Questions for Reflection

1. How does your school build English learners' primary language literacy?
2. How can print and online resources be used with English learners to develop primary language literacy?
3. How can you keep students focused on making sense of texts as they read?
4. How do you use and model the gradual release of responsibility in order to scaffold instruction?
5. What strategies have you used to support ELs' primary literacy?
6. How can you use primary language to help students access the Common Core State Standards?
7. How do you work together to ensure that all core components of your chosen program are faithfully and effectively implemented?

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In the STARlight

California continues to have the largest number of English learners (ELs), about 1.3 million, or 22 percent of all students enrolled in K-12 schools. A review of English language proficiency growth of ELs in recent years (as reported by CELDT) and academic performance in English Language Arts (ELA) reveals that these ELs are not meeting state goals. In fact, as Olsen (2010) has shown, a majority of ELs who are exited from EL services score below basic on the ELA California Standards Test (ELA/CST).

As the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are implemented, all educators will need to make special efforts to ensure that English learners do not fall even further behind. The new standards present all students with challenges of increased complexity, and they greatly emphasize literacy across the curriculum. The standards call for collaboration and teamwork, and active use of language in the context of inquiry. (CDE, 2013; Californians Together, 2013).

One research-based solution for these challenges is to build primary language literacy so that English learners can access the CCSS. Meta-analyses of a variety of bilingual programs have consistently shown that ELs who receive long-term bilingual education build literacy in their first languages and outscore ELs who are placed in English only programs (Slavin & Cheung, 2004). Reviews of research on second language literacy conclude that programs “where biliteracy is the goal and where bilingual instruction is sustained promote literacy in English, as well as primary language literacy” (California Department of Education, in press) (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Goldenberg & Riches, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008).

2. Ensure that Bilingual Programs are Well-Implemented

Bilingual programs succeed when they are understood and promoted by everyone at a school and when administrators provide teachers with time to plan together, provide teachers with professional development, include parent coaching, and give positive feedback to encourage teachers. It is essential that the core implementation components of the specific program be written, that teachers and administrators carefully monitor use of those components (Blase et al., 2012). In effective programs, administrators and teachers carefully plan curriculum and ensure that there are adequate resources in both languages (Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005). This includes planning for primary language environments in order to ensure that all students are working in their primary language. These program materials will be consistent with the CA ELD Standards and the CCSS. (California Department of Education, in press)

3. Schools and districts should adopt instructional materials that support the development of biliteracy.

The adoption should be supported by annual allocation of funds to ensure that these materials are consistently available to all ELs. Program 3: Biliiteracy Language Arts/English Language Development Basic Program, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight is one of the five options in the new California K-8 textbook adoption. This basic grade-level biliteracy language program provides instructional materials in English and in a language other than English which is intended to support ELs in developing literacy is both English and in another language. These program materials will be consistent with the CA ELD Standards and the CCSS. (California Department of Education, in press)

4. Primary Language Support

Even when bilingual instruction is not feasible, teachers can make use of materials in the primary language. By doing so, schools practice an additive approach to biliterality and do not risk threats to student self-identity. We can encourage family use of the home language to summarize the lesson. For example, the teacher can also use their first language to ask students what they know about the topic and then have students work in pairs or small groups to discuss what they know, using their first language. Teachers can teach the lesson in the students’ second language using different strategies to make the content comprehensible. For example, the teacher (parent or other partner) reviews the lesson in the students’ first language or has the students work in small groups using their first language to summarize the lesson.

Instructional Implications for Teachers

1. Garcia (2009, 2011) has shown that English learners engage in translanguaging, the drawing upon both languages naturally when they read and write in either language. Both Garcia (2011) and Cummins (2007) encourage teachers to promote the use of first languages as resources. Teachers should allow students to problem solve and show their understandings in their first languages as well as English. By allowing discussions in small groups and by providing parallel texts in the primary language, teachers support metacognitive language transfer.

2. Teachers can use original literature in the primary language as well as culturally relevant bilingual books to promote primary language literacy (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). Teachers can use the book as a first language preview and later have students read the book in their second language. Students can read in their second language and if they have difficulty, use their first language text as a resource to check for accurate comprehension. Students can compare and contrast versions of a book written in two languages. Teachers can also ensure that the classroom environmental print includes the language of all their students.

3. In both bilingual programs and programs taught only in English, teachers can implement preview/view/review (Freeman & Freeman, 2000). The teacher, a parent, a paraprofessional, or a student provides a preview by giving a short overview of a lesson, reading a book, or showing a video in the students’ first language. The teacher can also ask students what they know about the topic and then have students work in pairs or small groups to discuss what they know, using their first language. Teachers teach the lesson in the students’ second language using different strategies to make the content comprehensible. For example, the teacher (parent or other partner) reviews the lesson in the students’ first language or has the students work in small groups using their first language to summarize the lesson.

Online Resources

1. Implement Multiliteracies Pedagogy
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWkZwI6V0e4

2. Translanguaging Guide – Strategies for Using Primary Languages

3. Freeman and Freeman Articles and PowerPoints on ELs http://davidandyvonnyfreeman.com

4. Teachers can teach reading using a meaning centered gradual release of responsibility model. Effective literacy instruction involves gradually shifting the responsibility from the teacher to the students (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983; Fisher and Frey, 2007). This model includes read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. The goal of any literacy program should enable students to become engaged readers who choose to read and who can construct meaning from a variety of texts (Brozo, Shiel, & Topping, 2007/2008). Meaning making is goal of any reading instruction. “Meaning making must be the central purpose for interacting with text, producing text, and engaging in discussions. Meaning making includes literal comprehension but is not confined to it at any grade level” (Freeman & Freeman, in press) (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). Teachers of all content areas will need to focus on language development (both oral and written) for all students, and especially for ELs (California Department of Education, 2013; Californians Together, 2013).

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6. Instruction should include collaborative, interactive, inquiry-based pedagogy and language development to support success in the CCSS. (Californians Together, 2013). It should focus on twenty-first century skills that include the 4 Cs: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. These should be fostered in all curriculum areas.

References

References are posted at http://mes.sccoe.org/bcn/Pages/default.aspx.

Online Resources

1. Implement Multiliteracies Pedagogy
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWkZwI6V0e4

2. Translanguaging Guide – Strategies for Using Primary Languages

3. Freeman and Freeman Articles and PowerPoints on ELs http://davidandyvonnyfreeman.com

http://www.colorincolrado.org

5. Scoop It Dual Language Resource
http://www.scoop.it/search?q=dual+language+education

6. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) National:
http://www.corestandards.org

http://www.cde.ca.gov/cc/

http://www.scoop.it/search?q=dual+language+education

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWKZWIdVQe4

http://www.nysieb.ws.gc.cuny.edu/files/2013/03/

5.21 – Partnership for 21st Century Skills