian students see the wide world of career possibilities.

helped students compile the essays and photos of their visitors into a book to be displayed in the classroom. The class also made a list of occupations to which they might aspire. “Oh my God, that was a big list!” exclaims Rabimova.



The Next Step:

ASSESSMENT

and the English Language Learner

ANCHORAGE, Alaska—Laurie Fredrick figures she'll spend 89 hours this spring judging how well her Filipino, Hmong, Samoan, and Hispanic students understand English. Fredrick—and teachers like her across the country—are fulfilling a new federal mandate, administering statewide assessments of English language learners' skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

An English as a Second Language resource teacher at four Anchorage elementary schools, Fredrick will individually test all 52 of her ELL kindergarten students on the four dimensions. She'll also give the speaking portion of the proficiency test to 250 first- through sixth-graders. One after another, the students will sit across from Fredrick for 15 or 20 minutes, examine pictures, and orally respond to questions and prompts. For some monolingual youngsters, it will be a grueling ordeal. Other, more fluent, students will breeze through the session, barely breaking a sweat.

"We get a wide range of students," notes Fredrick, who spends half her time at Lake Hood Elementary, a school that's just a stone's throw from the world's largest seaplane airport and where almost a third of the youngsters are non-native English speakers. "Many of our students don't read or write in their first language, but they speak it or at least hear it at home. A majority of them were born here or came young."

The new battery of assessments, which are steeped in academic rather than conversational English, will give Fredrick a clearer picture of students' proficiency—from beginning to high-beginning, low-intermediate, high-intermediate, and advanced levels. Because the tests are aligned to state standards, they'll also help teachers tailor classroom instruction to each child's needs.

Language Learners in the Spotlight

Like Alaska, most states are rolling out their language proficiency tests for the first time in spring 2006. As the centerpiece of Title III legislation, the new tests are the second major piece of the No Child Left Behind Act to directly affect English language learners. Together, Title I and Title III have brought unprecedented attention to Limited English Proficient (LEP) students as a distinct subgroup—attention that’s spawned the full range of emotions often associated with politically laden educational policy: from hopeful praise to bold criticism, cautious support, and widespread confusion.

According to Wendy St. Michell, the LEP program manager for the Idaho State Board of Education, “The number one issue we have with Title III—other than adequate funding—is to help district- and school-level staff members understand the compliance issues involved with the new legislation. Some have not understood the difference between the language proficiency test and the statewide content assessment, and that the language proficiency test is not an optional assessment. It has also been difficult to communicate that the new language proficiency test has its own set of sanctions, which include AYP.”

Although Title I requires testing all students on academic content, while Title III requires testing only the English proficiency of ELL students, the two pieces of legislation are inextricably twined and are based on the same major elements:

- **Specific grade-level standards and benchmarks.** For Title III, standards and benchmarks are for language proficiency rather than academic content.
- **A comprehensive assessment.** Title III legislation requires that ELL students be tested in five domain areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension. Comprehension can be determined with the same measurements used for listening and speaking, and is therefore not assessed as a separate domain on most state tests.
- **Measurable achievement goals that are used to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP).** In Title III these goals are called “annual measurable achievement objectives” (or AMAOs) and are separated into three major categories.
 1. The starting point and annual goals—set by the state—for the percentage of ELL students who will make progress on the yearly English language proficiency test

2. The percentage of students who will attain proficiency and exit out of the program each year
3. The percentage of students in the ELL subgroup who will meet state AYP goals on the statewide academic content test

- **A system of accountability.** If a district fails to meet any one of the above objectives, it is not considered to be making AYP and is subject to the same sanctions as in Title I. This is the most direct link between the Title I and Title III legislation.

The State of the States

The U.S. Department of Education issued the final guidelines for Title III in February 2003, and states have been scrambling to meet the new requirements ever since. Developing the new English proficiency assessments has proven to be the most difficult—and most costly—part of the process. By the end of 2004, 40 states had reportedly developed an assessment, but few had actually administered one. The federal government set a final deadline of spring 2006. According to the latest reports, only a few states—including Montana in the Northwest region—will miss this mark. (For more on Montana’s situation, see page 17.)

Several states used a separate federal grant program to form consortia—partnerships among states, higher education institutions, and educational companies—to collaborate on the development of a common test. One such group, the Mountain West Assessment Consortium (MWAC), originally included Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, several other western states, and Measured Progress, a non-profit company that specializes in educational assessment.

While MWAC made some progress toward the development of a single assessment, several states began to question its relevance to their specific standards and needs. Some states felt they could not wait for consortium decisions, and so split off to develop their own assessments. Eventually, the consortium dissolved.

A brief look at the assessment development process in the Northwest reveals the uneasy balance between federal requirements and the states’ preference for blazing their own trails.

“Funding is definitely one of the biggest issues for us. We’re trying to figure out how to use the available funds in the best way possible. As a small state, we have to be more creative than some in terms of how we come into compliance.”

—Wendy St. Michell,
LEP manager, Idaho

ALASKA

Alaska was one of the first states to split from MWAC and eventually contracted with Ballard & Tighe, a private company best known for its IDEA products, which include English language development programs and assessments. Like many companies, Ballard & Tighe responded to NCLB legislation by developing a package of assessment products that specifically addressed the new Title I and Title III guidelines. Alaska worked with the company to customize the IPT® 2005 (IDEA English Language Proficiency Test) to match the new Alaska state standards for English proficiency.

IDAHO

Idaho was also a member of the MWAC. When the consortium dissolved, Idaho held competitive bidding for an assessment vendor and eventually chose Touchstone Applied Science Associates (TASA), Inc. The company and the state worked together to modify the MWAC items and develop the Idaho English Language Assessment (IELA), which includes separate assessments for kindergarten and the 1–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12 grade spans.

As in many other states, Idaho school districts are now required to hire test administrators using their own Title III funds. While the state pays for the actual test materials, critics say that a big chunk of total Title III funds are consumed by the administration of a single test. According to Wendy St. Michell, “Funding is definitely one of the biggest issues for us. We’re trying to figure out how to use the available funds in the best way possible. As a small state, we have to be more creative than some in terms of how we come into compliance.”

MONTANA

Montana has a very small LEP population. Native Americans are the largest ethnic group in the state, representing 11.3 percent of the total student population and 84 percent of all Limited English Proficient students. Because Title III is a formula-driven program in which districts receive allocations based on the total number of LEP students they report, Montana receives only a small amount of Title III funds.

A member of MWAC, Montana found itself in a difficult situation as other states split away from the consortium. “The cost of contracting for a statewide test, compared to the amount of funding we qualified for, has made for a real challenge,” says Lynn Hinch, Montana’s Title III director. “We’re still working to form a partnership with another state and have also been engaged in issuing a request for proposals as required by our state administration. We’ve been in constant touch with the [U.S.] Department of Education about that, and they’ve been very supportive.” Montana expects to administer its first tests in the 2006–2007 school year.

OREGON

Oregon was also an original member of MWAC but chose to go in a different direction early on. “In a project like [MWAC], sometimes standards get watered down to meet everybody’s needs,” says Pat Burk, chief policy officer for the Oregon Department of Education. “We felt that the language of the assessment became pretty vague and general, and that ours needed to be more specific than what was emerging in the consortium.”

Another factor was that the state wanted to deliver the assessment online. “Putting it online actually controls costs,” says Burk, “but the real benefit is that it allows us to get results back to teachers instantly. We felt that was very important.”

The state eventually contracted with Eugene, Oregon-based Language Learning Solutions to develop the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA). The ELPA consists of individual tests for grade levels K–1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12, and is being given online.

WASHINGTON

Even before NCLB, Washington implemented a uniform statewide assessment for English language learners. Shortly after that, the state began developing English proficiency standards. Because the language proficiency test was selected before standards were established, the state conducted an alignment study.

Partly because of this head start, the state chose not to participate in MWAC or any other consortium. “In some ways we were ahead of the pack, but our development process may have been somewhat out of sequence,” admits Mike Middleton, an operations manager in the state assessment department. “We had a statewide assessment, but we had yet to fully articulate specific English language proficiency standards.”

Based on the results of the alignment study, the state decided to work toward a test more closely aligned with both state standards and Title III requirements.

They eventually chose Harcourt Assessment, Inc. “We agreed to build an augmented test, with Harcourt’s off-the-shelf product—the Stanford ELP—as the foundation,” says Middleton. “We needed to fill in gaps so that it better matched our state standards.” The augmenting process included material created and reviewed by statewide panels of ELL teachers, using the state’s English language development standards (ELDs).

The final product, WLPT-II, is “more closely aligned than either the earlier language proficiency test used by the state or Harcourt’s base product,” says Middleton. The new test is divided into four separate grade levels: K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12, and covers all five domains for measuring language proficiency.



“The best way to measure how well you’re doing with ELL students is to use a number of different criterion-referenced assessments in the actual classroom. They need to be closely tied to your instruction, and they need to be given frequently—bimonthly, monthly, or even weekly, depending on the type of assessment.” —Frank Hernandez, NWREL program adviser

The Challenges of the Law

Besides limited finances and tight deadlines, several details of Title III legislation have drawn criticism from educators and technical assistance providers. For instance, as required by the legislation, most states have built their English proficiency standards around their existing language arts standards. The intent is to ensure that language learners do not fall behind in content. The reality, say critics, is that learning a language and learning more complex, formal uses of that language are two very different things.

“States have complied with the letter of the law,” says Gary Hargett, an independent educational consultant who specializes in ELL issues, “but the concern is that it doesn’t necessarily help you define what real English language proficiency is. Language arts and English language proficiency are two separate constructs. To combine them in this explicit way is not going to help us understand how to help a student become proficient.”

The inclusion of K–1 students in the statewide assessment has also raised some concern. “The law says that all students must be assessed, including K–1,” says Hargett. “So, you have to ask: What does English reading and writing look like for the K–1 ELL student? Well, we’re not even sure what it looks like for the native English speaker at that age, especially in writing. I think it raises all kinds of theoretical questions that they didn’t mean to raise, and those are interesting questions, but the mandate is not for research—the mandate is to develop tests that can be used for accountability.”

According to many experts, the focus on a single kind of assessment and on limited measures for determining progress is a major issue. “They’ve tied language proficiency to content standards,” says Frank Hernandez, a program adviser for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, “but I don’t know if that is going to be sufficient or appropriate to assess instruction.”

The effective assessment of ELL students, say many experts, has little to do with a single, annual test. “You need to include a lot of other factors and measures besides one high-stakes test to tell whether you have an effective program or not,” says Hernandez. “The best way to measure how well you’re doing with ELL students is to use a number of different criterion-referenced assessments in the actual classroom. They need to be closely tied to your instruction, and they need to be given frequently—bimonthly, monthly, or even weekly, depending on the type of assessment.”

Finding the Positives

Even critics of NCLB agree that the new legislation has brought much-needed attention to the plight of ELL students. In the past, ELL students were seldom included in statewide testing, and ELL teachers had little clout, a tiny budget, and were often isolated in separate classrooms or even separate buildings. Mainstream teachers, meanwhile, received little professional development in effective instruction for ELLs and were given scant motivation to take the issue personally.

While some may find accountability measures to be a negative kind of motivation, the fact remains that ELL students can no longer be ignored. Educators around the country are already reporting some positive outcomes from this aspect of NCLB, including an increase in collaboration between mainstream teachers and ELL specialists; an increased awareness of the importance of language instruction across the curriculum; and a focus on professional development for mainstream teachers of ELL students.

For Hargett, the increase in high-quality professional development is the most important of these improvements. Although “sheltering” strategies and other language-centered approaches have been garnering support for several years, he says, the results have not always been successful.

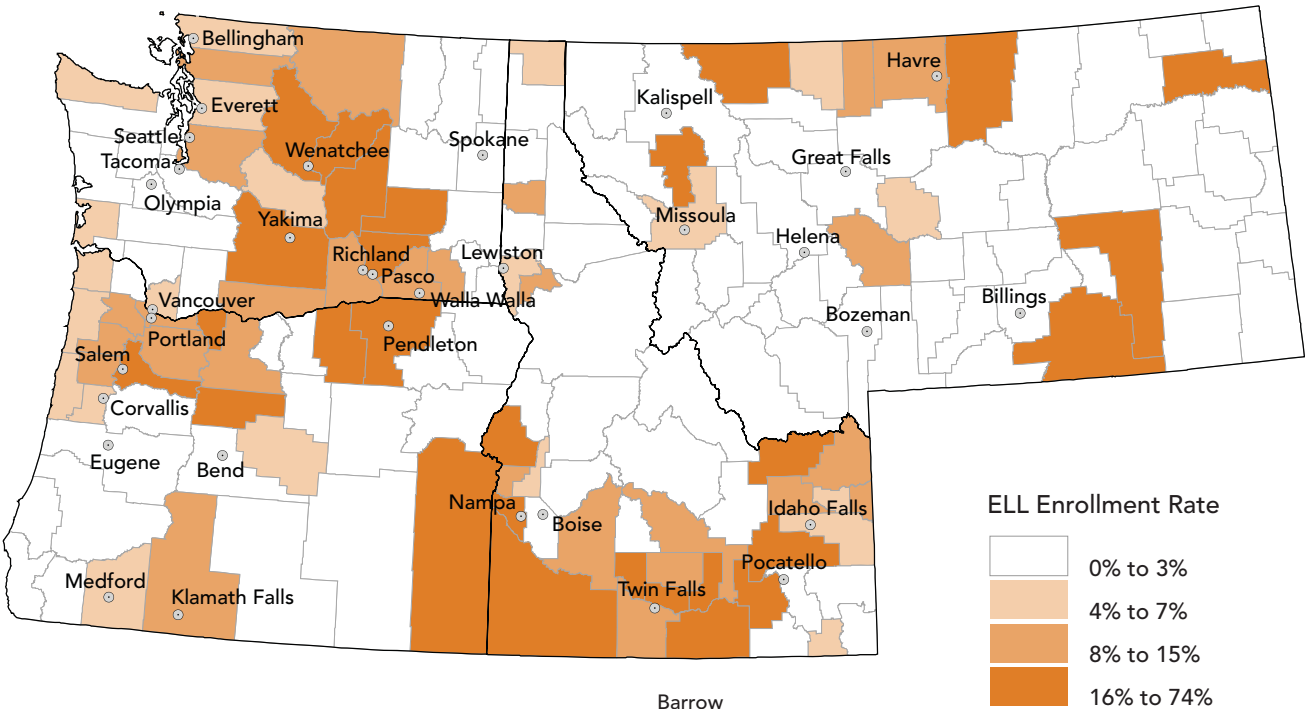
“Teachers need help in figuring out how to embed language objectives into their lesson plans,” says Hargett. “That’s well known. But it’s not enough to say you’re going to create a language-rich atmosphere in the classroom. I’ve been in a lot of classrooms where I was told, ‘This is a sheltered classroom,’ and I couldn’t see where the teacher had pulled out explicit attention to a form of the language.”

“The key to success isn’t the assessment you use,” Hargett continues. “The key is the actual services you’re providing. You have to take a close look at your program and say: ‘Are these programs really addressing the learner’s needs? Are they really developing English proficiency? Are they really making content accessible to ELL students during the time that they’re still gaining English proficiency?’ I think those programmatic questions have to be answered before you can have any meaningful discussion about the assessments. It’s really a mistake to think that the key is in the nature of the assessment as opposed to what’s being assessed.” ■

➤ The Role of Language

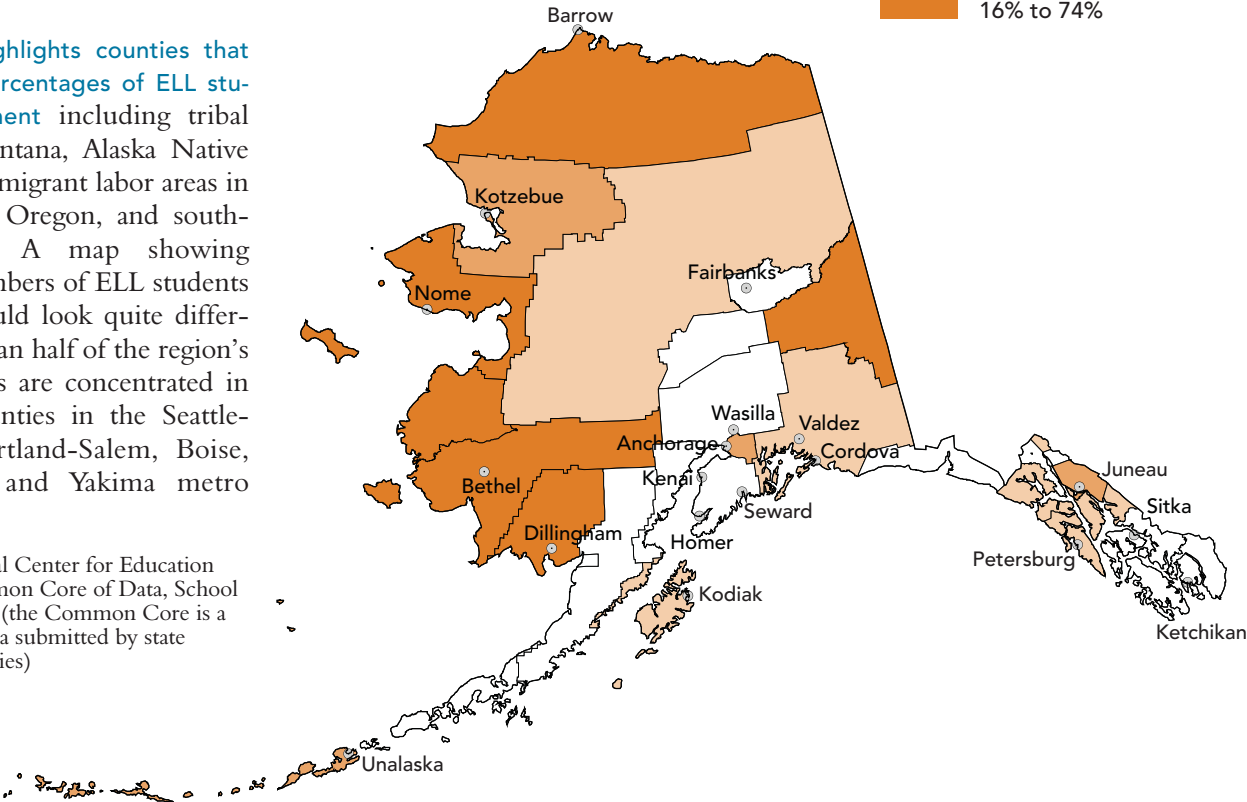
REGION AT A GLANCE

ELL Enrollment Rate by County (School Year 2002–2003) *By Richard Greenough*



This map highlights counties that have high percentages of ELL student enrollment including tribal areas in Montana, Alaska Native villages, and migrant labor areas in Washington, Oregon, and southern Idaho. A map showing absolute numbers of ELL students enrolled would look quite different: More than half of the region’s ELL students are concentrated in only 10 counties in the Seattle-Tacoma, Portland-Salem, Boise, Anchorage, and Yakima metro areas.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, School Year 2002–2003 (the Common Core is a collection of data submitted by state education agencies)



EVERYONE'S CHILD

IN LARGE DISTRICTS WITH DOZENS OF LANGUAGES, EVERY TEACHER NEEDS TO CONSIDER THE ELL STUDENT'S NEEDS.

By RHONDA BARTON

ANCHORAGE, Alaska—In a voice just above a whisper, the shy nine-year-old responds to some basic questions about herself during a state assessment. She can only answer a few questions, and is stumped when asked to identify common objects.

Her uncomfortable silences aren't totally unexpected. She is a recent Hmong refugee, and the English vocabulary required for this test may be as hard to grasp as some of the other realities of a new life in a gritty Anchorage neighborhood. Not only are the words and sounds different from her native tongue, but the scene outside is equally foreign: Fellow students at Mountain View Elementary are leaving tracks on the playground with plastic snowshoes and a hulking bull moose has made himself comfortable on the edge of the school's boundary.

FROM THAI TO TAGALOG

For Arlene Sandberg and other ESL resource teachers in Anchorage, such examples of cultural and linguistic disloca-

tion are commonplace. Approximately 15 percent of the district's students—some 6,613 youngsters—are English language learners. The district is home to a mind-boggling 95 different languages, and that number is likely to grow. Just this year the district had to create a code for Sudanese on its forms when two children arrived from the war-torn African nation. At Mountain View alone, a visitor can hear snatches of Samoan, Spanish, Russian, Thai, Lao, Hmong, Mien, Cambodian, German, Tagalog, Cup'ik, Yup'ik, and Inupiaq in the hallways and at recess.

Sandberg is one of 13 resource teachers who—together with bilingual paraprofessionals—serve ELL students in Anchorage's 58 elementary schools. Under Anchorage's formula, resource specialists are assigned half-time to schools with 100 or more limited English students; they divide the rest of their week among three other schools with smaller ELL populations. In the case of Sandberg, though, her influence ripples out to a much wider circle than her four schools.



The 26-year teaching veteran, recently named Alaska's 2006 Teacher of the Year, shares her expertise with others through state and district workshops, sheltered instruction trainings, university lectures on bilingualism, and state-level committee work. Above all, she serves as a tireless advocate for ELL students. "I'm willing to stir the pot," she admits. "I'm not worried about winning a popularity contest with teachers—I have to work with every single teacher in this school and everybody knows that I put students first."

Maxine Hill, the head of the district's bilingual education program, praises Sandberg as "an exceptional teacher who has continued to refine her skills through many staff development opportunities." Hill adds, "She has totally embraced the philosophy of SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) in her instructional techniques in order to benefit the students she encounters on a daily basis at Mountain View Elementary School."

Like her ESL colleagues, Sandberg spends the bulk of her time working with children who need the most intensive help learning English. But, she makes it her business to keep track of every one of the 130-plus ELL students at Mountain View.

10 THINGS MAINSTREAM TEACHERS CAN DO TODAY

The following tips were adapted from *Help! They Don't Speak English Starter Kit for Primary Teachers* and from *Integrating Language and Content Instruction: Strategies and Techniques*.

1. Enunciate clearly, but do not raise your voice. Add gestures, point directly to objects, or draw pictures when appropriate.
2. Write clearly, legibly, and in print—many ELL students have difficulty reading cursive.
3. Develop and maintain routines. Use clear and consistent signals for classroom instructions.
4. Repeat information and review frequently. If a student doesn't understand, try rephrasing or paraphrasing in shorter sentences and simpler syntax. Check often for understanding, but don't ask, "Do you understand?" Instead, have students demonstrate their learning in order to show comprehension.
5. Try to avoid idioms and slang words.
6. Present new information in the context of known information.
7. Announce the lesson's objectives and activities, and list instructions step by step.
8. Present information in a variety of ways.
9. Provide frequent summations of the salient points of a lesson, and always emphasize key vocabulary words.
10. Recognize student success overtly and frequently. But, also be aware that in some cultures, overt individual praise is considered inappropriate and can therefore be embarrassing or confusing to the student.

See sources on page 24.

"Even though I can't see them all, I truly know where they are [in their language development] and what they need," she says. Their language abilities cover the full range: "Even though some kids are born in the United States and others come to us right off the airplane from another country, many have no English because they've been speaking their first language up until the minute they get here and then they speak it when they get home at night," she observes.

SHARING DATA AND STRATEGIES

Because the need is so great and Sandberg is stretched so thin, she tries to help classroom teachers fine-tune their skills in working with English language learners. Today, Sandberg and Trish Jackson, Mountain View's reading coach, are planning a professional development session where they'll present data on K–3 reading scores. They've highlighted the results for ELL students and are tracking their long-term progress.

Jackson and Sandberg—who together with the school psychologist make up Mountain View's core leadership team—have worked with other teachers at their school to develop interventions for struggling readers. The strategies appear to be helping: Mountain View made adequate yearly progress for the first time last year.

The advent of No Child Left Behind and the consequences tied to AYP have had a dramatic impact on the ELL landscape, Sandberg believes. "Now we have to look at data—and look at it in a different way—and change what's not working. Before, a lot of classroom teachers never saw their role as a stakeholder in a bilingual child's achievement. You can't do that anymore This child belongs to all of us."

"I feel that since most of our parents can't speak on behalf of their children, I have to advocate for them. We always have to look at the child and make sure we're doing what we need to do to make a difference for that child."

—Arlene Sandberg, 2006 Alaska Teacher of the Year

Free summer school helps Federal Way students improve their reading and meet grade-level expectations.





Photo: Jim Lavrakas

STRUCTURED IMMERSION

The idea that everyone is responsible for the progress of ELL students is fully embraced by the Federal Way School District in Washington. Located between Seattle and Tacoma, Federal Way is the state's seventh largest school district with almost 22,400 students. Slightly more than 10 percent of those students are English language learners from homes with 78 different dialects. While the greatest number of students speak Spanish, Korean, Russian, or Ukrainian, teachers might

encounter children whose first language is Swahili, Ilokano, Amharic, Arabic, or Urdu.

Like Anchorage, Federal Way assigns ESL specialists and bilingual paraeducators to schools based on the number of limited English students enrolled. A full-time specialist with a state endorsement provides support at schools with 100 or more ELL students, while a school with 50 ELL students merits a half-time position. However, the district has adopted a research-based structured immersion program that relies on classroom teachers in neighborhood schools. The model

involves teaching grade-level subject matter in English in ways that are comprehensible and engage students academically, while promoting English language development.

Sheltered instruction is also part of the model for secondary students. Students take leveled language arts and social studies, while assigned to mainstream science and math classes.

"People are a little afraid of the words 'structured immersion,'" notes Jean Vaughan, Federal Way's director of ELL programs, "but our program is scaffolded. We constantly have teachers look at the state's English language development standards, which drives the instruction."

While newcomers at the elementary school level go directly to the mainstream classroom, they receive ELL English instruction every day for up to 40 minutes during a 90-minute block in guided reading groups that are based on the student's language proficiency. Limited proficiency students also may get individualized tutoring in math.

At the secondary level, students are taught in sheltered English classes. Bilingual tutors are assigned to science and math mainstream teachers who also receive training in Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) through Action Learning in California. (See page 11.) Teachers new to SDAIE (which is similar to the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol commonly used in Washington) receive mentoring and follow-up trainings, along with help from instructional design specialists.

A SAMPLING OF TEACHING STRATEGIES

The mainstream teacher who is searching for research-backed strategies to improve ELL students' achievement will find little in the way of definitive scientific studies. However, there are less rigorous, evidence-based studies that suggest beneficial approaches. A By Request publication from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (www.nwrel.org/request/2003may/ell.pdf) summarizes some of these strategies and notes that they are rarely used in isolation:

- **Total Physical Response (TPR)**—Developed by James J. Asher in the 1960s, TPR is a language-learning tool based on the relationship between language and its physical representation or execution. TPR emphasizes the use of physical activity to increase meaningful learning opportunities and language retention.
- **Cooperative Learning**—Robert E. Slavin has shown that cooperative learning can be effective for students at all academic levels and learning styles. It involves student participation in small-group learning activities that promote positive interactions.
- **Language Experience Approach** (also known as Dictated Stories)—This approach uses students' words to create a text that becomes material for a reading lesson. Students describe orally a personal experience to a teacher or peer who writes down the story, using the students' words verbatim. The teacher/peer then reads the story back as it was written, while the student follows along. Then the student

reads the story aloud or silently. This approach helps students learn how language is encoded as they watch it written down.

- **Dialogue Journals** (also known as Interactive Journals)—In this approach, students write in a journal and the teacher writes back regularly, responding to questions, asking questions, making comments, or introducing new topics. The teacher does not evaluate what is written, but models correct language and provides a nonthreatening opportunity for ELL students to communicate in writing with someone proficient in English.
- **Academic Language Scaffolding**—The term "scaffolding" is used to describe the step-by-step process of building students' ability to complete tasks on their own. It consists of several linked strategies, including modeling academic language; contextualizing academic language using visuals, gestures, and demonstrations; and using hands-on learning activities that involve academic language.
- **Native Language Support**—According to Thomas and Collier (2002), ELL students should be provided with academic support in their native language whenever possible. Even in English-only classrooms, and even when an instructor is not fluent in a student's language, this can still be done in a number of ways. Teachers can use texts that are bilingual or involve a student's native culture, organize entire lessons around cultural content, and encourage students to use their own language when they cannot find the appropriate word in English.

- **Accessing Prior Knowledge**—All students, regardless of their proficiency in English, come to school with a valuable background of experience and knowledge. When teaching a new concept, the teacher can ask students what they already know about a subject. Creating a visual, such as “semantic webs,” with the topic in the center and students’ knowledge surrounding it, is a good way to engage students in the topic and to find out what they already know.
- **Culture Studies**—The importance of including a student’s home culture in the classroom is a well-documented, fundamental concept in the instruction of English language learners. Culture study, in this context, is a project in which students do research and share information about their own cultural history. Such studies can be appropriate at any grade level and incorporate many skills, including reading, writing, speaking, giving presentations, and creating visuals. (For more on culturally responsive, standards-based teaching, see page 47.)
- **Realia Strategies**—“Realia” is a term for any real, concrete object used in the classroom to create connections with vocabulary words, stimulate conversation, and build background knowledge. Realia gives students the opportunity to use all of their senses to learn about a given subject, and is appropriate for any grade or skill level.

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Vaughan credits this capacity building as the reason why Federal Way’s ELL students outperform their peers on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). In reading, 65 percent of the district’s ELL fourth-graders met standards last year (compared to 46 percent for the state at large) and Federal Way’s math scores bested the state average by 18 points. Scores for reading and math for seventh- and 10th-graders were also substantially higher than the statewide showings.

PROVIDING FOR ALL

“All means all, according to our superintendent, and we really believe that and have moved it forward,” says Vaughan. The district’s definition of “all” even goes beyond the norm: When they saw a need to bolster Hispanic students’ WASL scores, Federal Way leaders used Title III funds to create a Latino Night School for the whole family.

Partnering with Highline Community College and a local multiservice center, the district’s night school offers a GED program, high school credit recovery, middle school classes, and adult education courses in conversational English and skill building. For the 3–10-year-old set, there are activities and homework help provided by the district’s AmeriCorps workers. The school,

which operates two nights a week, also serves mothers and children from birth to toddlers. As a result of the program, WASL scores among Federal Way’s Hispanic students rose last year and the school will see its first group of adults receiving GEDs this year.

Vaughan thinks that any school might benefit from a structured immersion approach, though she admits it may be a hard sell in some communities. “There seems to be a fear that schools won’t be able to market it to their mainstream teachers, to have special learners or ELL students in each classroom for the majority of the day and have them be successful,” she says. Changing minds, though, may lie in how the system is funded. Federal Way doesn’t take basic education dollars out of mainstream classes and use them for bilingual education; consequently, mainstream teachers don’t have the expectation that ELL is responsible for the achievement of all bilingual students.

Besides yielding strong test scores, there may be another, more powerful argument for mainstreaming English language learners with scaffolded instruction. “It’s a wonderful enrichment to be able to interact and work with so many cultures and languages,” Vaughan states firmly. “It’s a true multicultural learning environment.” ■

A Russian ELL student in Federal Way works with a classmate on a physics experiment.



A Hispanic Perspective: Oregon School Superintendent Susan Castillo

Susan Castillo has racked up an impressive list of “firsts”: first Hispanic woman to serve in the Oregon State Senate; first Latina elected to statewide office in Oregon; and Oregon’s first Hispanic state school superintendent. The former television journalist has overseen the state’s half-million students and 1,200 public schools since January 2003 and recently announced her candidacy for a second four-year term.

During her tenure, Castillo’s main push has been to shrink the achievement gap, and there’s evidence that the state is inching closer to that goal. According to an analysis of 2005 state test scores by the *Oregonian* newspaper, “passing rates among white students went up in every grade in reading and math. But the scores of Latino, Native American, and low-income students shot up dramatically at most grade levels, putting those students closer to matching the attainment of white and middle-income students.”

In an interview with *Northwest Education*, Castillo reflected on her crusade to close the gap and her role as the Northwest’s only Hispanic school superintendent.



Q: How has your own family experience and Latino heritage colored your views on education?

I grew up in a household where my mother dropped out in the eighth grade and was very challenged throughout her life on the kind of work that was available to her. Growing up and seeing your parent experience that, you really do make that connection between education and opportunity.

For me, closing the gap is also really important because we know we need to have all kids be successful for economic reasons. We can’t afford to lose anyone in our schools today and it’s even more critical because of the changes in our world, the skill levels needed, and the urgency to compete in this global economy.

This year, Oregon experienced its greatest enrollment increase in nearly a decade—largely due to a 10 percent jump in Latino youngsters, who now make up 15 percent of the total student population. What do you feel is important in serving this growing demographic?

I really see how important it is to make progress in the area of parental involvement. I can remember that my mother was not exactly comfortable in the school environment because of her own experience with school. But, it’s so powerful for parents to be involved and know [their children’s] teacher and what they’re doing in school. We need to help our schools be successful in reaching out and help them connect with best practices around the state.

Also, for children who don’t have English as a first language, we’ve been focusing on early learning—getting them into preschool and full-day

kindergarten. When we called that out as an issue and started providing more leadership at a state level, we helped districts connect with other districts that are retargeting their federal dollars to create more opportunities for extended day or full-day kindergarten. As a result, we have many more children in full-day kindergarten today and we want to continue to build on that.

We certainly want to continue our efforts to get all children who qualify for Head Start into Head Start. We’re not covering those children and they are the poorest of the poor kids in Oregon. We need to make that a priority: It will make an enormous difference in what happens with the success of those children and all of us will benefit.

What do you see in the future for ELL education, especially as the rhetoric grows louder around “English-only” programs?

I think there are important lessons to be learned from the whole English-only wave out there. That’s my prediction for those states: We may see them rethink what they’re doing. I think here in Oregon, we’re about trying to find solutions to help all kids be successful, to honor all children, to honor what languages they speak, and to help them be proficient in English because we know that’s very important to be successful and get into higher levels of education.

I think what’s exciting in Oregon is that we are open to experimenting and trying to understand what does work for children to help them be successful. Maybe there isn’t a silver bullet, and we need to be open to watching for results. What are the results we want? Where we’re getting those results, let’s learn from that and build on it. ■

FORGING FAMILY TIES

*Increasing parent involvement means
overcoming barriers that are both
real and perceived.*

By RHONDA BARTON



HILLSBORO, Oregon—Gilt-framed portraits of seven children smile down from the wall above the velvet love seat in Maria Esther Palomares's modest but spotless living room. They're the reason that Palomares and her husband Marcelino Alejandro left their native Guadalajara to plant roots in a suburb west of Portland. "We came to find a better life," says Palomares in rapid-fire Spanish. "It is difficult to study in Mexico. Here, the government helps out more."

Palomares is determined that her children—and others like them—will flourish in the Hillsboro School District. Even though she speaks little English, Palomares is as involved in the education system as any stereotypical soccer mom. Dashing from one classroom or meeting to the next, she reads Spanish stories to children in the elementary school, volunteers at PTA gatherings, chaperones field trips, and serves on both the district's parent advisory and strategic planning committees. Despite putting in 10-hour days as an agricultural worker, Marcelino also volunteers his evenings.

Their hard work hasn't gone unrewarded. Palomares reports that all of her children are getting good grades and doing well in school. Her oldest daughter, Erica, garnered five scholarships and enrolled in Portland Community College—the first family member to attend college. Seventeen-year-old Yesenia, a high school junior, plans to go to nursing school and even five-year-old Esmeralda, the youngest in the family, confidently says she wants to be a doctor when she grows up.

What NCLB Says

It's not surprising that Maria and Marcelino's children are on track to fulfilling their parents' dreams for them. Thirty years of research confirms that when parents are involved, students do better in school. In a comprehensive review of 51 high-quality studies, Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp found that—regardless of family income and background—students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades, enroll in higher level programs, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behavior, graduate, and go on to postsecondary education.

The No Child Left Behind Act—particularly in Titles I and III—has expanded schools' obligations to inform parents and reach out to families who've traditionally been underrepresented in school activities and decisionmaking. For example, schools that receive Title III funding must establish effective ways to inform parents of Limited English Proficient students how they can be involved in their children's education and actively help their children learn English and meet high academic standards. Under NCLB, all parents have the right to be informed of the content and quality of their children's education; the right and responsibility to participate in decisions and learning at the school; and the right to make educational choices in the best interests of their children.

Yet, despite those mandates and the research findings, many schools still struggle to actively engage high numbers of parents and other family members. And, that fact is even truer when it comes to families who speak limited English.



Photo: Rhonda Barton

Maria Esther Palomares (left) sits on the Hillsboro School District's parent advisory and strategic planning committees, ensuring that Spanish-speaking parents' voices are heard. Palomares's seven children, including 17-year-old Yesenia, are enrolled in the district.

A "Running Start"

A statewide survey by Oregon's Chalkboard Project found that many traditionally underrepresented families tend to spend more nights assisting their child with homework than their higher income Anglo counterparts. At the same time, they are less likely to volunteer at their child's school because of barriers that are both perceived and

real. Those barriers can range from language to culture to economics.

"Involvement creates a bridge between the school and the home, allows parents to spot problems or opportunities early, and improves communication between the important adults in a child's life. But, minority and low-income families are telling us they often don't feel welcome in school hallways and classrooms," says Chalkboard President Sue Hildick.

Chalkboard, which is funded by five local foundations, has responded with a two-tiered effort called "Running Start." The first part is a staff training kit with tools and resources to conduct all-day workshops or shorter one-hour seminars with teachers, administrators, staff, and parent leaders. According to Chalkboard, "the aim is to arm every adult in the school—from teachers and playground monitors to school crossing guards and custodial staff—with a deeper understanding of the barriers to parent engagement and how to overcome them."

PARENTS' TOP 10

Through surveys and ongoing communication with the Hillsboro School District, Hispanic parents have identified their top priorities:

- Parent education classes in English
- Supportive school environments
- Better communication between educators and parents
- Community services and how to access the support
- More about NCLB
- Understanding the U.S. education system
- How to advocate for their children
- Understanding special education
- Drug and alcohol prevention and services
- Gang prevention and support services

The second part of the project is aimed at parents. It offers sample Oregon test questions and information on topics such as how to read report cards and how education works in the United States. "These seem basic," admits Project Director Stefani Willis, "but for newly arrived parents, it's difficult to navigate the system." The materials, translated into Spanish, and the training toolkit are available on Chalkboard's Web site (www.chalkboardproject.org). While much of the information is available in bits and pieces in other places, Chalkboard leaders believe organizing it on one site will make it easier to access.

Chalkboard is also partnering with the Oregon Department of Education to launch a policy template that ensures all schools reach out to parents in a unified, thoughtful way. The two groups hope the template will be approved by the Board of Education in time for statewide implementation in the 2006–2007 school year.

A Welcoming District

Schools in and out of the state only have to look as far as Hillsboro to find a model for successful family engagement. Saideh Haghighi, a Teacher on Special Assignment, puts in 12 hours a day to make sure that parents like Maria Palomares feel welcome throughout the district.

Haghighi, whose heritage is a mix of Puerto Rican and Iranian, was working in an after-school tutoring program when she realized that parents of her ELL students rarely showed up for conferences. "I started visiting them at home and decided to hold meetings at the community centers in apartment complexes, instead of at school," she recalls. She was joined by a couple of other teachers and, as word spread of their outreach efforts, the National Education Association offered them a two-year, \$18,000 grant to create

a parent involvement program.

Today, Haghighi provides support to all 32 schools in the district, which has a Hispanic enrollment of almost 28 percent. A typical day starts with a school visit at 7:30 a.m. and stretches long into the night with parent meetings. In between, she translates at conferences and fields an endless stream of requests from parents and school officials. "My focus is on the

Hispanic community," she says, "but I'll never say no to helping in ESL efforts with other minority groups."

Next year, she'll have two additional community outreach workers to help target the district's seven elementary schools with a 50 percent or greater Hispanic population. Funding for the positions—"always an issue," concedes Haghighi—will come from a variety of sources, including title grants. But, the increasing need for such outreach is clear given Hillsboro's demographics: The number of Hispanic students in the district grew almost 154 percent from 1994 to 2004, compared to a .07 percent increase in the white student population.

Saideh Haghighi—whose first name means "good luck" in Farsi—believes Hillsboro is unique in its commitment to including Hispanic parents at all levels of decisionmaking. Five such parents serve on the district's strategic planning committee, including three who don't speak English. Hispanic parents also have a say in choosing new

Saideh Haghighi advises schools to show families that you care, take their concerns seriously, and treat parents as individuals.



RESOURCES

Building Trust With Schools and Diverse Families

www.nwrel.org/request/2003dec/

This By Request booklet, published by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, examines research on family involvement and provides a regional sampler of effective practices.

Chalkboard Project

www.chalkboardproject.org

This foundation-funded educational advocacy organization offers a parent involvement toolkit for school staff members and informational materials in Spanish for parents.

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

www.edpartnerships.org

This Web site has a wide range of parent and family engagement resources, including a link to Henderson and Mapp's 2002 study, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*.

curriculum for board approval. And, they turn out by the hundreds for monthly meetings on topics they've chosen themselves.

One of the most successful functions was a Saturday college fair, held at one of the district's high schools. Haghighi invited representatives from a half-dozen local colleges and universities, who were ready and able to admit students on the spot. "We had a table with information on 19 scholarships and volunteers to help parents fill out their FAFSA (financial aid) forms. Thirty-four students showed up and all were accepted or took home offers to review with their families!"

When it comes time for Yesenia Palomares-Alejandro to head for college, she'll know that her parents played a huge role in paving the way. "They've always told me you don't have to work, just concentrate on your studies," she says. "It makes me proud that they've been so involved and supported us." ■

Speaking the Same **LANGUAGE**

A high-poverty school in North Central Washington
uses progressive hiring practices and a dual-language approach
to close the achievement gap.

Story and photos by
BRACKEN REED

WENATCHEE, Washington—When Principal Connie Strawn arrived at Lewis & Clark Elementary in 1992 she could barely speak a word of Spanish. “I couldn’t even pronounce Spanish names correctly,” she recalls. At the time, nearly 20 percent of the students at the school were native Spanish speakers, many of whom had recently arrived from Mexico.

A small agricultural city on the eastern slope of the Cascade Mountains in North Central Washington, Wenatchee was in the middle of a seismic demographic shift. New technologies, changing immigration policies, and other global market forces were combining to alter the normal migration of agricultural workers. With the work year expanding, more migrant laborers were staying on after the fruit harvest and choosing to make a permanent home in the Wenatchee Valley. The percentage of English language learner students—nearly all native Spanish speakers—began to rise astronomically throughout the district. Experts predicted that the Latino population in the area would double within the next decade.

Strawn’s first reaction to these demographics was an acute awareness of her own limitations. Her lack of Spanish and her rudimentary understanding of Latino culture were barriers to the kind of environment she wanted to create at the school. She could also see that the staff at the school shared her limitations. “My first year here we had two teachers who spoke some Spanish,” says Strawn, “but no native speakers at all.” For a school already nearly a quarter Hispanic, this seemed unacceptable. Strawn’s guiding questions were:

“What’s best for the kids? What do the kids need?” Her answers led her to two decisions that would help shape the future of the school. First, she would embrace the diversity in a purely personal way, by learning as much Spanish and as much about Latino culture as she could fit into her busy schedule. Second, she would actively seek out bilingual, native Spanish-speaking teachers and staff members at every opportunity.

JOURNEY TO THE CLASSROOM

In 1992, one of those future teachers was still toiling in the orchards and fields of Central Washington, struggling to learn English, and dreaming of a return to teaching. Alfonso Lopez was born in a small village in Oaxaca, Mexico. By the time he arrived in Wenatchee in his mid-20s, he had already struggled through more adversity than many people face in a lifetime. The son of poor farmers, he managed to attend college and earn his teaching degree and later a master’s degree in social science. Lopez taught for five years in rural schools in Oaxaca. Often, he served as principal as well as teacher and was also called on to teach an English language class. “I didn’t speak any English,” he admits. “I was just trying to do whatever the book said.”

Like Strawn, Lopez’s sense of his own limitations as an educator served as motivation. A visit from his brother, who had been living in the Wenatchee Valley area for several years, convinced Lopez that he should go to the United States. At first, he says, his goal was to learn English so that he could return to Mexico and teach English language classes more





Bilingual kindergarten teacher Rosemary Tiffany, the child of migrant workers, draws on personal experience to inspire both students and fellow teachers.

effectively. But once here, he fell on hard times. Lacking financial support, he was unable to take language classes. Very quickly, he ended up alongside his brother in the orchards.

For nearly 10 years Lopez worked in the orchards and on a cattle ranch near Ellensburg. In that time, his intelligence, warm personality, and personal ambition took him from fruit picker to the position of ranch foreman. He was making good money and his English was slowly improving. Just as his boss offered to send him to college for agricultural management, he saw an advertisement in the local Spanish language newspaper *El Mundo*. A program called the Priority Hispanic Certification Program was recruiting native Spanish speakers with professional degrees in their home country, who were interested in becoming certified teachers. Lopez was one of nearly 60 people who responded to the ad, and was eventually chosen to be one of 16 participants. A collaboration between the North Central Education Service District, the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Heritage College, the program was designed to meet the state's dire need for Spanish-speaking teachers. For Lopez, it was an opportunity to pursue his long-delayed dream: a return to teaching and a chance to improve his English. He gave up his well-paying job and moved back to the Wenatchee area where, as part of the program, he worked as a paraprofessional—first at Lincoln Elementary and then at Lewis & Clark Elementary.

When Lopez arrived at Lewis & Clark, Connie Strawn's instincts were already proving prophetic. The Hispanic and LEP population at the school had continued to soar. The mobility rate hovered at 40 percent.

From farm worker to ranch foreman to teacher and soon-to-be administrator, Alfonso Lopez's intelligence, ambition, and personal warmth have helped him rise to the top.



More than 80 percent of the students qualified for Title I free and reduced-price lunch. Spanish-speaking teachers were in demand throughout the state, and Strawn was a step ahead. The hiring of Alfonso Lopez would be another giant step forward.

BUILDING THE BILINGUAL “FAMILY”

The vision that Strawn formed soon after coming to Lewis & Clark centered on the development of a schoolwide, bilingual environment that embraced diversity and held all students to high expectations. It's a vision often articulated but seldom pursued with the kind of fierce commitment Strawn has shown. Against significant opposition she stuck to her initial determination to hire bilingual, native Spanish-speaking teachers. Lopez was not the first such staff member Strawn hired, but as she says, “Alfonso was definitely key.”

While Lopez was still a paraprofessional and finishing his degree program, an ESL position came open at the school. Strawn pushed the district to give him an emergency teacher certificate and hired him full-time as soon as it went through. Lopez, who now works as the school's Title I reading specialist, began opening doors immediately. Rosemary Tiffany—the daughter of Mexican migrant workers, a native Spanish speaker, and a colleague of Lopez's at Lincoln—came on board as a bilingual kindergarten teacher (See “Voices,” page 39). Other bilingual teachers soon followed. The school quickly gained a reputation in the city for its bilingual, family-friendly environment, helped along by Lopez's tireless promotion. “I wrote articles for newspapers,” he says. “I went on television and radio, went to soccer games, whatever I could do to get the word out.” The word was that Principal Strawn had a vision and that her vision made Lewis & Clark Elementary the best school in the district to send your Spanish-speaking child and the most supportive environment a bilingual teacher could wish for.

THE LANGUAGE OF SUCCESS

The story of Lewis & Clark's success is a decadelong process of hard work, strong leadership, and an unwavering commitment to high standards for all students. Throughout that decade Strawn has not only hired bilingual teachers, but also a bilingual secretary, a bilingual home visitor, and a bilingual counselor. These hiring practices have had a far-reaching influence that's changed the entire school culture. As Megan Castillo, a language enrichment specialist at the school, says, “Our staff ethnicity really beautifully matches our student ethnicity now, and that has not only changed students' expectations



“This has been my dream. To help Spanish-speaking students retain their native language while learning English, and to give English speakers the gift of bilingualism. We have the same expectations for all students, no matter what their native language, their ethnicity, or their economic background.” —Principal Connie Strawn

and visions of what they can achieve, but also teachers’ expectations. They say to themselves: ‘Look at what Mr. Lopez achieved, look at what Mrs. Tiffany has achieved. I need to have higher expectations for my students, too.’ It’s been beneficial for students and parents, but also for the teachers in the building.”

During the past decade Strawn has also developed her vision of a school that is truly bilingual and resolute in its belief that teaching students to read in their native language is the right thing to do. The school initially implemented an early-exit bilingual program and then moved to a dual-language immersion program in 2004–2005. The program—based on the dual-language model developed by Leo Gomez and Richard Gomez, Jr.—currently encompasses K–2, but will expand to the third grade in 2006–2007, the fourth grade the year after, and finally cover the entire K–5 student body in 2008–2009. As part of the model, all students take math in English; science and social studies in Spanish; and language arts in their native language. Beginning in the second grade, a second unit of language arts is added so that all students have both Spanish and English language instruction.

Strawn, who has greatly improved her own Spanish-speaking skills over the years, sees a dual-language immer-

sion program as the ultimate expression of the school’s commitment to diversity. “This has been my dream,” she says. “To help Spanish-speaking students retain their native language while learning English, and to give English speakers the gift of bilingualism. We have the same expectations for all students, no matter what their native language, their ethnicity, or their economic background.”

Those high expectations are beginning to pay off. For the past two years, the school’s reading and math scores have exceeded state and district results. In the 2004–2005 school year, 86 percent of Lewis & Clark’s fourth-graders met or exceeded the standard on the reading portion of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and 66 percent met or exceeded the standard in math. In addition, the achievement gap between white and Hispanic students has virtually disappeared. The school was named a 2005–2006 National Title I Distinguished School and was awarded a Title I Academic Achievement Award for sustained improvement on reading scores. In 2005, Strawn was chosen by her peers as the North Central Washington Elementary School Principal of the Year and Rosemary Tiffany was named the ESD’s Regional Teacher of the Year.

For his efforts, Lopez received a Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award in 1998, as well as the 1998 Washington Award for Excellence in Teaching. He will earn his administrator’s license in the spring of 2006 and take a step he could hardly imagine in his days in the orchard: When school begins in September, Lopez will take over as principal from the retiring Connie Strawn. Like Strawn, Lopez will undoubtedly bring a strong, clearly defined vision to that position: One that embraces cultural diversity and the belief that all students, given an equal opportunity, can succeed. ■

Lewis & Clark Elementary’s dual-language bilingual program currently encompasses K–2, but will be schoolwide within the next three years.



 Building a Bilingual Staff



Heriberto Torres, a former migrant worker, now teaches full-time at Yakima's Davis High School and directs its plaza comunitaria.

Portal to Opportunity

AN ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAM BASED IN MEXICO
ALLOWS LATINO STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES
TO MAKE STRONGER ACADEMIC GAINS—
USING MATERIALS IN THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE
WHILE THEY CONTINUE TOWARD FLUENCY IN ENGLISH.

Story by BRACKEN REED

Photos by SARA GETTYS

YAKIMA, Washington—At 2:40 on a drizzly spring afternoon, students burst through the weathered metal doors of A.C. Davis High School. A young couple walks toward the parking lot, their arms draped around each other, creating their own island as other students dart around them. Some students head for soccer or softball or track practice or to club meetings; others to after-school jobs or the comforts of home. But for another group, the academic day is not over. These students amble in to a small, portable classroom just outside the main building with their backpacks and book bags and head for one of the computers that circle the small, crowded room.

Heriberto Torres, the coordinator of the program—a short, compact Latino with a broad chest and a tidy mustache—greet each student in energetic, rapid-fire Spanish. After a long day in English language classrooms, many of the 30-plus students seem to visibly relax as they enter the room and fall into the easy rhythms of their native language. Mariachi instruments fill the back of the classroom and brightly-colored, Spanish language posters cover the walls. While most of these students might prefer to be at sports practice or wandering toward the parking lot with an arm around their sweetheart, there is a sense that the hardest part of the day is behind them. Here, there is a feeling of shared culture based on both a common language and each individual's desire to improve his or her life. The classroom is filled to capacity. For the next two hours and 15 minutes, all lessons are in Spanish.

Portals, Portables, and the Plazas Comunitarias

The portable classroom at Davis is one of several places around the city that house plazas comunitarias, or community plazas. Each offers a facility, computers, an on-site coordinator, and a wealth of educational and cultural resources and services.

Here, both students and parents can access a cornucopia of Spanish language content courses via the CONEVyT (pronounced “Cone-aye-Veet”) Portal. CONEVyT—the Spanish acronym for Mexico’s Consejo Nacional de Educación para la Vida y el Trabajo (the National Council for Education for Life and Work)—is part of a national system that offers lifelong education and training opportunities for Hispanic teenagers and adults. The Mexican government created the program more than 25 years ago to meet the needs of the estimated 35 million adults in that country who had not completed school beyond the sixth grade. From the beginning, the program also focused on serving Hispanic immigrants in the United States.

Several Mexican government agencies, including the Secretaría de Educación Pública, the Instituto Nacional de Educación para los Adultos (INEA), and the Colegio de Bachilleres, collaborated to develop the programs and services offered under the CONEVyT umbrella. In purely academic terms, this collaboration resulted in high-quality, Spanish language curricula for more than 150 different courses, ranging from remedial Spanish literacy and math to calculus, physics, and other college-level courses. Initially offered as traditional pencil-and-paper coursework, during the past five years the program has developed into a Web-based “portal,” which has helped spread its popularity throughout the United States. Currently, public and/or private institutions, schools, or districts in 30 different states use the CONEVyT Portal to help English language learners improve their academic achievement. More than 130 plaza comunitaria sites exist in the U.S., while more than 2,000 are scattered throughout Mexico.

Only a few states, however, have truly tapped into the full potential of the CONEVyT program by hosting their own portals, rather than simply accessing the main Mexican educational site. These include California, Texas, Oregon, Nevada, New Mexico, Georgia, North Carolina, and most recently, Wisconsin and Washington.

In May 2005, these last two states held a joint videoconference with Mexican government officials to announce the unveiling of CONEVyT Portal/Plaza Comunitaria projects in their respective states. Mexican President Vicente Fox, Washington state Governor Chris Gregoire, and other high-ranking officials hailed the multinational collaboration and its potential to improve the academic achievement of Spanish-speaking students in the United States.

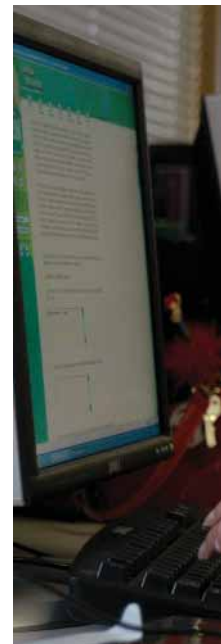
Making It Your Own

The CONEVyT Portal in Washington is hosted by the Yakima School District, whose superintendent, Benjamin A. Soria, played a major role in bringing the program to the state. Hosting a portal allows for more customization of the program, explains Nicolas Zavala, the executive director of state and federal programs for the district. “Basically, we have what’s called a mirror site,” says Zavala. “We house the entire program on our own server. In theory, we could just connect to the Oregon portal or the California portal or directly to the Mexico portal, but having our own portal gives us greater control. We can personalize it. We can upload certain courses that another state might not be interested in. Moreover, we also have more control over the registration process, the passwords for the assessments, and other administrative functions. It makes us a lot more independent.”

Hosting a portal also means that a state can shape the CONEVyT coursework to match its own state standards. Soon after the May 2005 inauguration ceremony, the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s migrant/bilingual office formed a course alignment project team, consisting of bilingual, content-area experts from around the state—including 11 from the Yakima School District. For the next several months the team worked closely with Mexican education organizations and the Mexican Consul in Seattle to explicitly align courses to Washington state standards. In the end, 92 of the possible 150 courses were fully aligned and piloted in the fall of 2006.

A Growing Population

In 2003 Washington had 490,448 official residents born in Mexico or other Hispanic nations—the eighth largest such population in the United States. Between 1990 and 2000, the





ELL students can earn up to 14 of their 22 required academic credits by taking online Spanish language courses via the CONEVyT portal.

number of Mexican-born residents in the state increased by 200 percent. Much of this growth can be attributed to changing trends in agriculture and in the immigration policy. The Yakima Valley, a broad, fertile agricultural plain, is fed by the Yakima River, which starts in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains and stretches more than 100 miles to its confluence with the Columbia River in the Tri-Cities. Along the way it is used to irrigate some of the most productive farmland in the country. Hispanic migrant workers have been an important part of this agricultural work since at least the 1960s. Yakima and the smaller towns that dot the valley have traditionally been home to the largest concentration of Hispanics in the state.

In recent years, the shift from fruit orchards to vineyards and hop fields has contributed to a shift in migration trends. More Hispanic workers are staying in the valley year round, and more Hispanic students are filling the schools. According to the most current available statistics there are more than 55,000 Hispanic students in Washington public schools, representing 12 percent of the entire student population. In the Yakima School District that number is closer to 59 percent. Many of these students are English language learners struggling to meet grade-level expectations in the core subject areas. For many students that struggle ends in frustration. During the 2003–2004 school year, for instance, the dropout rate for Hispanic students was 10.2 percent, while the on-time graduation rate for that group was only 54 percent. As Jorge Herrera, the CONEVyT coordinator for both the Yakima School District and the state, says, “We see the CONEVyT

program as a way to keep more kids in school, raise the graduation rate, and bring them up to grade level, while they also acquire English.”

Breaking Barriers

The 30-plus students crowded into the Davis High School portable building are only a small sampling of Yakima’s CONEVyT participants. At the Davis site alone, for instance, more than 80 English language learner/migrant students are registered in the program. In addition, more than 100 mainstream students are using CONEVyT courses as supplemental resources for their own academic development—some use the program to study Spanish, or a part of a CONEVyT course to improve their skills in specific content areas, while others take courses (in Spanish) not otherwise offered by the school. Many of these mainstream students have access to home computers and normally come to the plaza comunitaria site only to take exams if needed.

For the many students and parents without access to the Internet, the plaza comunitaria is indeed a portal to opportunities otherwise out of reach. Each site is open to both students and parents four days a week. Students, like those at Davis, have access to their respective plaza comunitaria from 2:45 to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, while parents come in the evenings from six to eight. More than 40 parents are registered at the Davis site. On an average night, between 25 and 30 parents show up to do CONEVyT coursework or to take personal growth classes, such as employment skills, ESL, GED Spanish courses, parenting, or effective communication.

Perhaps the most important features of the program, for students and parents alike, are its flexibility and affordability. All K–9 level courses are free, while grade 10–12 level courses have a small recovery fee of \$10 each, which includes all course materials and assessment tools. In addition, all of the courses are designed for those 15 years or older, but participants can find an appropriate course at any level of instruction, from remedial to college-level. “Adding to the flexibility,” says Herrera, “is that none of the courses has a time limit—students aren’t pressured to finish the course within a semester or trimester or whatever. They can go at their own pace and take the tests when they are ready.”

All of this flexibility is meant to remove the traditional barriers to adult learning in the Hispanic community, such as limited English skills, a mobile lifestyle, lack of childcare, the need to hold multiple jobs, and distrust in the standard educational institutions. Here, all coursework is in Spanish and most staff members are bilingual.

GROWING THE SYSTEM
The Yakima School District will eventually have a dozen separate plaza comunitaria sites around the city. Several other sites around the state are either established or in the planning stages, including four in Wenatchee, four in Toppenish, one in Okanogan, five around Centralia, one in Cowiche, and one each in inner-city Seattle, and tiny, remote Mattawa. Each district must provide a facility with computers (no more than five years old) and hire a district coordinator. Interested districts should contact Jorge Herrera at the Yakima School District: 509-573-7114.

A World of Choices

For many students, CONEVyT will mean the difference between graduating and dropping out. In Washington state, students must earn 22 total credits to graduate, with a maximum of seven credits taken in electives. Currently, Limited English Proficient students can earn up to 14 of their 22 credits in Spanish via CONEVyT, including core classes such as Algebra I and II, geometry, Biology I and II, Economics I and II, accounting and bookkeeping, one of the two health/fitness requirements, world languages, and occupational education. The only core subject credits students can't meet through CONEVyT are language arts and social sciences. "The Washington CONEVyT Portal offers content course work in Spanish only; basic language arts and local history aren't options," says Herrera, acknowledging the essential need and the political nature of English language instruction. "We want students to learn English. The Spanish language courses are not a replacement for that—they are supplemental."

"We see the CONEVyT program as a way to keep more kids in school, raise the graduation rate, and bring them up to grade level, while they also acquire English."

—Jorge Herrera, CONEVyT coordinator

For Herrera, the real treasure of CONEVyT is in its electives. Students can earn all seven of their elective credits, but they don't have to stop there. The program offers advanced-level classes such as physics and calculus, and others—such as philosophy, anthropology, and scientific research methodology—that aren't offered at the regular school, in any language.

"In the past," says Herrera, "students might arrive at the school ready for calculus, but end up being placed in a lower-level math class because of their limited English skills. That was a total waste. Now, with CONEVyT, a student will never get stuck in a lower-level or remedial class due to a language barrier."

Along with these educational opportunities, Herrera says, come hope and dignity. Parents who have never learned to read or write in any language can take ESL classes or Spanish literacy classes—or both—at an appropriate level and at their own pace. They can also earn a GED by taking Spanish language classes or can earn their accredited certification from the Mexican school system.

For Herrera, the only barriers still left are due to the after-school nature of the program. "We would really like to make this available during school hours, like English language online programs such as A+ or NovaNet," he says. "It's not fair that a lot of these students have to miss out on sports or can't take after-school jobs or participate in other activities. If



Photo: Bracken Reed

Alice Villanueva (second from left) runs the plazas comunitarias site at Eisenhower High School in Yakima, with the help of paid student tutors. Each of the students also participate in the CONEVyT program, with access to the plazas site after school from 3 to 5 p.m. The students then return in the evening to tutor adult participants from 6 to 8 p.m.

they don't have a home computer and they really want to participate in the program, they have to make some difficult decisions."

One other possible barrier is that—beginning in 2008—students will have to pass the Washington Assessment of Student Learning, in English, in order to graduate. But Herrera does not see this as a problem. "If anything, CONEVyT will help them pass," he says. "Transferring knowledge from one language to another is easier than being tested on material you've never even studied."

Finding Community

As the students at Davis High School plunge into their studies a quiet settles over the room. Most of the students are wearing headphones and are deeply immersed in their lessons. Some students are taking tests—including a few taking finals. Others are just getting started with CONEVyT. As Torres surveys the room, he points to one rail-thin boy in a hooded sweatshirt. "This student just arrived from Mexico two days ago," he says. "He really has no English at all." Although Torres is whispering in English, the boy seems to sense that he's being talked about. He shifts slightly in his seat and glances in our direction—swiftly, almost imperceptibly—but in that glance is a mass of emotions: fear, confusion, homesickness, anger, loss. Torres, who was also born in Mexico, seems unfazed. "We'll get him going," he says confidently, and turns in another direction.

In this student—surrounded by his Spanish-speaking peers, presented with coursework he is familiar with from Mexico, and guided by an instructor who himself has made this same long journey—it's possible to see the real power of CONEVyT and to understand the meaning of the plazas comunitarias. ■

A Teacher's Voice: **From Surviving to Thriving** *By Rosemary Tiffany*

Rosemary Tiffany is a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Lewis & Clark Elementary in Wenatchee, Washington, who knows firsthand the challenges her students face. The daughter of migrant workers, she grew up in the Yakima Valley and was a struggling student, a high school dropout, and teen parent. Through sheer determination, she earned both bachelor's and master's degrees and was recognized as the North Central ESD Regional Teacher of the Year. In addition to teaching, Tiffany gives professional development trainings in cultural awareness throughout Washington state.

I'm a second language learner. I started school not being able to speak English, which was difficult for me because I went through most of my elementary and intermediate years really hating school—I mean really hating it with a passion. I didn't understand the language, and learning English was difficult for me because my family was very large and we were migrant farm workers, so we didn't stay in one spot for very long.

I came from a family of 12 and no one had graduated. My mom never went to school, my dad had maybe a second-grade education. They were all working in the fields, so there was no one really to help me with schoolwork.

My mom always kind of pushed us to go to school, but I invented all kinds of illnesses to stay home. One day the truancy officer came and knocked on my door and said, "I know you're in there. I saw you through the window." So, he actually forced me to get in the car and took me to school and it was kind of embarrassing. After that, I tried to go to school even though I didn't like it.

Somehow I stuck with it, but I did get married as a junior in high school and dropped out for a little bit. Then, I decided that school was more fun than working in the field. So, I went back to school and I did graduate, amazingly. I can remember in my biology class in high school, the teacher was just kind of talking to the whole class—kind of an informal conversation—and I said, "I think I'm going to get an A this time on my test," because I knew I had been working hard. And he said, "Well, I don't expect you to." He said, "I don't think you'll ever amount to anything." He truly said those words! Those words hurt a lot. And I'm the type of person that if you say, "You can't," I'll show you I can. I think maybe in a way that was meant to happen to me because it really pushed me in the other direction.

[After graduating,] I started working as a paraprofessional. I did that for five years: I was doing just about the same amount of work as a teacher and not getting the pay, and there were so many things I didn't like that I was seeing. I

decided to try to go to college. A really neat program came along—the Migrant Extended Degree program: They would pay for the years it would take, but it meant that I would work as a parapro and then go to school at night. I did that for two years, but decided that I really wanted to get done sooner, so I quit the program and went to college on my own. I was treated really well there. I think they kind of looked at me like an exchange student because I was different—there weren't many Latinos there at that time.

The thing that happened to me at college is I [finally] began to understand the language. It took me not five years, not seven years—as most programs tell you—but it took me at least 10 or more years to really understand the academic language and to be able to comprehend what I was doing.

I went on to become a teacher and later got my master's degree in bilingual education/ESL from Heritage College in Toppenish. I went on to the Chelan School District and taught there for nine years as their migrant/bilingual teacher. I was teaching [my students] to learn English but at the same time I was giving them a lot of Spanish instruction to support them. I had kids telling me, "I can't do it. I can't. English is too hard. I can't learn it." What helped is that I had gone through that experience and I was able to say, "If I can learn it, you can learn it. And I know it's hard but you will learn it eventually."

My goal as a teacher is: I want my kids to know that I care for them and that I want them to have a good education. That is important to me. If they know that you care, they'll work harder for you. ■



Photo: Bracken Reed

What the Research Says About Effective Strategies for ELL Students *By Rhonda Barton*

Meeting the needs of English language learners is a challenge that's widely felt in the Northwest. Half of the region's 1,103 school districts report enrolling ELL students. In 91 of those districts, English learners represent more than a quarter of all students and in another 37 districts, ELLs fill half the seats.

Beyond any social implications, the performance of these students can carry a disproportionate amount of weight in an educational era dominated by No Child Left Behind. According to the Urban Institute, two-thirds of ELL students nationally come from low-income families. Consequently, an ELL student who does poorly on state achievement tests can potentially affect a school's adequate yearly progress standing in as many as three categories: Limited English Proficiency, low income, and racial/ethnic. As the Center on Education Policy (Rentner et al., 2006) points out, "This leads to greater pressure on schools, districts, and states to rapidly increase the English proficiency and academic performance of English language learners in order to improve the performance of three subgroups."

The question then becomes, how is this goal best accomplished?

ASSESSING PROP 227

Two states—California and Massachusetts—restrict bilingual instruction and require English learners to be taught overwhelmingly in English. California's Proposition 227, which passed by statewide referendum in 1998, established structured immersion as the default program for instruction. ELL students undergo sheltered/structured immersion during a "temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one year" and then transfer to mainstream English language classrooms.

A five-year evaluation of Proposition 227, conducted by the American Institutes for Research and WestEd (Parrish et al., 2006), was released in January 2006. After tracking data from 1.5 million English learners and 3.5 million English fluent and native English-speaking students in California, the researchers concluded that "there is no evidence to support an argument of the superiority of one English learner

instructional approach over another." Among the study's other findings were:

- Since Proposition 227, students across all language classifications, in all grades, have posted gains on state achievement tests. But, other reforms such as class-size reductions and the climate of increased federal and state accountability make it impossible to attribute these gains to any one factor.
- The gap between ELL students and native English speakers has remained virtually constant in most subjects and in most grades.
- Less than 40 percent of English learners are likely to meet the criteria to be reclassified as fluent/proficient after 10 years in California schools.

The study goes on to say that while there's no one path to academic excellence, several critical factors do contribute to success for English language learners. These include staff capacity to address ELL students' linguistic and cognitive needs; schoolwide focus on English language development and standards-based instruction; shared priorities and expectations; and systematic, ongoing assessment with use of data to guide instruction.

THE CASE FOR DUAL LANGUAGE

The work of Virginia Collier and Wayne Thomas of George Mason University seems to challenge the assertion that there's no one path to academic excellence for ELL students.

After 20 years of program evaluation research involving almost two dozen large and small school districts in urban, suburban, and rural settings in 15 states, Collier and Thomas (2004) write passionately about the "astounding effectiveness" of dual-language immersion.

In what they term a "wake-up call to the field of bilingual education," Collier and Thomas point to evidence

that "enrichment dual-language schooling closes the academic achievement gap in L2 and in first language (L1) students initially below grade level, and for all categories of students participating in this program." They go on to say, "This is the only program for English learners that fully closes the gap."

According to the researchers, when students enter mainstream classes and leave special remedial programs (including

"[T]here is no evidence to support an argument of the superiority of one English learner instructional approach over another."

—Proposition 227 Evaluation

intensive English-only classes such as those in California and Massachusetts, ESL pullout classes, ESL content/sheltered instruction, structured English immersion, and transitional bilingual education), they may continue to make academic progress—but only one year at a time, as do typical native English speakers. And, they may make less than a year’s progress each year in secondary school when the cognitive demands are greater. In order to make more than one year’s progress in each year and effectively close the achievement gap, Collier and Thomas maintain that ELL students need curricular mainstream instruction through two languages.

Collier and Thomas also believe that the dual-language approach has an added benefit: “[It] can transform the experience of teachers, administrators, and parents into an inclusive and supportive school community for all.”

ANOTHER VIEW

Looking at research spanning the last quarter century, Fred Genesee of McGill University and his colleagues (2005) also found “strong convergent evidence that the educational success of ELLs is positively related to sustained instruction through the student L1 [native language]. In both descriptive and comparative program evaluation studies, results showed that length of time in the program and time of assessment affect outcomes.”

Examining 200 studies and reports, the researchers homed in on oral language development, literacy, and academic achievement. They reported that when students in the early years (K–3) of a bilingual program were tested, they typically scored below grade level. However, later assessments (at the end of elementary school and in middle and high school) revealed that “educational outcomes of bilingually educated students, especially in late-exit and two-way programs, were at least comparable to, and usually higher than, their comparison peers” (p. 375). The studies also showed that the longer the students stayed in such programs, the better they did.



Photo: Rhonda Barton

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Hispanics will make up half of America’s under-18 population by the year 2020.

According to Genesee and his coauthors, research consistently confirmed that ELL students who received any specialized program, such as bilingual or English as a Second Language instruction, were able to catch up to or surpass the levels of their ELL and English-speaking classmates in English-only classrooms. Citing Thomas and Collier’s seminal 2002 study, they stated that “students who participated in an assortment of different programs and those who received no special intervention performed at the lowest levels and had the highest dropout rates.”

In conclusion, Genesee and his colleagues maintain: “Taken together, these results indicate that ELLs are more successful when they participate in programs that are specially designed to meet their needs (ESL, bilingual, etc.) than in mainstream English classrooms and when the program is consistent throughout the student education” (p. 374).

THE BENEFITS OF SIOP

Jana Echevarria, a professor at California State University, Long Beach and principal investigator with OERI’s Center for Research on Excellence, Education & Diversity (CREDE), makes a case for the use of sheltered instruction to boost achievement for ELL students. A developer of the empirically validated Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (see page 46), Echevarria asserts that SIOP offers a model for systematic implementation of high-quality ELL instruction rather than the “pick and choose” approach to sheltered lessons used by some teachers.

Writing in the February 2006 issue of *Principal Leadership*, she reports on one elementary school where “chronically underachieving students made consistent and significant yearly gains on standardized tests when the SIOP model was implemented to a high degree by all teachers.” Eighty-six percent of the third-graders who were enrolled in the school

during the three years that SIOP was implemented scored at or above grade level on state assessments.

Based on her research, Echevarria characterizes effective ELL practices as focused instruction that contains explicit content and language objectives; frequent opportunities to interact with the teacher and other students; and explicit vocabulary development with words repeatedly written, pronounced, modeled, and used in context. She makes the distinction between social or conversational English and academic English, noting that “teachers often assume that because students can converse well in English, they should also be able to complete academic tasks and assignments.” That is a false assumption, given studies that show conversational ability can be acquired within one to three years while academic proficiency can take between five and nine years to develop.

INTERWEAVING STRATEGIES

Further support for the practices emphasized by Echevarria can be found in a synthesis of 34 research studies compiled by Hersh Waxman of the University of Houston and Kip Tellez of the University of California, Santa Cruz (2002). The studies—most of which were qualitative and involved a limited number of classrooms—highlighted seven teaching strategies that were effective for ELL students: collaborative learning communities, multiple representations, building on prior knowledge, instructional conversation, culturally responsive instruction, and technology-enriched instruction.

Waxman and Tellez argue that these practices are not separate but can—and should—be used simultaneously. Thus, teachers can help students improve their language skills by working in small groups while using technology or by linking culturally responsive lessons to prior learning.

In the end, the researchers stress that “the most important issue related to effective classroom instruction is not the form it takes but the quality of the instruction.” Teachers must perform these practices well, set high expectations for ELL students, and offer a warm and supportive classroom environment.

FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES

By improving outcomes for the growing population of English language learners, educators not only address the demands of NCLB but the greater human consequences. As the Pew Hispanic Center (2002) points out, “In the United States today people with more education tend to live longer and healthier lives, remain married longer, and earn more money.” Hispanics—who make up 75 percent of the language minority students in the United States—drop out of high school at twice the rate of their white peers and are less likely to go on to postsecondary education. With the projection that Hispanics will make up half the population under the age of 18 in this country by the year 2020, it becomes ever

more critical to give them—and other ELL students—the education they need to succeed. ■

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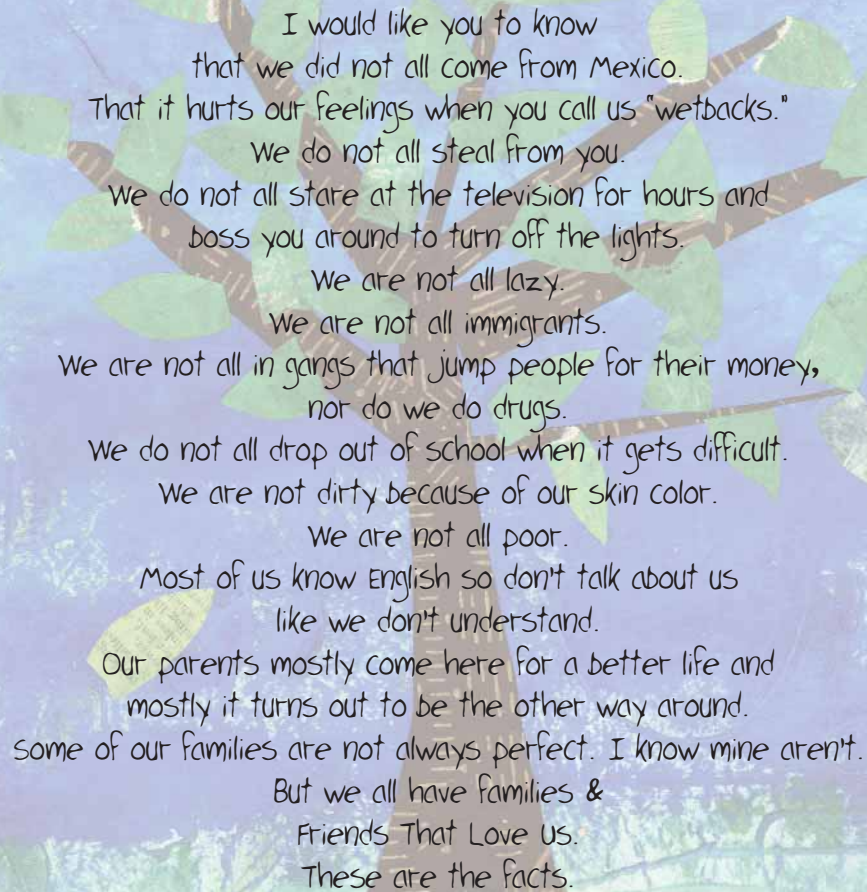
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END NOTE

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO KNOW

by Diana Reyes



I would like you to know
that we did not all come from Mexico.
That it hurts our feelings when you call us "wetbacks."
We do not all steal from you.
We do not all stare at the television for hours and
boss you around to turn off the lights.
We are not all lazy.
We are not all immigrants.
We are not all in gangs that jump people for their money,
nor do we do drugs.
We do not all drop out of school when it gets difficult.
We are not dirty because of our skin color.
We are not all poor.
Most of us know English so don't talk about us
like we don't understand.
Our parents mostly come here for a better life and
mostly it turns out to be the other way around.
Some of our families are not always perfect. I know mine aren't.
But we all have families &
Friends That Love Us.
These are the facts.

Diana Reyes is a seventh-grader at Valley View School in Phoenix, Arizona.

Photo © Elena Ray

NWREL Launches Rigorous Scientific Studies

Today, the need for evidence has become as important in the classroom as in the courtroom. In 2002, the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) created the Institute of Education Sciences with the mission of “transforming education into an evidence-based field.” ESRA followed on the heels of the No Child Left Behind Act’s demand for using “scientifically based research” when choosing initiatives to improve educational results.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory—which has long been known for its research and development activities—is rising to the challenge by launching a series of rigorous scientific studies that will yield the type of evidence educators can readily use. “Since the Laboratory was founded almost 40 years ago, we’ve considered ourselves as ambassadors of scientific evidence, taking research into the field in ways that stimulate and support its effective application in educational policy and practice,” says Carol Thomas, NWREL’s Chief Executive Officer. “We are building on that tradition by conducting rigorous studies to examine the effects of proposed policies, programs, or practices on academic achievement related to high-priority needs of the region.”

Under the new Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) contract, NWREL will conduct three randomized controlled trials that test the efficacy of interventions in reading, writing, and mathematics in elementary, middle, and high schools. Each of these long-term studies will use a sufficient number of experimental and control groups to ensure rigor. According to Steve Nelson, director of the Office of Service and Planning Coordination, “There will be careful consideration in recruiting and selecting sites so there’s fidelity of implementation, geographical and educational contexts, and size and diversity of student populations.”

NWREL’S TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

These experts in research methodology and content areas will serve as advisers to NWREL’s experimental studies:

- Raymond Barnhardt, director of the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies and co-director of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks
- Johannes Bos, president and CEO of Berkeley Policy Associates
- William Demmert, Jr., director of the Applied Research and Development Center at Western Washington University
- Allen Glenn, professor of curriculum and instruction and former dean of the College of Education at the University of Washington
- Dan Goldhaber, associate professor at the University of Washington and an affiliated scholar of the Urban Institute’s Education Policy Center
- Richard Lesh, the Rudy Distinguished Professor of Education at Indiana University
- Audrey Champagne, professor of educational theory and practice at the State University of New York, Albany
- Joan Herman, co-director of CRESST and the Center for the Study of Evaluation at the University of California, Los Angeles
- Michael Kamil, professor of education at Stanford University
- LeAnne Robinson, assistant professor at Western Washington University
- Lynn Santelmann, associate professor at Portland State University
- Sam Stringfield, professor at the Department of Teaching and Learning, University of Louisville

“You can talk to teachers, parents, and students and they can tell you if something has made a difference, but those are perceptions and not empirical evidence. For gold standard research, you need to isolate other variables so you can say the intervention is solely responsible for the result.”

—Kim Yap, NWREL Center for Research and Evaluation



Kim Yap, head of the Center for Research and Evaluation, explains that this type of “gold standard” scientific research “increases the certainty of knowing that an intervention—and not other factors—has made a difference.” Yap adds, “You can talk to teachers, parents, and students and they can tell you if something has made a difference, but those are perceptions and not empirical evidence. For gold standard research, you need to isolate other variables so you can say the intervention is solely responsible for the result.”

An external group of nationally known researchers—both methodologists and content experts—will serve as a technical advisory board. The distinguished group (see list below) will critique the design of the studies and offer feedback.

In addition to the experimental studies, a series of shorter term, “fast response” research projects will address issues of special interest to the Northwest. During the next year, these projects will focus on the effectiveness of literacy coaches, professional development policy in science and mathematics, improving principal leadership, the role of external facilitators in school improvement efforts, and parental choice in supplemental educational services.

“These studies rely on extant research, rather than new data,” notes Yap. “For example, we’ve collected a lot of data on literacy coaching as a result of our statewide evaluations of Reading First results. By analyzing that data, we can draw conclusions about the different types of coaching and which are more effective with certain types of students and teachers.” In future years, NWREL will select other fast response topics based on regional needs assessments.

Getting the results of research into practitioners’ hands remains a high priority for the Laboratory. “At NWREL, dissemination has always meant something more than mere distribution of information,” says Dave Wilson, head of the Office of Development and Communication. “For dissemination of knowledge to be meaningful, it must result in some positive effect on policy, practice, and ultimately learner outcomes.”

Teachers and educational leaders will be able to access briefing papers and research reports through postings on a national Laboratory Network Web site as well as NWREL’s own Web site. Upcoming issues of *Northwest Education* will also share research findings, which will form the basis of future trainings and other products.

Yap stresses that the findings will be helpful to teachers and administrators in terms of practice and policy. “We’re not doing esoteric research,” he says. “We’re trying to help educators find answers.” ■

EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH STUDIES

NWREL will conduct three long-term, rigorous experimental studies:

- **Research on Elementary Writing**—Led by Michael Coe, this study will examine how NWREL’s 6+1 Trait® Writing model affects teacher practices and student achievement in grades 3–5. It will involve 60 schools in four to six school districts, with six teachers participating in each school. Both urban and rural school districts will be represented, along with students from different racial/ethnic minority groups, income levels, and English proficiency levels. A teacher survey and student pretest will provide baseline data. Writing samples and multiple assessments of students in both a treatment group and a control group will be used to determine the impact of instruction in the writing traits.



- **Research on High School Reading**—This randomized study, under Jim Kushman, will test the effectiveness of a reading comprehension program called Project CRISS (Creating Independence Through Student Owned Strategies). The study will focus on ninth- and 10th-grade students in approximately 20 comprehensive high schools with large numbers of nonproficient readers. The research will ask whether direct tutoring and teacher strategies in the classroom have a positive effect on struggling readers and if there are different effects when students are grouped by NCLB subgroup categories.



- **Research on Middle School Mathematics**—Edith Gummer will examine NWREL’s mathematics problem-solving model and its impact on improving mathematical thinking in the classroom. The study will not only look at student achievement, but how professional development in the model affects teachers’ classroom practices. The research is linked to another study of the problem-solving model, funded by the National Science Foundation Interagency Education Research Initiative.



NWREL Training Blends SIOP and Equity Components

It's hard to imagine two places more different than American Samoa and Kodiak, Alaska. But, educators in both locations have benefited from training in Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), provided by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Equity Center. Since 2003, NWREL's SIOP workshops have reached 1,000 educators from rural Jerome, Idaho, and Falls City, Oregon, to Washington's urbanized Puget Sound.

Developers at the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) created the SIOP model as a way to help students acquire grade-level content knowledge while increasing their English proficiency. The model consists of 30 items grouped in three broad categories: preparation, instruction, and review/assessment. Using SIOP, the teacher has a road map for everything from building language objectives into lesson plans to linking instruction to students' background experiences and to providing feedback.

After becoming certified SIOP trainers, NWREL staff members added their own twist to the model: They created a three- to four-day SIOP academy that incorporates key components of educational equity. Equity Center Director Joyce Harris talked about the program with *Northwest Education*:

Q: It seems more and more schools are investing in SIOP these days. What accounts for the growth in its popularity?

No Child Left Behind is forcing schools to focus on populations that have not done well for any number of reasons. One [population] that jumps out at you is English language learners and the expectations that these students will be able to show some academic growth in a relatively short period of time. The reality is if these students don't have a command of the English language, on which most assessment materials are based, they won't do well. The traditional approaches have really centered on 'let's develop the language and then we'll deal with the academics,' but SIOP is based on trying to help students develop their proficiency in the English language while they learn academic skills. Another reason for SIOP's popularity is the U.S. Department of Education's focus on using research-based best practices in our schools. The developers of SIOP were able to pull proven practices together in a cohesive professional development model.

What makes NWREL's version of SIOP unique?

When we returned to Portland [from CREDE], we began a very ambitious process of looking at the SIOP materials through the lens of trainers, and added some things that we

felt would strengthen the contents for our participants. One of them is the whole issue of second language acquisition. Teachers need to know the fundamentals of second language acquisition and understand the stages from a student's perspective. What is the student experiencing? So, we talk about things like affective filter and the "silent period." We often help teachers reflect on times when they may have visited a different country where they were in the language minority: How did you feel when everyone around you was speaking in a language that you didn't understand? What did you do? Did you try to get in the middle of the conversation? No, you were silent. You listened. You looked for cues to let you know whether what people were saying was angry or welcoming. That's something we spend a fair amount of time on in the very first part of the training. We think it's important for teachers to understand that the process of acquiring a second language is a total involvement of the whole being: It's not just reading words, trying to sound out words, or trying to figure out meaning. It involves some physical responses.

How would you answer the contention that SIOP amounts to just good teaching?

That's exactly what it is and that's why we got involved with SIOP. These are just things that you do if you want to be effective in the classroom and create students with high levels of academic performance. SIOP reaffirms that if you are using good teaching practice, you can adapt your content and the way you deliver it to help any child become successful academically. Teachers need to understand that they already have knowledge of the skills and strategies of good teaching, but with English language learners, they must focus every day on helping students develop their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. We constantly reinforce that whatever you do in the classroom to help ELL students, it has to give them the opportunity to practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking all the time—no matter what the subject is. ■



The Equity Center, led by Joyce Harris, offers a SIOP academy.

To bring a NWREL SIOP Academy to your site, contact the Equity Center at 503-275-9482 or visit www.nwrel.org/cnorse/. Professional development workshops on other issues regarding equity and access—including building cultural competency, reducing school-based harassment, and closing the achievement gap—are also available.

Developing Culturally Responsive, Standards-Based Teaching

Research indicates a strong correlation between low school performance and a lack of congruence between students' cultures and school norms. Multiple studies also suggest a compelling relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement, attendance, and behavior at home and school, as well as higher scores on standardized tests. According to a new publication by Steffen Saifer and researchers in NWREL's Center for School, Family, and Community, "drawing on the knowledge, skills, and experiences of students enriches the curriculum and builds family and community support, broadening learning experiences for all students."

Classroom to Community and Back: Using Standards-Based Teaching To Strengthen Family and Community Partnerships and Increase Student Achievement seeks to unite two traditionally disparate but equally important pedagogies—culturally responsive teaching and standards-based teaching. The book and an accompanying workshop provide foundational research, tools, and examples to actively engage all students by incorporating their cultural knowledge and frames of reference into a standards-based curriculum. Woven throughout the guide are "snapshots" of real-life classrooms using culturally responsive, standards-based (CRSB) teaching.

First-graders in one ESL classroom bring their parents in to share stories from their home countries. They read from a book that the parent and child have made together. The parent speaks in her native tongue and the student interprets in English, emphasizing that speaking more than one language is an asset, not a deficiency. This project at Whitman Elementary School in Portland has proven to be very successful: During one school year, all students in the class made adequate progress and three of 12 who started the year below grade level finished nearly two years above grade level.

Other examples in the book include publishing a best-selling book on the community's traditional Thanksgiving Day high school football competition, creating family maps that trace immigration experiences, and making heritage dolls. The projects provide a peek into successful kindergarten through high school classrooms.

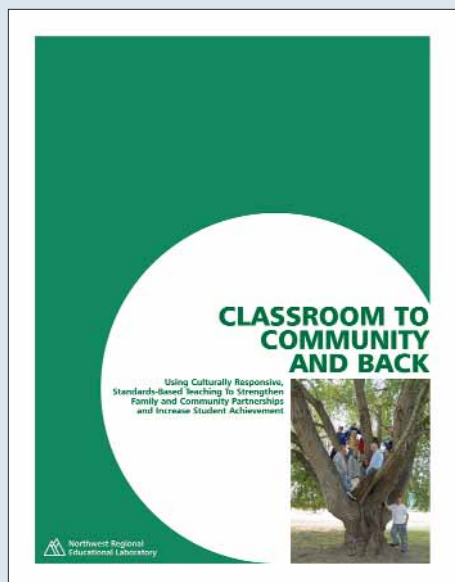
CRSB TEACHING WORKSHOPS

NWREL offers professional development workshops on culturally responsive, standards-based teaching in half-day and all-day formats with a two-day session recommended for trainers. The training can be customized to meet the needs of K–12 teachers, staff development specialists, and administrators. In a survey of educators who participated in the training, 100 percent said it provided a good process for closing the achievement gap, and more than 92 percent said that they were able to make stronger connections with their students' families. To find out more about available workshops and how to bring one to your site, contact Steffen Saifer at 800-547-6339, ext. 150; saifers@nwrel.org.

To order *Classroom to Community*, visit the online catalog at www.nwrel.org/comm/catalog/ or call 800-547-6339, ext. 519. The guide is also available online at www.nwrel.org/partnerships/c2cb/c2c.pdf. ■

"Much has been written about culturally responsive and standards-based teaching separately, but it is the integration of the approaches that is critical to the goal of high achievement for all students."

—Classroom to Community and Back



Classroom to Community and Back: Using Culturally Responsive Standards-Based Teaching To Strengthen Family and Community Partnerships and Increase Student Achievement

179 pp.

Item #C001

Member: \$27.55 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$29.70 plus shipping

Helping ELL Students Grow in Mathematics

Developing mathematical understanding in English language learners is the aim of a new professional development offering from NWREL's Center for Classroom Teaching and Learning. Created to support migrant educators in Montana who are members of the federally funded MATEMATICA consortium, the original course integrated two research-based approaches to instruction: Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), a student-centered method for teaching mathematics to K–3 students, and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), a national model used to support high-quality instruction in the academic content areas for ELL students. NWREL has now broadened the offering, using other research-based best practices in mathematics instruction to meet the needs of educators teaching upper elementary and adolescent ELL students.

“The strategies I learned in this class allow me to focus on what I want my students to learn and accomplish, and has made teaching a lesson easier.”

—Class participant

Intended for teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators who teach mathematics to ELL and migrant education students, this service can be customized to meet a school or district's specific needs. Courses are tailored for specific grade clusters—K–2, 3–5, 6–8, or 9–12—and consist of a combination of the following components:

- A series of workshops examining research-based best practices for mathematics and sheltered instruction. These can be delivered using both face-to-face meetings and videoconferences.
- Video Study Group meetings, facilitated on site by a NWREL staff member, where teachers examine and discuss videotapes of their own classroom instruction.
- Asynchronous online discussions and assignments.



NWREL mathematics expert Linda Griffin leads an interactive online session as part of a course that blends cognitively guided math instruction and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol techniques.

“What a difference [this course] has made already!” wrote one participant in the online class forum. She went on to reflect, “Creative problem solving had almost been taught out of my students. Now my students understand that math can be done using various strategies and I have seen a huge improvement in comprehension and problem-solving skills from those students who were struggling at the beginning of the year.”

In addition to learning effective mathematical instruction practices and sheltered instruction strategies, participants benefit from working collaboratively with colleagues to improve teaching and learning for ELL students in mathematics.

To learn more about these services, including how to schedule a training for your site, contact Linda Griffin at 800-547-6339, ext. 169, or griffinl@nwrel.org. ■

What's New on the Web

NEW SEARCH ENGINE

In the past, searching for just the right page on NWREL's Web site of more than 22,000 documents may have seemed like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. But now, users of the site are apt to find what they need in the first page—maybe even the first result. “With the popularity of search engines like Google, we all expect to type a word or two into a search box and get the answer,” observes NWREL's head Webmaster, Vicki Jean Beauchamp. “With our previous search engines, that wasn't happening. You'd get results ... though not necessarily what you were seeking. That's changed with the introduction of the Google Mini, a new search engine that's been adapted exclusively for NWREL's use.”

Conference Call

2006 OREGON HIGH SCHOOL INSTITUTE

June 26–27, 2006

Kingstad Center, Beaverton, OR

The hot topic of high school reform is the focus of this two-day event for Oregon educators, cosponsored by NWREL and several other organizations including the Oregon Department of Education and Employers for Education Excellence (E3)/Oregon Small Schools Alliance. Participants will gain awareness of what is happening in Oregon high schools, develop an understanding of effective school reform strategies, and commit to taking community action. The first day centers on Personalized Learning: Engaging Students. The second day's topic is Preparing Students for Success: College, Work, and Citizenship. Register online at <http://gearup.ous.edu/hsinstitute/>; the registration deadline is June 9, 2006.

Google Mini works with any search box on NWREL's Web site. If you still have trouble finding the appropriate page, e-mail Beauchamp at webmaster@nwrel.org. Here's to more efficient searching!

BY REQUEST

While quantities last, various titles from NWREL's popular By Request series are available for sale in NWREL's Products Catalog Online (www.nwrel.org/comm/catalog/). The series addresses a wide variety of issues and concerns raised by Northwest educators during a 10-year span, including:

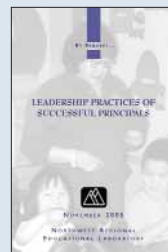
- *Strategies and Resources for Mainstream Teachers of English Language Learners*

- *Building Trust With Schools and Diverse Families: A Foundation for Lasting Partnerships*

- *Culturally Responsive Practices for Student Success*

- *Profiles of Progress: What Works in Northwest Title I Schools*

Each booklet contains a discussion of research and literature pertinent to the issue, a sampling of how Northwest schools are addressing the challenge, suggestions for adapting these ideas to schools, selected references, and contact information. PDF versions of all 30 booklets are free on the Web at www.nwrel.org/request/. ■



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS SUMMER INSTITUTE

July 25–27, 2006

NWREL, Portland, OR

This three-day institute will give facilitators the tools to lead professional learning teams in their own schools. The training will support schools working with structural changes like Smaller Learning Communities and interdisciplinary teaming. For further information, contact Susan Sather, 800-547-6339, ext. 645; sathers@nwrel.org. Register by June 23, 2006.

6+1 TRAIT® WRITING ASSESSMENT FOR TRAINERS INSTITUTE

July 19–21, 2006

The Resort at the Mountain, Welches, OR

In this three-day advanced training, educators who are experienced users of the 6+1 TRAIT model will learn how to train others in its use. Previous training in the model is required. The institute will include a review of writing traits and

strategies, lesson design and training considerations, and workshop planning.

6+1 TRAIT® WRITING ASSESSMENT: INTRODUCTORY INSTITUTE

October 11–13, 2006

Surfsand Resort, Cannon Beach, OR

This workshop features practical, ready-to-use lessons and strategies that help students identify quality in writing, manage their own writing process, practice effective revision and editing, and become confident writers. The final day will focus on beginning (K–3) writers. Teachers of grades 6–12 may opt to attend only the first two days.

For information on 6+1 TRAIT Writing events, contact Sharon Northern at 800-547-6339, ext. 572, or e-mail northern@nwrel.org. More information can be found at www.nwrel.org/assessment/trainings.php. ■

Flashback

1. TRAINING OF TRAINERS

Teachers from as far away as Hong Kong and six states spanning the country attended the 6+1 Trait® Writing Assessment for Trainers Institute in Portland, March 6–8, 2006. After participating in the intensive three-day institute, these new trainers can now teach other educators in their communities how to use the internationally popular writing assessment model. Pictured—NWREL trainer Peter Bellamy describes workshop elements.

2. NEW FRONTIERS IN YOUTH MENTORING

Some of the country's most prominent mentoring experts were featured at a training program for Alaska youth mentoring professionals, held in Anchorage, April 10–12, 2006. The conference showcased effective mentoring practices—especially those in rural locations and with Native youth. NWREL's National Mentoring Center coordinated the event, which was sponsored by the Alaska Mentoring Demonstration Project. The project is a collaborative initiative between the Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Southeast Alaska; Boys and Girls Clubs; and the National Senior Service Corps of Alaska. Pictured—(from left to right) Patti MacRae, NWREL; Maggie Steele, Seventh Generation Warriors for Peace; Amy Canata, NWREL; Mark LoMur-

ray, The North Dakota Tribal/Rural Mentoring Project; Craig Bowman, Common Ground Consulting; Nicky Martin, NWREL; Judy Taylor, U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Resource Center; Dr. Susan Weinberger, Mentor Consulting Group.

3. BREAKING RANKS

High school leaders from across the nation gathered at a Breaking Ranks II™ workshop in Portland conducted by NWREL's Recreating Secondary Schools Unit, March 6–8, 2006. The tailored workshop was designed to help high school leaders integrate their schools' Smaller Learning Community plans with three core areas: collaborative leadership, personalization and curriculum, and instruction and assessment.

School teams interested in future Breaking Ranks II workshops or in the new Breaking Ranks in the Middle (BRIM) workshops currently under development by the National Association of Secondary School Principals can contact Katie Whitney Luers at luersk@nwrel.org or Erin McGary-Hamilton at mcgaryhe@nwrel.org. Pictured—Erin McGary-Hamilton helps team members from Miami, Florida, work on their school plan.

4. 4CAST CONFERENCE

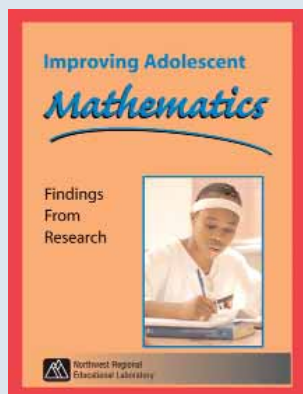
NWREL's Volunteer Leadership Center is leading an innovative pilot project that will identify best practices from AmeriCorps field programs in the Northwest and share them through a variety of electronic learning formats. To kick off the project—called “4CAST” or Collaboration for Capacity-Building Strategies and Tools—AmeriCorps representatives gathered in Portland, March 21–23, 2006, to review existing materials and discuss how to adapt them for a wider audience. 4CAST expects to post the material on a national Web site in early fall. ■



NWREL PRODUCTS

View NWREL's complete product catalog and check out our easy and secure online ordering system at www.nwrel.org/comm/catalog/

New Products



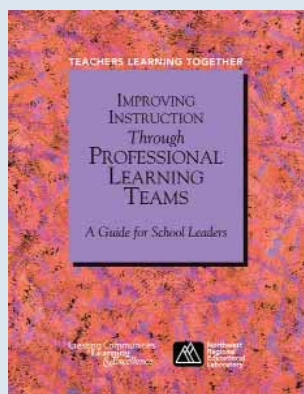
Improving Adolescent Mathematics: Findings From Research

This publication focuses on research designed to improve adolescents' learning of mathematics. It helps school leaders and faculty members work collaboratively to develop schoolwide or districtwide plans to improve math learning by incorporating research-tested practices into instruction, assessment, professional development, and school structures to support struggling learners. (117 pp.)

Item #S301

Member: \$16.70 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$18.85 plus shipping



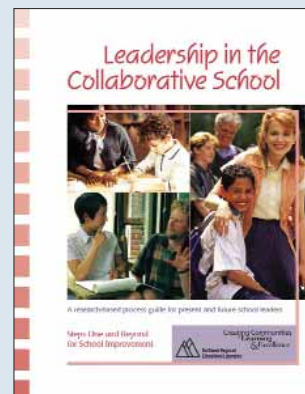
Improving Instruction Through Professional Learning Teams: A Guide for School Leaders

Although there is considerable research on the value of professional learning teams (PLTs), there is little research on how schools develop them. This guide provides strategies for teachers and school leaders to effectively develop these communities in coordination with their school improvement plans. A theoretical foundation for PLTs and concrete advice on getting ready for PLTs, building support structures and relationships, and reinforcing PLT skills are presented in this guide. (125 pp.)

Item #S002

Member: \$28.30 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$30.75 plus shipping



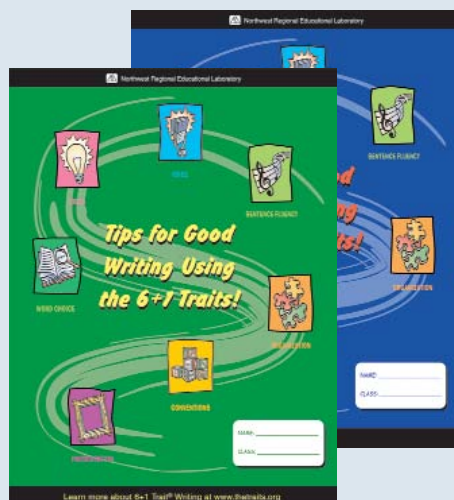
Leadership in the Collaborative School: A Research-Based Process Guide for Present and Future School Leaders

Studies of successful schools have revealed certain essential ingredients in improving education. This book contains sections on getting started and setting direction, planning and taking action, and maintaining momentum and sustaining progress. Each chapter discusses tools for effective change, including short research syntheses, consensus-building materials, data use, recommended resources, and sample activities. (260 pp.)

Item #S003

Member: \$21.10 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$23.10 plus shipping



These colorful folders help students organize and protect their work and provide reference information about writing with the traits. Incorporated into the fun design are definitions of the traits and grade-appropriate tips on being a better writer the 6+1 Trait® way.

6+1 Trait® Writing folders (primary grades)

Item #E115

Member: \$12.50 for a pack of 10 plus shipping

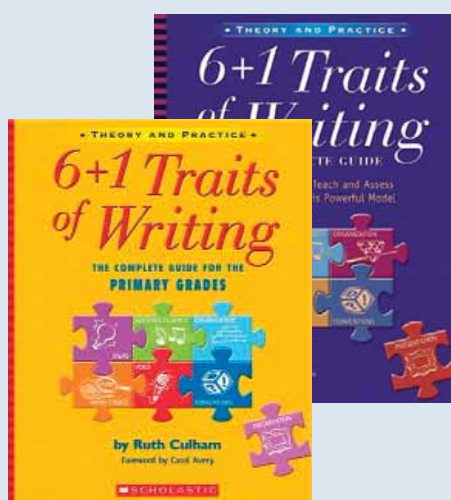
Nonmember: \$13.75 for a pack of 10 plus shipping

6+1 Trait® Writing folders (middle and high school grades)

Item #E116

Member: \$12.50 for a pack of 10 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$13.75 for a pack of 10 plus shipping



The 6+1 Trait® model has such a tremendous impact on writing instruction because it allows teachers to pinpoint students' strengths and weaknesses in ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation; and focus instruction accordingly. In these books, author Ruth Culham guides teachers on how to assess student work, plan instruction, and use a common vocabulary for the traits of good writing that their students can understand. Each book—one framed to address K–2 teachers' needs and another for teachers of grades three and up—includes scoring guides, focus lessons, and activities for teaching each trait.

6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades

304 pp.

Item #E060

Member: \$23.45 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$25.99 plus shipping

6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide (grades 3 and above)

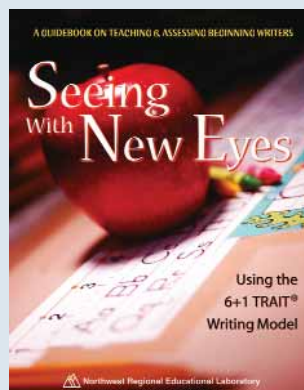
304 pp.

Item #E061

Member: \$24.25 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$26.99 plus shipping

Best Sellers



Seeing With New Eyes (6th ed.)

For primary students, writing can take many forms: drawings, scribbles, and text that goes every which way. The challenge for teachers is to see the experimentation and playfulness of young writers not as errors, but as ways of learning. The sixth edition of *Seeing With New Eyes* is designed to do just that.

Based on NWREL's 6+1 Trait® Writing model, this guidebook helps teachers use the traits of good writing as a framework for instruction and scoring of prewriters as well as competent ones. The sixth edition includes new scoring guides on a wide range of student work samples to help teachers give more effective feedback. While the main audience for the publication is teachers of grades K–2, the model can also be used effectively for older students in special education and Limited English Proficiency classes. (317 pp.)

Item #E028

Member: \$23.40 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$26.45 plus shipping





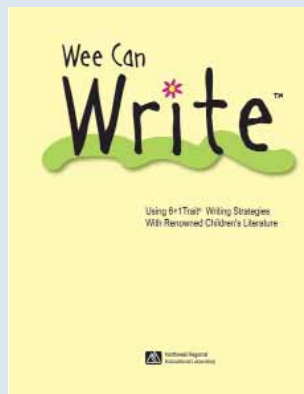
Picture Books: An Annotated Bibliography With Activities for Teaching Writing With the 6+1 Trait® Writing Model (6th ed.)

The latest edition of this perennial favorite contains an additional 150 annotations of picture books published between 1998 and 2004. The new annotations include many books suitable for use with young adult readers and listeners, indicated with a “YA” coding. As in the past, the descriptions are arranged by trait. Each of the traits has sample lesson plans for immediate classroom use, including the most recently added trait—presentation. If you have started using the 6+1 TRAIT Writing system in your classroom, you will find *Picture Books* a valuable resource. (176 pp.)

Item #E013

Member: \$17.25 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$19.60 plus shipping



Wee Can Write: Using 6+1 Trait® Writing Strategies With Renowned Children's Literature

NWREL introduces its latest book focusing on teaching and assessing the skills that are the bedrock of effective writing. Written by two kindergarten teachers, *Wee Can Write* ties the literacy needs of very young writers (pre-school–grade 2) to developmentally appropriate instructional strategies, including assessment of student understanding. Built on a foundation of renowned picture books and divided into the four seasons of the year, this book's flexible lessons for six traits continuously blend connections among reading, writing, speaking, and creative artwork, supporting a thematic and integrated approach to the writing activities. (135 pp.)

Item #E009

Member: \$22.65 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$25.70 plus shipping



6+1 Trait® Writing Rubric to Grade Converter

Teachers love a lot of things about the 6+1 TRAIT model: It helps them improve their writing instruction; it shows students what good writing looks like; and it creates a common vocabulary to discuss writing. But the main drawback to the model has always been the time-consuming calculations required to convert rubric scores to grades.

NWREL offers a time-saving solution that ensures accuracy—the rubric to grade converter. Using reliable slide-chart technology, the rubric to grade converter has the flexibility to work with the model's four-, five-, and six-point scales and can be used to grade writing on just one or all seven traits.

Item #E112

Member: \$9.75 plus shipping

Nonmember: \$10.60 plus shipping



Northwest Education is available online in both PDF and HTML versions.
Look for Web exclusives.

Up next in the fall issue:

Effective literacy coaching: Helping students learn to read and read to learn

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