Effective Practices in Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs

Overview

The ALD4ALL Project has several objectives and components for improving bilingual-multicultural education in New Mexico. A major component of the project is to conduct an inquiry into the effective practices for improving the education of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students, including English Learners (ELs). Findings from the inquiry would then inform the design and development of new approaches for professional learning for teachers and administrators. The project team structured the inquiry using a framework of systemic indicators put forth by Cadiero-Kaplan (2004).

Cadiero-Kaplan's indicators of effective practices—Value of Learner, Academic Language Orientation, Expectations for Learners, Instructional Goals, Resources, Assessment and Accountability, and Program Approaches are a source of inquiry that provides a structure for systemic inquiry.

The inquiry team conducted site visits and ongoing data collection at 12 schools identified for their promise and achievement in New Mexico.

Using expanded definitions of Cadiero-Kaplan's indicators, the team conducted 98 classroom observations and numerous participant interviews and focus groups at 12 participating schools who were chosen because of their promise and achievement in serving CLD students.

The findings—that we term *Effective Instructional Practices— include the following:*

1) *Child-Centered Value of Learners;*

2) *Holistic Academic Language and Literacy Orientation;*

3) *Expectations for Active Learners;*

4) *School/Program-Wide Instructional Planning;*

5) *Resources for Learning in a Bilingual Context;*

6) *Performance-Based Assessment and Accountability,* and

7) *Bilingual-Multicultural Education Program Models.*

The inquiry findings demonstrated that there are varying levels of implementation of these effective practices and that not all schools demonstrated similar levels on all indicators. For instance, some schools easily epitomized one of the indicators, while other schools were more balanced across some or all the indicators.

Effective Instructional Practices in BMEB Programs

Student-Centered Value of Learners

Draw on students' experiential background and skills to meet learning goals.

Students learn best when their home language, learning preferences, and community practices are leveraged to further advance their academic, socio-emotional, and spiritual development. Teachers can improve English learners (ELs) learning outcomes by using culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices (Tharp et al., 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) that draw upon students' cultural and linguistic resources by accessing their prior knowledge and relevant experiences and skills. These practices have been found to develop literacy comprehension and decoding/encoding skills among ELs (August & Shanahan, 2006; Escamilla et al., 2013).

Indicators of Student-Centered Value of Learners

The educator:

1) acknowledges the diversity of the students in their classroom by including the multiple cultural identities that children have acquired from their home/community practices;

2) offers opportunities for students to use their different learning preferences by engaging them through various forms of learning such as dancing, singing, art, and music participation;

3) values students' home language as a resource for learning across different disciplines;

4) learns about students' and families' *funds of knowledge* (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005), cultural and linguistic resources, and experiential practices by engaging students, parents, and community members in the development and application of place-based learning;

5) practices multiple ways of valuing success in the classroom by including academic, socio-emotional, spiritual, and social justice approaches to learning and assessment;

6) assures children's participation in their learning by embracing a stance that ALL children can learn, and

7) makes the classroom culture inclusive of ALL children.

Holistic Academic Language and Literacy Orientation

Teach multidimensional uses of language explicitly, across all content areas ensuring real-world applicability of concepts and skills learned.

Academic language goals are met when the teacher extends learning beyond vocabulary skills to include discourse competence that requires linguistic knowledge—knowing how to act, talk, interpret, and think according to the particular cultural or social group (Gutiérrez, 1995). Students' application of language in real-world situations increases their use of

language in functional and communicative ways that vary according to context (Schleppegrell, 2004).

Using language in multidimensional ways, including speaking and writing, encourages students to use their everyday forms of language as a means of understanding the language of texts (i.e. the use of popular culture such as media to better comprehend texts)(Bailey & Heritage, 2008).

Disciplinary literacy involves written and spoken expression of complex ideas and concepts that are embedded in the context of a subject essential for learning the core curricula making use of the multiple literacies that students bring to the teaching-learning process (Gee, 2007 Gibbons, 2009; 2002).

Indicators of Holistic Academic Language and literacy Orientation

The educator:

1) knows the language of the classroom and texts, for example, use of content-based vocabulary, language forms and conventions, and language complexity;

2) identifies and understands the functions of academic language and disciplinary literacy and how to use it to expand students' social and linguistic capital;

3) understands that discourse (ways of communicating oral or spoken language) is a social practice and varies across contexts and groups;

4) recognizes that the students' home and community experiences influence their literacy and language development and uses in instruction, and

5) encourages students to develop academic language in their first and second language strengthening their bilingualism and biliteracy.

Expectations for Active Learners

Communicate clear learning goals and objectives while expecting all students to demonstrate growth.

Effective educators set goals and objectives that ensure clear expectations for learning by actively involving students in applying solid fundamental skills, critical thinking, logical reasoning, and numeracy and literacy in creative problem-solving ways.

Teaching and learning is not only an individual endeavor, but is also socially mediated and context-dependent (Vygotsky, 1978). Effective educators recognize this and also that individuals possess valuable *funds of knowledge* (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Therefore, ALL teachers should view their students as capable learners who can negotiate meaning with others and become active, self-regulated learners and decision-makers. Teachers and students need to have a shared understanding about the students' boundless potential to meet expected outcomes, demonstrate growth, and use critical thinking to succeed in school.

Indicators of Expectations for Active Learners

The educator:

1) studies the content of relevant national, tribal, state, and/or local standards and develops an achievement plan for student performance;

2) identifies clear expectations for learning by stating the overall learning goal(s), defining objectives, and clearly articulating the steps to accomplish the goal(s);

3) organizes learning where students and teacher are collaboratively negotiating meaning during instruction (e.g., instructional conversation);

4) understands that ALL children are capable learners by supporting their positive self-efficacy;

5) designs opportunities to explicitly teach students the social capital necessary for an equitable education;

6) creates opportunities for students to be active participants in decision-making about their learning;

7) builds a classroom community that collaboratively sets the expected behaviors and rules, and

8) helps students examine curriculum from multiple perspectives.

School/Program-Wide Instructional Planning

Plan rigorous, interactive, and meaningful core curriculum, lessons, activities and approaches to meet learning goals and objectives.

Teacher coaching, modeling, and on-going support are an integral component of intervention design (Walqui, 2011) and critical components of a sociocultural approach to professional learning. Furthermore, educators who employ a generative theory (Ball, 2009) of designing school/program-wide instructional planning are capable of connecting their personal and professional knowledge with what they learn from their colleagues and students in order to implement their instruction and meet students' educational needs, interests, and inquires. To do this, schools should embed school/program-wide collaborative teaming to plan for curriculum, instruction and assessment through study groups, coaching/mentoring models, lesson study and/or professional learning communities (PLCs).

For example, teachers across New Mexico meet in PLCs to develop instructional plans by using the district level curriculum pacing guides and relating it to New Mexico's language standards and common core in order to meet language, literacy and content goals. Furthermore, through these PLC gatherings, teachers can share their expertise and experiences about implementing approaches essential toward meeting content and language objectives aligned with multiple learning standards.

Indicators of School/Program-Wide Instructional Planning

The administrator/leadership team:

- assigns students strategically to classrooms and programs, and

- collaborates with teachers to develop instructional guides,

- collaborates with teachers and stakeholders to design, develop and align the school curricula, and

- structures and often leads productive and accountable PLC meetings.

The educator:

1) plans interactive language and content objectives and activities that are measureable by teacher and students connected to multiple languages, such as:

   a) journal-writing,

   b) rubrics (students measure own learning),

   c) feedback (can be oral and in multiple languages),

   d) exit cards (in assigned language),

   e) data notebooks (students keep their own, track progress in assigned language, and write goals for the day), and

   f) differentiation of instruction (in which the teachers use a common language when talking about instruction and know when to adapt).

2) develops meaningful, content-relevant language objectives by recognizing students "funds of knowledge" and language abilities, such as:

   a) practicing presentation skills in multiple languages;

   b) preparing students for the state writing assessment by explicitly modeling the expected format, structure, and content, including voice, and

   c) maintaining the target language if relevant to the goals of the school's bilingual program model.

3) arranges language and literacy learning through teacher-led and/or student collaborative groups, such as:

   a) teacher repetition of language and content objectives, and

   b) peer-to-peer coaching in multiple languages;

Resources for Learning in a Bilingual Context

Identify and maximize use of available resources to support teaching and learning.

Implementing bilingual-multicultural program models in New Mexico requires the schools' leadership to be under the guidance of the Bilingual Multicultural Education Bureau (BMEB). The Bilingual Multicultural Education Bureau (BMEB) processes school/program-wide program goals and monitors the allocation of funds ensuring appropriate use of monies to meet the educational goals of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. The BMEB provides guidelines for implementation of five bilingual education program models: Dual language, maintenance, transitional, heritage language, and enrichment. It is each individual school's leadership responsibility to be good stewards of available financial and human resources allocated to them by managing and aligning programming with funding sources. Also, it is the responsibility of leadership to be familiar

with program goals that are in alignment with community/tribal needs and interests. Each bilingual education school/program-wide model must support the teaching and learning of CLD/ELs enrolled in the bilingual model by allocating monies for materials, services, and human capital.

Indicators of Resources for Learning in a Bilingual Context

The educator:

1) communicates with leadership about the financial support for materials and services that are needed to meet the educational goals of CLD/ELs for academic success, such as:

    a) books in multiple languages for literacy and content learning,

    b) smart boards,

    c) after-school, weekend tutoring, and summer enrichment programs

    d) cultural enrichment,

    e) community support (whole child approach),

    f) family literacy center,

    g) collaborative outreach programs involving different stakeholders including community and governmental agencies (e.g., health providers, counseling services, clinics, youth centers, and housing liaisons),

    h) technology classes, and

    i) local resources and artifacts in the form of posters, prints, books, guides, people, songs, stories, and agricultural knowledge.

2) assists leadership in identifying human capital and time to support the implementation of the bilingual educational program model goals, such as:

    a) recruiting highly qualified teachers with bilingual and/or TESOL endorsement and/or Native Language certificate and community, preferably local, community experiences and knowledge;

    b) recruiting, screening, and interviewing school-level EL/bilingual coordinators;

    c) bringing in professional development support from the district personnel through ongoing, embedded, based on research, based on data, teacher to teacher professional learning;

    d) implementing weekly teacher collaborations in departmental PLCs or common planning meetings, and once a month with leadership to discuss new research and practices that are needed based on a continuous review of student data;

    e) recruiting a principal as expert instructional leader with community knowledge;

    f) facilitating students, families and community as resources in classroom;

    g) recruiting and supporting indigenous heritage language teachers who see the benefits and challenges of teaching a heritage language;

h) stimulating parent engagement and participation in school sponsored family nights or cultural nights to promote indigenous languages and cultures in the community;

i) allowing parents to share their funds of knowledge in support of the curriculum and instruction;

j) having teachers interview local businesses in the community in order to learn about the assets that the community, families, and students bring to school;

k) providing opportunities for students to consult each other often for information, and

l) Implementing culturally-relevant professional learning opportunities for ALL.

Performance-Based Assessment and Accountability

Measure and record student learning to inform programmatic and instructional decision-making.

School leaders, including teachers, set program and instruction goals for decision-making starting with community/parent survey/input, administrative-peer-teacher and student feedback, and assessment of student data. Available information is also used to plan for placement and balanced classrooms—balanced by gender, SES, language dominance, proficiency levels. Student data are recorded through performance assessments consisting of any form of measurement in which the student constructs a response orally or in writing (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996).

Some of the characteristics of performance-based assessment and accountability are the setting of a criteria that are made known in advance. Ideally, the criteria should be collaboratively developed with local families, and community/tribal members. Further, students can be active learners by helping set the criteria and using the criteria in the self-assessing their own performance.

Indicators of Performance-Based Assessment and Accountability

The educator:

1) measures student progress through various forms of performance-based assessment and accountability, such as:

a) utilizing the Oral Dine language assessment (ODLA), district level assessments, teacher-made assessment, portfolios, projects, and rubrics;

b) utilizing the Woodcock-Muñoz, IPT, LAS Links, and other Spanish home language assessments;

c) WIDA ACCESS English language proficiency assessment;
d) developing holistic biliteracy common language assessments;

e) conducting formative assessments in the form of teacher observations, anecdotal notes, writing, pair/share, and exit cards;

f) integrating language skills and content across content areas;

g) putting up class progress charts toward individual and collective goals;

h) utilizing Response To Intervention (RTI) plans to measure student achievement;

i) strongly recommending teacher and student conferencing about editing students drafts before publishing the text;

j) circulating the room and providing feedback when needed in order for students to better understand the purpose of the activity (checking for understanding in both languages);

k) using multiple ways of mining data to inform instruction (such as weekly teacher collaboration), and, for example, monitoring their students' literacy progress to inform their literacy instruction, and

l) assessment student progress through teacher observation, student self-assessment, computer-assisted learning and data folders.

Bilingual-Multicultural Education Program Models

Implement Bilingual Multicultural Education Program models that embody the sociocultural and local context for teaching and learning.

Ideally, program planning and/or adoption begins with an open dialogue with stakeholders, including parents and the community about their children's education before adopting a given program model. To do this, schools/programs should have an understanding of and commitment to the local community's resources, needs, and interests, especially regarding on students' cultural, linguistic, academic, and socio-emotional well-being.

Indicators of Bilingual-Multicultural Education Program Models

The educator:

1) re-examines the school or program's existing bilingual-multicultural program model, if applicable, using the indicators of effective instructional practices mentioned above.

2) examines how other program models and/or approaches, based on the indicators of effective instructional practices mentioned above, may offer greater benefits or improvements in the education of CLD.