Making Time for Small Group Instruction—implementing productive literacy centers

by Jessica Ladd, Manzano Mesa Elementary School

Small-group reading instruction is the heart of any literacy program, but the question is always, “What are the other students doing as you work with your small group?” Literacy centers are a fantastic way to meet the challenge of productively engaging the rest of the class. They provide children the time to practice skills previously taught, make choices, take ownership of their learning, and most importantly, learn how to work responsibly and independently while the teacher focuses on guided reading with a small group.

Laying the foundation for independent literacy center work

The first week of school, I introduce all areas of my first-grade classroom so that the kids know how to access and manage resources. In preparation, I clearly organize and label all materials and areas or “centers” in the room. To introduce these areas, I work with one group in one area of the room while the rest of the class has been split up into groups of three or four and are working on an activity such as play-do, writing, pattern blocks, etc. This usually takes about two weeks to thoroughly introduce the room and materials.

After the room introduction, I begin doing literacy activities with the whole group that will later turn into center work (bingo, word family sorts, word wall activities, math games, writing routines such as squiggle writing). I frequently use centers that include math, listening, word wall, word family, science, poetry, and writing. During this time, I hang a chart that shows each table group and what the students are supposed to do when they are finished with the activity.

We establish routines so the class knows how to function in the centers, where their completed work goes, and what to do when finished, rather than saying, “Teacher, teacher! I’m done!” I spend a minimum of three weeks working on these routines to ensure the children are able to work independently. Not only is this developmentally appropriate, the practice time also supports my English language learners (ELL’s).

The next step is to thoughtfully place the kids into their literacy groups. I do this after I know the kids and their skills a bit better. The groups are heterogeneous. I make sure that I have a

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write about their favorite part. Later, they will respond more in depth to the story by listing the characters in the story, retelling the beginning, middle, and end, or writing the problem and the solution. These are skills that I would have taught and practiced again and again during my read-aloud time.

MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE LITERACY CENTERS

One key aspect to the smooth running of literacy centers is to ensure that all activities are based upon skills already taught during the first six weeks of school or throughout other parts of the day. This will ensure success for both you and your students. It never works out well when a center includes a new skill! This is important for all my students, but especially for those who are English language learners. The familiarity of the content and task is an important scaffold for them, as are the multiple opportunities to work on related content and language.

The second key is to introduce the new centers each week in great detail. While this does take time, it is time well spent. If there is a game we played in math the week before, I will take the time to refresh students' memories by actually playing the game with the class. I do not like to leave samples for the kids because I find they just copy the sample. In addition, before we start centers everyday, I do a brief re-cap of each center and show samples that other students have completed. If the center is complicated enough to need a sample, then I will make sure I have a parent volunteer to help out, or I don’t use it as a center. Activities that are too complicated aren’t worth doing for me or the kids! I need to know that each center has activities that the students can be successful in completing independently. Figuring out which activities work best has gotten easier the longer I use literacy centers. The biggest lesson that I have learned in my five years of using centers is to make the activities predictable and familiar. This not only helps you and your planning but the students as well.

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Refocusing on Sheltered Instruction
by Carlos Ortega, Albuquerque High School

In August, Albuquerque High School asserted its principal goal in its Education Plan for Student Success, (EPSS), school year 2006-2007. “The number of Albuquerque High School students meeting ‘proficiency’ in reading will increase by 10% from 43.97% to 53.97% as measured by the New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment.” Furthermore, the EPSS lists the strategies with which teachers and students have attempted to meet this ambitious goal: the incorporation of periodic, uniform reading and writing strategies in English and Spanish across the curriculum as well as curriculum mapping. An example of evaluation is the school-wide, short-cycle assessment that consists of literacy strategy instruction and reading comprehension pre- and post-tests. This project has provided teachers opportunities for professional growth, effective teaching, and study of data on which to make decisions about future instruction toward realizing Albuquerque High’s EPSS goal.

Yet, other data taken from the New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment results, school year 2005-2006, became cause for concern for AHS Principal Linda Sink. Falling short of Adequate Yearly Progress, (AYP), only 15.38% of English language learners achieved proficiency in reading and 11.72% in math last year. While some of the staff’s interpretations of these results focused on ESL teaching and learning, a broader, more encompassing interpretation and decision prevailed. ELL students from the emerging to the proficient levels of English, from all content and elective classes, not just ESL students, would benefit from additional academic support. Fortunately, over the years, the Albuquerque Public Schools’ Alternative Language Services Plan has addressed the needs of students and teachers in schools with ELL students. The main thrust of APS’s Language and Cultural Equity’s efforts has been to train and support teachers in sheltered instruction. So, AHS could realize ELL students’ academic progress by revisiting sheltered instruction in its professional development program. Easy!

Well truly, not so easy, given that teachers and staff developers have long grappled with how to energize trainings in and encourage implementation of sheltered instruction throughout the district. A return to this topic in professional development, albeit very important and extremely relevant in Albuquerque High’s case, seemed like too daunting a trip to embark upon. How to infuse sheltering English instruction for ELL students with a renewed sense of worth and urgency, while facing the challenge to increase reading and math proficiency? Undoubtedly, teachers in all content areas could take advantage of effective sheltering this year.

Fortunately, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, developed by Jana Echavarría, Deborah Short, and others provided the clue for how to start the conversation among the faculty. Building background for language learning and explicitly linking concepts to students’ experiences and prior knowledge could yield good information for teachers in beginning their professional development discussions and work. A survey of student perceptions about effective sheltering could unlock teachers’ prior knowledge and experience for the purposes of using sheltered instruction.

LCE Resource Teachers Greg Hansen and Nancy Lawrence and Albuquerque High School Bilingual Coordinator Carlos J. Ortega designed the following survey of student perceptions of instruction and guidance by teachers:

**Students’ Language Instruction Survey @ AHS**
**Encuesta para estudiantes: la instrucción de idiomas**

1. Cuando estás en clase, ¿jamás explicas algo sobre tu vida personal o de lo que ya sabes sobre el tema de la lección? Provee ejemplos.
   When you are in class, do you ever share anything about your personal life or what you already know about the topic of the lesson? Give examples.

2. In class what do your teachers do to help you understand what you’re reading?
   En clase, ¿qué hacen tus maestros para ayudarte a comprender lo que estás leyendo?

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Engaging Navajo Students Through Culturally Relevant Language Projects
by Vincent Werito

In the last two years, I worked with a group of dedicated Navajo language teachers to create a Diné language and culture curriculum framework for the local school district. In our work, we have found that it is very important to acknowledge and incorporate Diné cultural traditions when developing thematic unit lessons while also recognizing that we are teaching students who have lived in an urban environment all or most of their lives, some who live in the city but often return to rural settings, and some who are multiethnic or of mixed race.

As a Diné language educator, I have been asked on many occasions about how Diné language and culture are relevant to urban Diné students. For example, I have been asked questions like: "Shouldn't we be teaching more of the language and not the culture?" or "Why should students who have no familiarity and connection with Navajo livestock, Navajo homes, or Navajo arts and crafts learn about them?"

These questions are in fact related to the notion that teachers need not be concerned with providing culturally relevant lessons or materials for those Indian students who have no connection to their cultural heritage. I have been told before by a teacher, "Why do you talk about Indian culture and traditions? It really is not important for these students who now live in our (the modern) world." More importantly, for us as educators, the questions point to a more significant goal of how to include students who are here, considering where they come from and where they live. That is, we have to remember that although our students are Navajo, they do not necessarily speak Navajo or know all of the cultural nuances and traditions like their parents and elders. On the other hand, there are many students who have recently moved to an urban environment from their Navajo homelands who do have familiarity with many of the Diné cultural traditions.

In response, we have maintained that although many of our students may not be familiar with Diné cultural traditions like their parents or grandparents, they are still in fact Diné and should, by every right, i.e., their human and linguistic rights, learn about their cultural and linguistic heritage. Moreover, the Diné language and culture, like all other languages and cultures, are changing, yet much has also remained the same as evident in our collective history and memory.

From this idea, we collaborated to create some wonderful culturally relevant thematic lessons that draw upon contemporary and traditional Diné cultural life-ways and issues. For example, in looking at traditional Diné foods, students also address important contemporary issues like diabetes and healthy organic food production. And, in discovering how traditional Diné homes were made, students also engage in critical thinking and learn about math and social studies topics like fractions and migration stories. Through such thematic lessons, students deepen their understanding of important historical and contemporary events and issues.

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through individual and group projects. Finally, it is imperative to note that through all this, the target language is maintained, and students are constantly immersed in and using the Diné language during the teaching and learning.

Much time and energy are spent in creating the space and environment for the students to hear and begin to comprehend the language. And so, for Navajo teachers, it is important to remember that all directions are given in Navajo; basic commands and verbs are integrated into daily lessons; everyday phrases and expressions are used in the classroom; and special time is allotted for students to share their ideas with one another and to reflect on their work. In this way, students in Navajo class, whether at the high school or elementary level, are engaging in their learning by creating their own knowledge and sharing that knowledge with one another.

As Navajo language teachers, one of our main goals of teaching Native languages is oral language development. By using second language teaching strategies and methods, and by acknowledging the importance of multiple learning styles and different cultural backgrounds, Navajo teachers and other teachers who work with English language learners must constantly engage and include their students in the lesson development and through culturally relevant social interactions so that students become critical thinkers and learners. Previously, I have stressed that our current educational models require some innovative approaches which will acknowledge and validate differences more than similarities that students bring to the classroom.

We emphasize the importance of Navajo history in our thematic units because it reinforces the traditional and contemporary concepts needed to become critical-minded thinkers and speakers of Navajo. I would like to point out here that creating culturally relevant lessons should be about more than integrating the language and culture of minority groups into content areas like history, language arts, math, and science. Instead, the idea is to integrate different perspectives, histories, and voices across, within, and throughout the school curriculum and the entire process of schooling. In this way, education is transformed and all educators can promote equal and equitable access to education for all students in the classroom, school, and community. It is through this type of transformation in our work with Navajo language students and teachers that we feel it is important to recognize the significance of empowerment and empowering students.

In the end, the Diné language, as an Indigenous heritage language, is changing, but it also retains many traditional core elements of respect and awareness which can also be adapted to work in a modern contemporary context. By working together with other teachers and culturally knowledgeable individuals, I believe that all teachers can create some exciting, innovative, and culturally appropriate instruction using thematic lesson planning in their classrooms. Viewing multicultural education as a process for transformative education will help foster this work. Finally, I believe that it is important that all educators come to fully understand and embrace the multiple forms and various sources of knowledge of all cultural groups.

REFERENCES
Yo estaba observando alumnos en una clase de cuarto grado de lenguaje dual durante la primera semana de clases. Ellos estaban haciendo una tarea en español. La maestra acababa de decirme que se estaba dando cuenta de que un alumno, Leonardo (no es su nombre verdadero), tenía dificultad con la lectura. En ese mismo instante, Leonardo se acercó a la maestra y le dijo: “¿Tiene algo que puedo colorear? Me gusta colorear”. La mirada de la maestra parecía decir “¿Ahora que hago?”

La maestra tenía razón. Leonardo sólo podía identificar 3 vocales (a, o, e) y 8 consonantes (b, d, k, l, r, s, t). Obviamente es un problema grave cuando un niño de cuarto grado sólo puede leer 11 letras, tras haber asistido desde kindergarten a las escuelas públicas en Estados Unidos. En vez de tratar de encontrar a quién culpar, la maestra y yo decidimos que la experiencia de Leonardo de cuarto grado iba a ser diferente a las experiencias del pasado. Trabajamos en un plan de acción.

Pensé inmediatamente en el trabajo de Paulo Freire, quien había encontrado una manera de enseñar a los jóvenes y a los adultos analfabetos en Suramérica, América Central y México. Han escrito mucho acerca de Paulo Freire y la pedagogía del oprimido. Simplemente utilizamos los componentes más básicos de las ideas de Freire:

- Los maestros y los estudiantes aprenden uno del otro a través del diálogo.
- La lección debe ser interesante y significativa para el estudiante.
- Una palabra generadora que le interese al principiante se puede analizar en sus componentes silábicos y se pueden formar nuevas palabras. (Por ejemplo, Freire utilizó la palabra generadora “basura” con jóvenes analfabetos de la calle. Ellos analizaron “ba, be, bi, bo, bu, sa, se, si, so, su, ra, re, ri, ro, ru” y formaron nuevas palabras - beso, Susi, sabe, sube, risa, rabo, etc.).

Los volcanes le fascinaban a Leonardo. Le traje una variedad de libros ilustrados acerca de los volcanes. Pronto me di cuenta de que Leonardo sabía mucho más que yo acerca de los volcanes. También había impresionantes ilustraciones de volcanes que había encontrado en Internet. El utilizó las ilustraciones para decorar una carpeta que usamos para guardar las palabras acerca de los volcanes. En la primera lección al estilo “Freire” utilizamos la palabra generadora “lava”. Le mostré la palabra, luego Leonardo tenía que poner las sílabas en el escritorio en orden de esta manera:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Las sílabas</th>
<th>Las palabras formadas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la va a</td>
<td>lavado vela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le ve e</td>
<td>veo ala ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>li vi i</td>
<td>lava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lo vo o</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lu vu u</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tuvo dificultades con las letras “i”, “u” y “v”. Al principio, Leonardo trató de evitar el ejercicio. Se quejaba de que estaba cansado, que tenía un dolor de cabeza, que no sabía leer, etc. Hicimos todo juntos, paso a paso. Repasamos las sílabas oralmente, luego le di ejemplos de cómo formar nuevas palabras usando las sílabas. Era un reto cognoscitivo, pero con apoyo, él pudo hacerlo. Hicimos tarjetas con las nuevas palabras escritas y tarjetas de ilustraciones que correspondían a las palabras. También jugamos “Fish” y Concentración.

La próxima lección estaba hecha con la palabra generadora “roca”. A Leonardo le encantan las rocas y era una buena conexión con los volcanes. Hablamos de las rocas, tocamos varias rocas y leímos libros acerca de las rocas. Le era difícil la letra “c”. Solamente usamos la “ca, co, y cu”. Como Leonardo ya sabía las letras “r” y “rr”, decidí incluir estas sílabas.

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Nuevamente practicamos con las tarjetas de palabras y las tarjetas con las ilustraciones. Además, le pedí a Leonardo que encontrara las palabras "lava" y "roca" en libros que habíamos leído acerca de los volcanes. Después de varias páginas, yo había decidido que era suficiente y no teníamos que seguir buscando palabras en el libro. Pero Leonardo insistió que acabáramos de encontrar todas las palabras "lava" y "roca" en el libro. Lo había subestimado. Leonardo se estaba dando cuenta de que era capaz de hacer lo que se le pedía. Estudiábamos "capa" y "cono" en la misma manera.

Noté que Leonardo estaba adquiriendo mayor confianza en la lectura. La repetición de las sílabas y la formación de palabras estaban dando buenos resultados. Mientras tanto, la maestra seguía leyendo con Leonardo todos los días. Sus compañeros le ayudaron con las sílabas. Sus compañeros de lectura jugaron "Fish" y Concentración con él. Un voluntario leyó con Leonardo dos veces a la semana.

Después de unos dos meses, Leonardo estaba listo para leer palabras más difíciles. Los dinosaurios eran otro tema de mucho interés. Discutimos mucho acerca de los dinosaurios y vimos varios libros. Leonardo formó palabras con las sílabas y utilizó las tarjetas de palabras y las ilustraciones para jugar los juegos que reforzaron el aprendizaje.

Leonardo también estaba muy interesado en los animales marinos. Tuvo la suerte de contar con unos caballitos de mar y se los enseñó. Usamos la palabra "caballito" como palabra generadora.

En abril, la maestra de Leonardo le dio un verano para ver su nivel de lectura en español. Su nivel era 2.1. Había avanzado dos años en lectura en sólo un año escolar. ¿Cómo pudo aprender a leer cuando no había podido antes? Leonardo dice que es porque todos lo ayudaron y fueron muy amables. Quizás es porque se quedó en su escuela todo el año. (Ya se habían cambiado más de 10 veces el año pasado.) Quizás algo mejoró en casa. Yo atribuyo mucho a la maestra quien exigía que Leonardo hiciera el trabajo de cuarto grado, pero con su apoyo cariñoso. Creo que el utilizar las palabras generadoras que le interesaban fue una estrategia poderosa. Al principio, Leonardo no podía leer, pero tenía un deseo de aprender. Leonardo todavía tiene que mejorar mucho, y estamos en estos momentos averiguando si tiene problemas de aprendizaje. Pero ya está leyendo.
Taking a Second Look at Ruby Payne’s "Framework"
by Greg Hansen

A few years ago I attended Ruby Payne’s workshop “A Framework for Understanding Poverty.” At the time, it seemed to make sense to me—as it has with many others, judging by her enormous success. Payne’s popularity has helped enable her to become an influential force in the efforts of educators to close the academic achievement gap (Keller, 2006). As Ms. Payne’s celebrity rises however, so does criticism surrounding her work. Teachers, parents, and educational researchers are challenging her assertions about generational poverty, claiming that her ideas are not new or innovative at all, but a reprise and repackaging of social deficit theory (Osei-Kofi, 2005).

The basic premise of her presentation is that teachers work more effectively when they understand the hidden rules that exist in a “culture of poverty,” and that teaching poor students the hidden rules of the middle class will help them to successfully navigate school. The ideas and suggestions in her book seem much less complex than what educators sometimes hear in relation to equity and achievement gap issues. Although Payne references multiple sources in her book, critics argue that she often misrepresents this scholarship, particularly the work of Jonathon Kozol, leaving her assertions without a solid foundation built on data and research (Dudley-Marling, 2007).

Undoubtedly, much of Payne’s appeal comes from the tendency to seek quick fixes to complex problems. Most of the research over the last three decades concerning educational equity has focused on the need to look inward, at our own attitudes and assumptions concerning students, and also at the institution of public education itself. Contemporary work in the field strongly suggests that serious efforts at creating a level playing field require an examination of the intersection of race, class, and gender that occurs in our schools. It also explores the role of public education both in interrupting and perpetuating barriers that exist in our society. Of course, this is difficult and challenging work that implies a need for fundamental change.

Payne’s A Framework for Understanding Poverty presents a more familiar and perhaps comfortable alternative. Using her approach, we examine what we perceive to be problems with the child based on his or her background, rather than aspects of our selves and the system as a whole. This can be seductive. The focus is on them, not me. I left the workshop that day believing that, in just a few hours, I had become a budding expert on the relationship between schooling and poverty.

Looking more profoundly into issues of educational equity inevitably leads to an examination of the ideologies that shape the way we talk about the level of change necessary for school reform. The bulk of the criticism surrounding Payne’s work is that she uses stereotypes and gross generalizations to describe a “culture of poverty” that support notions of cultural deficiency. A theory of cultural deficiency arose to explain the persistence of racial achievement gaps despite desegregation efforts and has been applied to social class as well. In the 1960’s, this theory posited that personal responsibility, lack of desire to succeed, and various problems within minority communities were to blame for disproportionate school success between White students and students of color (Dudley-Maning, 2007). Like Payne’s “framework,” this theory did not take into account the effects of discriminatory policies and practices, school funding, school curriculum, teacher expectations, and other aspects of existing public school systems.

While social deficit theory has been widely discredited, many sociologists and critical race theorists argue that it is alive and well in popular discourse and used to explain, normalize, and maintain race and class-based social stratification (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Payne echoes social deficit theory in her text when she describes characteristics of people living in poverty in terms such as:

- Options are hardly ever examined. Everything is polarized, it is one way or another. These kinds of statements are common: ‘I quit’ or ‘I can’t do it.’” (p.69)

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“Time exists only in the present. The future does not exist except as a word. Time is flexible and not measured. Time is often assigned on the basis of emotional significance and not the actual measured time.” (p.69)

“Destiny and fate are the major tenets of the belief system. Choice is seldom considered.” (p.69)

“The key issue for males is to ‘be a man.’ The man is expected to work hard physically, and be a lover and a fighter.” (p.68)

“People are possessions. There is a great deal of fear and comment about ‘getting above your raisings’.” (p.69)

Language like this is found throughout Payne’s self-published book, bolstering her claim that people living in poverty lack the emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical resources that would allow them access to a middle class existence (Keller, 2006). This discourse seems to share much of the ideology behind assertions along the lines of: “The problem is that this community doesn’t value education; just look at their parents,” or “Face it, these kids just aren’t college material,” or “My grandparents made it, so why can’t these people? They’re just lazy.”

Missing from Payne’s "Framework," is a direct and open discussion of race, despite mountains of data and personal narratives that document the persistence of a racial achievement gap, even among students of similar class backgrounds (Tatum, 1987). In the workshop I attended, she let the audience know right off the bat that this was to be a conversation about class and not race. Looking back, I wonder how many people in attendance might have felt frustration at her willingness to separate the two. In 2004, the Washington Post reported that the median net worth (including home equity) for Black and Hispanic families was under $8,000, while the median net worth of White households was $88,000, ten times more. This gap is often attributed, in part, to the legacy of discriminatory lending and real estate practices like redlining and blockbusting. Yet Payne insists that race and class can be spoken about separately. One must question the rationality of her position considering the amount of evidence to the contrary.

Taking a step back, I wonder why I was so willing to consider Ms. Payne an expert on poverty to begin with. She claims a middle-class background and states that her premise did not emerge from a field of study, but from her own experiences working with students for twenty-four years, and from her marriage to her husband who grew up in poverty (Payne, 2001). Let’s take a look at an approach quite different from Payne’s, using actual learning experiences. The examples below are from The Diversity Kit, an Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education, 2002, a free online resource for equity in education:

“Teachers visited students' homes, gaining an understanding of their Latino students' cultural backgrounds and gathering material for their curriculum. One teacher drew on the expertise of parents employed in construction occupations to create a mathematics curriculum. Another found that many of her students' families had extensive knowledge of the medicinal value of plants and herbs, so she taught scientific concepts in that context. Still another based a curriculum unit on the discovery that some students regularly return from Mexico with candy to sell. Students investigated the economics of marketing, did a nutritional analysis of candy, studied the processing of sugar, conducted a survey on favorite candies for which they graphed data and made a report.”

(Adapted from McLaughlin and McLeod, 1996)

“A class of African American middle school students in Dallas identified the problem of their school being surrounded by liquor stores (Robinson, 1993). Zoning regulations in the city made some areas dry while the students' school was in a wet area. The students identified the fact that schools serving white, upper

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middle class students were in dry areas, while students in poor communities were in wet areas. The students, assisted by their teacher, planned a strategy for exposing this inequity. By using mathematics, literacy, social and political skills, they were able to prove their points with reports, editorials charts, maps, and graphs... students’ learning became a form of cultural critique.”

In contrast to Payne’s "Framework," these vignettes illustrate how teachers can provide high support and hold high expectations, focusing not on what the students lack, but on the knowledge that they bring to the table. They are also examples of how education can take a role in addressing foundations and causes of inequities that persist both in our schools and our society.

REFERENCES

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

3. En clase, ¿qué hacen tus maestros para ayudarte a comprender lo que están diciendo? 
In class what do your teachers do to help you understand what they’re saying?

4. What kinds of classroom activities help you to learn best? 
¿Cuáles son las actividades del aula que mejor te ayudan a aprender?

5. ¿Qué trabajos manuales o en los que hayas utilizado tus otros sentidos has hecho en clase? 
¿Puedes recordar ejemplos de cuando tus maestros han utilizado gráficas, modelos, objetos, fotos, dibujos o pinturas para presentar lecciones? 
What learning activities have you done involving your hands and other senses in class? Can you remember examples when teachers use graphs, models, objects, photos, drawings or pictures to teach lessons?

6. What could teachers do to make you feel comfortable and confident in your learning? 
¿Qué podrían hacer tus maestros para que te sientas cómodo y seguro de ti mismo en tus estudios?

7. ¿Qué piensas hacer después de graduarte de la prepa? ¿Piensas que el español y/o el inglés te beneficiarán en la carrera? ¿Cómo? 
What are you thinking about doing after you graduate from high school? Do you think English and/or Spanish will be beneficial to you in your career? How so?

From a random sample of student responses, to the survey, Albuquerque High School teachers’ interest might well have been piqued by these students’ perceptions, perhaps not only for their less than favorable observations, but also for their glowingly favorable tone, too. How impressive to see that students recognize effective language and content teaching strategies! How important to see for one’s self that much honing of one’s own teaching skills is necessary.

In subsequent issues of Making Connections, we will see how AHS students responded to the questionnaire, how content area department faculty began their examination of sheltering techniques as a result of information gathered from the responses, and next steps in the journey of professional development around sheltered instruction.
Once I’ve begun to implement centers, I can focus on my reading instruction. My guided reading groups are fluid and change as the needs of the students change. This has little impact on the center work because the center groups stay the same. I simply form a guided reading group from students working at the various centers. Students usually have time to return and finish their work at the center after the guided reading session. If they don’t, they have a place to put the work until they can get back to it at another time.

Assessing student work
At the beginning of the year, it is important to take the time to check in daily with each group to see what they have done. This teaches the students to be accountable during this time; also, I learn the independence level of each child. This helps me with my planning. At the end of each week, after quickly looking through their center work which is kept in their “turn-in folders,” I will send it home. My main objective at this time is for the kids to be independent workers and problem-solvers. Because they are sometimes reading with me and do not have time to finish the activity, I do NOT require that every child complete every assignment. I do expect them to be actively involved in their center if they are not reading with me. I keep a mental note as to who is staying on task or not. If there are problems, we discuss them as a class at the end of centers and brainstorm how we can do better the next time.

Linking literacy centers to literacy work throughout the day...
In addition to center time, I do word work, shared reading and a read-aloud with an extension activity everyday. I integrate social studies and/or science into my curriculum through read-alouds. We do writer’s workshop at the end of the day, outside of our literacy block. These are integral pieces to my literacy centers because it is during those other times that I teach the skills we practice independently in the centers.

In the end, this instructional format works best when I remember that the purpose of literacy centers is to allow me time for uninterrupted small group instruction while the students have the opportunity to take ownership of their learning as they practice skills previously taught. It is amazing to see how the class stays engaged in meaningful activities for 40 - 45 minutes by the end of the year. They enjoy centers and it provides them important time to socialize, use appropriate social and academic language, and to learn to work together—something that they don’t always have the opportunity to do!

I group my ELL students with kids who have strong language skills... (which) ...provides them the opportunity for regular and extensive oral language development.

Literacy Center Resources
- Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children: Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell
- Words Their Way: Donald Bear
- Primary Literacy Centers: Making Reading and Writing Stick: Susan Nations and Mellissa Alonso
- Teaching Children to Care: Ruth Sidney Charney
- Teaching Reading and Writing with Word Walls: Janeil Wagstaff
- 40 Sensational Sight Word Games: Grades K – 2: Joan Novelli
- Phonics for First Grade: Patricia Cunningham
- http://www.fcrr.org/curriculum/studentCenterActivities.htm
- http://www.carlscorner.us/
Making more connections!

**Coming Events**


- **National Association for Multicultural Education’s 17th Annual International Conference** — Charting the Course to Academic Excellence and Equity through Multicultural Education: October 31-November 4, 2007. For more information, visit the NAME website at www.nameorg.org.


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**Cross Cultural Resource Library**

**Summer Hours are as follows:**
- Open daily: 8:00-4:30
- Closed daily for lunch: 12:00-1:00

**Library Specialist:** Jo Ann Gonzales

Please call 880.8249, ext. 154, before making the trip to be sure the library is open.

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**TESOL Endorsement and Survival Spanish Courses for APS Teachers – Summer 2007**

The College of Santa Fe is making available June courses for the TESOL Endorsement and in Survival Spanish for Teachers. The TESOL courses satisfy all NM State requirements for the endorsement. The Survival Spanish course helps participants to communicate better with monolingual Spanish-speaking children and their families and will satisfy the foreign language requirement for the TESOL Endorsement. Tuition for each course is $375, to be paid on the first day of class and reimbursed by Language and Cultural Equity when the course is passed. Contact: Prof. Henry Shoner at 855.7271 or at hshonerd@csf.edu.

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**Fyi...**

**Professional Development Offerings from Dual Language Education of New Mexico**

**Summer Critical Institutes**

**Dual Language Power Planning with a Science Focus**
- June 12-14, 2007 or June 26-28, 2007
- Fee: $305

For APS teachers — pay for one registration and LCE will cover the cost of a second.

**Facilitators:** Denise Sandy-Sánchez and Natalie Olague

**Dual U Training of Trainers**

Participate in a three-day training of trainers for staff developers led by the authors of Dual Language Instruction: A Handbook for Enriched Education.
- June 20-22, 2007, in Santa Fe
- Fee: $1000

More information and registration forms can be found at www.duallanguagemn.org.

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**Department of Language and Cultural Equity**

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