

# Making Connections

Language, Literacy, Learning

 A publication of the Department of Language and Cultural Equity 

## ***Instructional Conversation in a Middle School Setting***

*by Jesús Reveles, ALS Coordinator*

"I think, therefore I am"—Descartes  
"I have been listened to, therefore I am"—Anon.

### **What is Instructional Conversation?**

Instructional Conversation is a teaching strategy in which the classroom is arranged to accommodate conversation with small groups of students. The conversation is not random but has clear academic goals. The students speak more than the teacher; the teacher thus becomes a listener and facilitator. The Instructional Conversation (IC) protocol is a way to transform a classroom into a more productive learning community through dialogic teaching. It is a natural way to teach, learn, and create a dynamic classroom where sharing ideas and knowledge is the norm.

During Instructional Conversation, the teacher listens carefully and assists the students' efforts. For example, a teacher facilitating an IC about a book students have read together might ask the students to share their ideas about how they can identify with the characters or the situation. The teacher might probe students' thinking further by asking them to explain their thinking in more detail or give examples of what they mean. The IC is a place where school learning and



***Instructional Conversation supports middle school students' enjoyment of peer group discussion. Here, Van Buren M. S. students in Jeri Miller's class analyze text together.***

knowledge are connected to the students' personal, family, and community knowledge. The teacher believes that the students have something to say that goes beyond the text and the known answer in the teacher's head. IC helps develop the language of instruction and content of other academic subjects while reducing the distance between the teacher and the students (2000, Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence).

### **Why is Instructional Conversation important for English language learners?**

Research shows that Instructional Conversation between teachers and students (K-12) is minimal. Yet, there is strong evidence that IC helps to raise reading comprehension scores for limited English proficient students (*Teaching Transformed*, Tharp et al., 2000, pg. 33). Therefore, it is vital that teachers who teach limited English proficient students create a classroom environment where Instructional Conversation takes place daily and

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in all academic subjects. IC’s allow students to construct and own their learning, while building on personal connections. They provide the opportunity for students to acquire both content and language from each other as they negotiate understanding.

**How do IC’s work at the middle school level?**

Ms. Olachea regularly uses thematic instruction and cooperative learning in her class at Truman M.S. About eighty percent of her students are Hispanic and four are English language learners. Her sixth grade students were reading *The Circuit*, by Francisco Jiménez—a story about migrant farm workers. Ms. Olachea had established an environment of collaboration and community when I arrived to facilitate an IC about the story.

The instructional goals for this IC were character analysis and comprehension. We formed four small groups of five or six students, set the norms (active listening, take a risk, and speak to the group), and then asked the following open-ended questions: “Which characters did you identify the most with?” and “What surprised you?” We provided the students with role cards, assigning four roles to each group (reporter, encourager, writer, and facilitator). In their groups, students talked about the book and shared their reactions and their own experiences. After twenty minutes of dialogue, each reporter summarized the group’s conversation for the whole class.

One of the reporters was an English language learner. Reporting was a courageous move for the student, and it is indicative of the environment of trust that the teacher has created. Although he was at an intermediate level of English language development, he reported his group summary clearly, with detail and confidence. His summary showed that he truly comprehended the task and text and made a personal connection to the story. It also demonstrated how completely his group negotiated language in the IC setting.

Using the IC to promote comprehension was consistent with Ms. Olachea’s teaching practice. It was interesting to hear students’ insights and reactions. We helped them clarify and extend their thinking through inquiry. Ms. Olachea also gained new information about the students’ understanding and language proficiency.

According to the teacher, the experience of reading *The Circuit* was an empowering event for some students. The content allowed them to address real life issues through connections to the text. IC created a space for these students to express themselves and take risks not taken before. It was a rich experience in which the students were listened to and freely shared what they knew and how they felt about the story. Therefore, they will be more willing to engage in class conversations in the future.

The following chart is a list of eight indicators of effective IC’s. Use these indicators to plan, implement, and assess your own IC lessons.

The Teacher: <b>INDICATORS OF INSTRUCTIONAL CONVERSATION</b>	
1.	Arranges the classroom to accommodate conversation between the teacher and a small group of students on a regular and frequent basis.
2.	Has a clear academic goal that guides conversation with students.
3.	Ensures that students’ talk occurs at higher rates than teacher talk.
4.	Guides conversation to include students’ views, judgments, and rationales using text evidence and other substantive support.
5.	Ensures that all students are included in the conversation according to their preferences.
6.	Listens carefully to assess levels of students’ understanding.
7.	Assists students’ learning throughout the conversation by questioning, restating, praising, encouraging, etc.
8.	Guides the students to prepare a product that indicates the Instructional Conversation’s goal was achieved.
(2000, Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence)	

## La importancia de ser bilingüe

by Marisela Angulo, Senior, Río Grande High School

Excerpts from Marisela's bilingual seal essays...

I recently received a college magazine in which language was described as "man's most intimate external possession." These words on language made me realize that I have been living a life in which the two languages that I understand have taught me to live and experience two completely different worlds.

*El mundo del inglés es caracterizado por mi socialización e interacción con mis alrededores fuera de mi hogar. El mundo del español es el mundo de mi hogar, en el cual tengo una familia que me da enseñanzas de moralidad y que me enseña también a reconocer buenos principios que me harán una persona de valor y prestigio. Pero aún mas importante, estos dos idiomas representan dos distintas y bellas culturas.*

*La última vez que visité Sonora, México, el lugar en donde nací, mi abuelo me regaló un libro viejo llamado La Historia de la Filosofía. Este libro era el mismo que él y sus hijos habían leído y marcado, llenándolo de notas interesantes. A como fui leyendo el libro, me di cuenta de que el idioma en el que estaba escrito (español) tenía su propia elegancia. Era una elegancia muy parecida a la del inglés, pero a la misma vez comencé a ver y analizar las lecturas en una manera inesperada y desconocida. Me di cuenta que podría interpretar las lecturas a través de dos ángulos, entonces entendería las ideas mucho mejor a que si las hubiese visto bajo una sola perspectiva.*

*Los dos lenguajes son extremadamente importantes para mí porque siento que le dan dos tonos diferentes a mi potencial de ser una persona intelectual. El inglés es el entendimiento del ser, donde el español es el corazón. El balance constituye la estabilidad tanto en el corazón como en el aspecto del conocimiento. Estos dos crean la noción de cómo distinguir lo bueno y lo malo, básicamente contiene lo que me he convertido, siendo, una estudiante bilingüe.*

My experience not only stamps a bilingual seal on my high school diploma, but it opens my eyes to the parallels of language, making it man's most "intimate" possession since there are certain things that are impossible to communicate. I feel I am at a disadvantage when I attempt to express how two languages have allowed me to see that life is lived in many ways and allows for different worlds.



**Marisela Angulo, graduating senior who earned a bilingual seal from Río Grande High School, reads her acceptance letter from St. John's College in Santa Fe.**

Language is what defines the boundaries of communication, and there is no other way to express what we feel inside, where we are completely alone with our thoughts, than through communication and language. Even with a "conocimiento" of two languages, I feel I could not write enough to measure up to the unfathomable value English and Spanish are to me.

### Linda Cultura

*In English, o en español,  
Dos idiomas con la misma intención.  
Una quinceañera, un "sweet sixteen,"  
Dos ilusiones que no tienen fin.  
Si prefieres a Cervantes sobre Jean Paul Sartre,  
La literatura en cualquier idioma,  
Sólo sabiduría puede brindarte.  
Aunque andes estrenando tus zapatos de Sears,  
El anillo que te regaló de tradición tu abuelita,  
Nunca pasará de moda.  
Y las palabras universales:  
Tacos, Nachos, Posole, Menudo, Tamales,  
Y frijoles, en fiestas, y a buena hora.  
Tradiciones pacifistas o revolucionarias,  
Desde Zapata, a Luther King,  
Más culturas involucradas.  
Música con sólo una razón,  
Sinatra o Juan Gabriel,  
Dos tonos,  
Pero del uno al otro,  
Ninguno es más fiel.  
Y si no le quitan la cordura,  
Two, o dos,  
La mexicana y la americana,  
Son sólo Una,  
Linda Cultura.*

# Poems to Paint the American Landscape

by Greg Hansen

**“Your teachers are precious; they will open your eyes.”**

—Tsering Dorjee, guest speaker from Tibet, addressing a group of 6th grade students—

As eye openers, teachers can bring to light the experiences of people, places, and events previously unknown to students. This is especially true when we work to include in our curricula the extraordinary mix of people and cultures in the United States.

Today, many teachers appreciate and enjoy the similarities and differences of the various cultures that make up our communities. The rich literary traditions of our society are readily available and easier to access than ever before. This enables us, as teachers, to include people, events, ideas, and historical perspectives in our classrooms, thus opening the eyes of our students to a much broader American landscape.

Poetry and multiculturalism work together naturally. Poems offer a way for students to process powerful subject matter by allowing a voice of expression. For example, Sonja Chlapowski, Social Studies teacher at Truman Middle School, used poetry to help her students learn about the Middle Passage and the experience of slavery. “I wanted them to look at the experience from a point of view outside their own. They tried to write using the voice of the people forced to suffer and endure. One student even wrote from the point of view of the ship captain,” Ms. Chlapowski explained, clearly proud of her students’ work.

Poetry itself is a sophisticated, yet accessible language experience that can be used to enhance learning in any content area. Students enjoy the free form inherent in poetry. This helps the writer to focus on meaning and ideas, captured in a new way, crystallized in the poem as nuggets of understanding. The examples of

poetry shown here have an added benefit. Because they are relatively short and structured, they are more accessible to second language learners. This provides a scaffold that allows all students the chance to produce work that is grade- and age-level appropriate.

## Name Poems

A person or a historical event is written vertically, as in an acrostic. The first word of each phrase begins with the corresponding letter.

***My first home gone  
In one quick flash  
Damned for life  
Down in the boat  
Lost lives scream  
Evermore forgotten  
People gawking  
Africans  
Shrieking souls  
Sent from here to there  
Aging way too fast  
Give me one last breath  
Echoed in their minds  
forever***

—Gabbie Robeson,  
8<sup>th</sup> grade, Truman M.S.—

## Photo Poems

This is a poem in two parts. Students look at a photo of a person or place. The first section is a description of what they see in the photo. The second is what they have learned about the subject that is not visible in the photo.

***Caught in a pickle  
Watching where he is going  
He tries to escape  
Jackie the Great  
He is the first  
He opened the door  
To end segregation***

—Estevan Muñoz,  
3<sup>rd</sup> grade, Monte Vista E.S.—

***I see a man talking into a microphone  
A man with dreams  
Cesar Chávez  
I don't see the kids of workers  
Who prefer equal rights over new toys***

—Cynthia Jiménez, 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Truman M.S.—

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**Students Andrea Montañó, Jared Trujillo, Joseph Coyne, and Connor Lemp (left to right) work on collections of original poetry with their teacher, Ms. Schlosser, at Taylor Middle School.**

### “W” Poems

Students are guided by these five “w” words: who, what, when, where, and why.

**Cesar Chávez**  
**Bringer of civil rights**  
**To California fields**  
**When my mom was young**  
**Because he believed in equal pay**

—José Rodríguez, 7th grade,  
 Truman M.S. —

### Cinquains

This structure has many variations. Here’s one:

*Line 1:* One word to describe the subject.

*Line 2:* Two words to describe it.

*Line 3:* Three words about it.

*Line 4:* Four or five words describing...

*Line 5:* A word that means the same as the first or sums it up.

**Jackie**  
**Played baseball**  
**Determined to win**  
**Not letting people interfere**  
**Robinson**

—Thea Bradley Varner,  
 3rd grade,  
 Monte Vista E.S. —

### Bio and Autobiopems

These poems can be helpful in building community within the classroom and are a way for students to learn about each other’s differences and similarities. Students have an avenue to talk about and celebrate what makes them unique. There are many variations on this idea.

#### Bio Poem #1:

“I don’t understand”  
 Three things I don’t understand  
 But most of all...(what I understand the least)  
 What I do understand

#### Bio Poem #2

“A poem about yourself”  
 One thing that makes you angry.  
 Two things that make you happy  
 A factor that has affected your life  
 What the future holds

**I do not understand**  
**Why bright people give up**  
**Why black is bad and white is good**  
**But most of all**  
**Why people who are different are scrutinized**  
**Brilliant minds seen as crazy**  
**Because they are different**  
**I do understand**  
**That we all start out nice**  
**And some of us change along the way**  
**Some get hurt**  
**And some get love**

—Andrea Montañó, 8th Grade, Taylor M.S. —

**Anger burns in me**  
**To hear someone say “I’m better”**  
**Without reason**  
**It gives me great pleasure**  
**To listen to music**  
**To plant seeds in my mind**  
**And to put myself in writing harvest**  
**I’ve never been the same since**  
**I wrote my first story**  
**And I discovered who I hope to be**

—Derek Knehans, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Taylor M.S. —

Thanks to Sonja Chlapowski and Chris Oglesby at Truman M.S., John Malin at Monte Vista E.S., and Michelle Schlosser at Taylor M.S. for providing the eye-opening instruction that made these poems possible.

## La enseñanza del contenido en español

por Carlos Chávez, Escuela Preparatoria Valley

En las escuelas preparatorias de las Escuelas Públicas de Albuquerque (APS) se ofrecen clases de Historia de los Estados Unidos, Historia Universal, Geografía, Gobierno, Economía, Álgebra, Geometría, Álgebra II, Biología, Química, Higiene y Salud y Tecnología en español. La enseñanza del contenido en español puede ser un gran desarrollo académico para el maestro. La experiencia resulta en el aprendizaje de nuevo vocabulario y también le permite al maestro experimentar con distintos métodos y estrategias.

Los estudiantes vienen a nuestras clases con diferentes

niveles de conocimientos. En las clases se encuentran estudiantes que hablan el español a un nivel bastante elevado y también leen y escriben a un nivel bastante avanzado. Hay otro grupo de estudiantes que leen muy bien, pero no comprenden lo que leen, y su nivel de escritura es muy bajo. También hay estudiantes que tienen mucha dificultad con la lectura y la escritura. A veces al nivel de preparatoria tenemos alumnos que son analfabetos. A pesar de estos distintos niveles, es posible que nuestros estudiantes tengan éxito en sus estudios dentro de un programa bilingüe.

Al enseñar en un programa bilingüe, algo que debe quedar claro es que tales clases son para



**Los estudiantes Jennifer Sandoval, Matt Peralta y Lukas Vigil reciben instrucciones del maestro.**

continuar el desarrollo del español, es decir la lectura y la escritura, a través del contenido. Para el estudiante bilingüe muchas veces es una experiencia de frustración por su bajo nivel de suficiencia en español.

Al nivel de preparatoria puede ser muy difícil encontrar materiales para nuestros estudiantes. Una sugerencia que les podemos ofrecer a los maestros es que se comuniquen con tantas editoriales como sea posible y que busquen

información por la red. Otra es traducir, preparar o

escribir su propios materiales. Algunas escuelas cuentan con fondos para pagarles a los maestros por estas funciones. Todo material, cabe recordar, se debe atener a las normas académicas locales, estatales y federales.

### LA LECTURA

En una clase de contenido en español la lectura es muy importante para el desarrollo académico, y a su vez, la ampliación del vocabulario del estudiante es de igual importancia. Por lo tanto, el maestro debe de enseñar el vocabulario para que el estudiante pueda aprender el contenido. Para cada unidad de estudio el maestro puede preparar una lista de palabras y usar éstas frecuentemente durante la enseñanza de la unidad. Los estudiantes empiezan poco a poco a usar dicho vocabulario. Al asignar lectura de la unidad, a veces es mejor asignar menos páginas de lectura para que así el estudiante empiece a conocer la información y a mejorar su nivel de lectura. Una vez que el maestro sepa el nivel de lectura de sus alumnos, puede ponerlos a trabajar en parejas asignando un estudiante con altas destrezas con un estudiante que necesite mejorar su nivel de lectura. Hay que darles a los estudiantes instrucciones específicas de lo que quiere el maestro que saquen de la lectura. Como maestro, uno tiene que tener paciencia

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porque a veces los avances de nuestros estudiantes son muy lentos y pueden tomar semanas, semestres y hasta años.

### LA ESCRITURA

La escritura es otra destreza que se desarrolla a través de la enseñanza del contenido. Como con la lectura, los niveles de escritura de los estudiantes suelen ser muy bajos. Aunque muchas veces los estudiantes quieren escribir lo menos posible, trato de motivarlos para que escriban más. Con la escritura, empiezo por enseñarles a los estudiantes cómo escribir una oración completa, luego cómo construir un párrafo y finalmente cómo escribir un ensayo. Usando este mismo sistema, los estudiantes tienen que escribir un trabajo como proyecto final.



**El maestro Chávez aclara la comprensión de la lectura asignada de su alumno Isaac Esquivel.**

Los estudiantes que tienen la mayor dificultad con la lectura y la escritura son los que más se quejan. Hay que tener cuidado con estos estudiantes porque pueden frustrarse, dejar de asistir a la escuela y atrasarse aún más. Les sugerimos a los maestros que hablen con el estudiante, los padres, los consejeros para ver si entre todos logran que el estudiante salga adelante.

Como maestros nos importa que sobresalgan nuestros alumnos. Aunque hagamos todo el esfuerzo para apoyar a estos alumnos, tenemos que darnos cuenta que algunos no más no quieren. La doctora Guadalupe Valdéz, profesora de español para bilingües en la Universidad de Stanford, ha publicado estudios acerca del estudiante que no quiere aprender.

### EL MANTENIMIENTO DE LA LENGUA

¿Cómo es posible medir lo que se ha aprendido? Es importante darle al estudiante la oportunidad de expresarse para demostrar su conocimiento. Por ejemplo, después de estudiar la unidad de “Destino Manifiesto,” les pido a los estudiantes

que dibujen su idea de la secesión mexicana. En otra hoja les pido que escriban un ensayo que explique su dibujo. Su imaginación y las explicaciones que dan los estudiantes muestran si han entendido la lección. Con los exámenes que toman los estudiantes, es importante dárselos en el idioma de instrucción para poder determinar el nivel de aprendizaje.

Muchas veces nos preguntamos, ¿cómo van a aprender los estudiantes el inglés de esta manera?

Los estudios nos indican que las destrezas y el conocimiento del contenido se transfieren al otro idioma. Como maestro bilingüe, yo lo he visto. Sí ocurre, aunque el proceso de transferencia toma tiempo; a veces hasta años.

### LOS BENEFICIOS DE LA ENSEÑANZA PARA LOS MAESTROS

Para el maestro, la enseñanza del contenido en español es una oportunidad para aprender de los mejores maestros, es decir, de sus propios estudiantes. Un maestro puede mejorar su vocabulario, su español y su conocimiento del contenido. Además, en las Escuelas Públicas de Albuquerque con su certificado como maestro bilingüe, un maestro recibe una remuneración.

En algunas preparatorias de APS los graduados pueden recibir un sello bilingüe. Este sello indica que los estudiantes han alcanzado un alto nivel de suficiencia en la lectura, escritura, expresión oral y comprensión auditiva tanto en inglés como en español.

A través de los esfuerzos de los maestros, se demuestra que nuestros estudiantes pueden obtener reconocimiento por sus habilidades bilingües. **¡Adelante!**

*Para mayor información, puede comunicarse con el maestro Carlos Chávez en la escuela preparatoria Valley.*

# Communicating Across Cultures

by Tony Watkins, Professional Development Coordinator  
APS Health/Mental Health Services Department

Before coming to work for APS, I was a family preservation therapist, supporting families during periods of instability and disruption. Most of the families I worked with were people of color; most were single-parent families; almost all were poor. As a man from a white, upper-middle class background, I was faced with earning the trust of strangers in the context of dramatic cultural differences. In my short career with APS, I have learned that race and culture can be significant barriers to communication in schools and classrooms, as well. But they need not be.

Here is a short list of recommendations on how to support diverse learners and their families in a multicultural context:<sup>1</sup>

**1. Reflect on your own biases.** I grew up in a predominantly white town that was situated in the middle of Indian country. As a young boy I witnessed physical and emotional violence directed at American Indians and did very little to stop it. Most of my friends were white, and, having witnessed first-hand how Indians were treated, I remember being grateful that I was not Indian. Very little in my education or experiences challenged the morality of this, nor the prevailing norms of the community that put whites on top. Reflecting on this as an adult has led to episodes of grief and shame as I recognized my own tacit participation in the racism that was a part of the fabric of my childhood. Going through this kind of self-evaluation has been crucial for me to provide effective services to Indian families. If I do not continue to come to terms with this racism, become aware of its manifestations in the world today, and deliberately confront it, I will do harm to the Indian families I serve and very likely to my Indian colleagues.

**2. Critique Notions of “Color Blindness.”** We all see the world through a particular lens and, because race has had such a formative impact on American history, our collective American

lens is colored. Yet, in the spirit of being unbiased, many proclaim that color doesn’t or shouldn’t make a difference, believing that the Civil Rights Movement corrected any differential privileges based on color. But color and ethnicity are integral parts of one’s identity and experiences. Challenge notions of “color blindness” as well as beliefs that we now have a level playing field. We have made progress, but

*...as important as it is to be intellectually curious about differences, it is even more important to be spiritually connected to each other as members of the human race.*

as Cornel West suggests, fifty years of Civil Rights legislation does not undo 280 years of slavery.<sup>2</sup> This may sound self-evident, but we cannot serve people effectively if we don’t see them—including the color of their skin, the history that points to, the languages they speak, and the contemporary conditions they face.

**3. Become a student of history.** Growing up in America, we have often read and been taught a version of American history that does not adequately include the struggles or the contributions of American Indians, African-Americans, and other minorities, nor the individuals of any color who worked for a more equitable nation.<sup>3</sup> The fact that our founding fathers were both authors of democracy and slaveholders at the same time still haunts America. A useful text in helping to reconcile this history is *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James Loewen. This book can be a springboard for recognizing the lingering manifestations of racism in our contemporary world and learning about the heroic people who have lived and died for something different.

**4. Take a risk.** It takes courage to connect with others, even in our very limited ways. Just as you are trying to understand the people you work with, they are also trying to make sense out of you. Be candid. If something looks or sounds strange, or exceptional, or interesting, or

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unsafe, say it. Make yourself vulnerable; allow others to see you! In addition, be on guard for and stand up to culturally insensitive talk when you come across it. Be careful not to acquiesce to prejudicial comments or practices. Anyone who has tried this knows it is harder than it sounds, but it is absolutely essential if we are to move toward a more non-racist society. In addition to providing respectful teaching, we must also remember to challenge insensitive or degrading talk when it occurs, rather than quietly accepting what is said.

**5. Get information flowing from your students and families to you.** As we embark on learning about the lives of others, it helps not to make assumptions. Embrace the fact that you don't know about another's life. *How do we behave when we know we don't know?* We're humble; we're inquisitive; we're open. Even if you consider yourself a cultural expert, each individual is a unique manifestation of his or her culture, so it's impossible to categorize or assume you know about another's experiences until you spend time with them. Place the value not on what we can teach others, but on what others can teach us. Learn like a child learns... be curious about differences; acknowledge and explore them. Bridge the gap between school and community by inviting family members into your classroom to share traditions, skills, and experiences. Some family members may be too busy, but nearly all will appreciate being asked. Home visits are also a great way to learn about family strengths and resources that may benefit you and your students. As a family preservation therapist, I was consistently impressed by how much I could learn about a family by simply going to their home, asking a few honest questions, and listening to their answers with an open mind.

**6. Look for common ground.** Building connections is not about how well you know someone, but about positioning yourself around common experiences. For example if you are a white person reaching out to an Asian family, it does little good to mention you have a Korean acquaintance. You have mistakenly implied that

your life experiences have prepared you to know about theirs. Rather, connect on common interests such as sports or music, or around common experiences such as raising children or applying for a job. Often, more specific information about cultures and individuals flows from this initial connection. Use humor. Getting a joke is a cultural marker of understanding; laughter can indeed be the closest route to human connection.

Finally, as important as it is to be intellectually curious about differences, it is even more important to be spiritually connected to each other as members of the human race. Each of us, regardless of our culture, has a spirit which makes us singular and unique; our spirits also connect us to each other. Entering into another's life is a sacred endeavor. Sometimes, particularly when we get busy, we don't treat it as such.

<sup>1</sup> This article does not necessarily reflect the opinions or beliefs of others in the Health/Mental Health Services Department.

<sup>2</sup> Keynote address at the 1997 *Family Therapy Network Symposium*; Washington, D.C. (I recommend his books *Race Matters* and *The Future of the Race*, as well.)

<sup>3</sup> Ricky Lee Allen encourages us to learn from anti-racists in the upcoming *Multicultural Training* video available soon in both the Cross Cultural Resource Library and the Health/Mental Health Services Library.



**Tony Watkins discusses an upcoming ethics training for school counselors and social workers with Lisa Johnson, a community family therapist.**

## Enchanting Learning

by Lonnie Dai Zovi, Manzano High School

Music is without a doubt one of the oldest art forms, with the voice and the body being the most natural instruments. Music and rhythm come naturally into the world with us. Most societies, both throughout history and in our contemporary world, have incorporated music into their lives in one way or another. Sometimes this music can take the form of chants (with or without accompaniment), playing instruments, or singing. Besides being part of the human experience and so very enjoyable, music has been found to greatly enhance learning.

It is for this reason that many good teachers throughout the world have discovered the powerful effectiveness of music, rhythms, and chants in their classroom to teach a variety of concepts. Music and chants lend themselves especially well to teaching new languages because they both rely on rhythms, pitch, and voice. Words and phrases taught through music and chants are learned much more easily and effortlessly than by simple repetition. Chants are particularly useful due to their repetitive, rhyming, and simple nature. Because they are rhythmic and not sung, the student need only concentrate on the words and the rhythm—not the tune. Some students who won't sing (due to voice changes, inability to carry a tune, or just bashfulness) will chant, and heartily!

### RHYTHM IN THE CLASSROOM

As a new Spanish teacher at Manzano High School, I wanted my students to have fun while learning the target language. In particular, as I conjugated verbs with these students, I recalled how bored I had been in their place. I remember thinking, as a student way back then, that this conjugating could be done in a better way. I

went home and gathered some musician friends to help me with my idea. From an ensemble of congas, maracas, güiros and claves, the "Vamos a Hablar..." rhythmic verb conjugation was born. I took this to my students, went over proper conjugations with them, passed out the instruments, and conjugated away. The students loved it!



**Lonnie Dai Zovi practices a chant with her students at Manzano High School.**

We have been taught to incorporate as many of Howard Gardner's "multiple intelligences" as possible in our

teaching. Music, rhythms, and rhymes are very strong intelligences which, besides being so much fun to use, are very effective. Many of us learned our ABC's musically and can still recite jump rope and other rhymes and songs learned as children. Teaching by using music, chants, rhythms and rhymes make a lot of sense. There is empirical research to support this, but even more important is years of proven success with using chants. Many of my former students tell me that they still remember most of the songs or chants. Students taking tests can be seen silently "singing" as they try to access the information. One of my students once chastised me, "The reason I don't understand how to tell time in Spanish is because you don't have a song." Of course I went home, made one up, and recorded it a few months later.

When I started teaching ESL in addition to Spanish, I began to make up many chants for these students. I am constantly reminded why I do all of this when my students use the words in proper context. For example, when I asked Rogelio to please take out a piece of paper, he sang: "Of course I will," a phrase taken directly from a chant in *Rockin' Rhythms and Rhymes*. Seeing how well the "overlearning" of vocabulary and forms from the chants helps students get a

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handle on language and transfer the new knowledge to appropriate situations, I continue to create and expand the repertoire.

### A VARIETY OF METHODS

But it is not only high school language students who enjoy and benefit from chants. Elementary teachers incorporate rhythm throughout the day in their classes and middle school teachers recognize their students' need for activity. So, chants are effective ways to improve learning for all ages. Social studies, math, science—all content areas can be enhanced with chants.

I use musical chants in my ESL or Spanish classroom about once a week, depending upon the theme or the grammar that I'm studying. My methodology varies greatly according to which course level of language it is, the actual chant used, and my mood or that of my class. Below are some sample methodologies.

#### Method A

1. Class reads script aloud, doesn't listen to chant
2. Collect scripts, listen and fill in cloze (listen 3-5 times, no word bank)
3. Go over for correctness, meanings, spelling
4. Sing with CD
5. Do exercises in class

#### Method B

1. Listen to chant
2. Hold up pictures (TVR: total visual response) as words heard (teacher, selected or all students)
3. Sing only the "pictured words" (with CD)
4. Sing the "non-pictured words" (with CD)
5. Sing the whole chant (with pictures and CD)

#### Method C

1. Teach TPR to chant
2. Listen to chant with TPR
3. Sing only the TPR parts of chant
4. Sing only the non TPR parts of chant
5. Sing whole chant with TPR

These procedures will work in the prescribed order, in a procedure you devise, and with other classroom activities. Of course you may find even more activities appropriate for your students. By changing your procedures occasionally, you will get optimum benefits for all of the students. In the off chance that a student or two refuses to recite the chant with the group, realize that he is still learning by listening and his reluctance may be part of his learning style. He still will benefit and perhaps show his learning by writing,

drawing, or reciting later on. Even though Methods B and C appear to be for younger or non-reading students, they work well for older and more able students, too. Method A is an easy way to present and teach the chants to an average group of students who have at least a beginning proficiency in reading.

#### What's the Weather Like?

What's the weather like outside, do you know?  
What's the weather like? Tell me before I go.

The sun is out; it's so sunny and bright.  
There's not even a cloud in sight, in sight.

What's the weather like outside, do you know?  
What's the weather like? Tell me before I go.

It's very hot; I mean it's very hot.  
Will it cool off? I'm sorry, I think not.

What's the weather like outside, do you know?  
What's the weather like? Tell me before I go.

It's so cold, oh so very, very cold.  
It's below zero, that's what I was told.

What's the weather like outside, do you know?  
What's the weather like? Tell me before I go.

It's raining, raining. I love to watch it rain.  
The earth is so thirsty, so I can't complain.

What's the weather like outside, do you know?  
What's the weather like? Tell me before I go.

It's snowing, snowing; it's great to see snow fall.  
Let's all go outside and make a big snowball.

What's the weather like outside, do you know?  
What's the weather like? Tell me before I go.

The fog is so thick, that I can hardly see.  
I can't even see my hand in front of me.

What's the weather like outside, do you know?  
What's the weather like? Tell me before I go.

The weather's great. It's a beautiful day.  
Let's stop our work and go outside and play.

**Rockin' Rhythms and Rhymes ©Vibrante Press**

Lonnie Dai Zovi may be contacted at  
[lonnie@vibrante.com](mailto:lonnie@vibrante.com) for more information.

# Making more connections!

## Coming Events

❖ **California Association for Bilingual Education—Spanish Language Institute for Two-Way Bilingual Educators:** July 12 through July 23, Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico. For more information, visit the CABE website at [www.bilingualeducation.org](http://www.bilingualeducation.org) or call 626.814.4441, ext. 104.



### Opportunities...

LCE is offering two courses in Spanish this summer that will satisfy the foreign language requirement for the TESOL endorsement. Survival Spanish for Teachers I and II will be taught at the College of Santa Fe in Albuquerque from June 1 to June 17. Tuition for each course is \$375, to be paid on the first day of class and reimbursed when the course is passed. For more information, please contact Henry Shoner at 855-7271.

### Assessment update from RDA...

During the 2004-05 school year, APS will be administering a new state test, the New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment (NMSBA), in grades 3-9. The test will have three subtests in Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science, and it will be available in both English and Spanish. The NMSBA will replace four tests next year: the NM Writing Assessment, TerraNova, Supera, and the current NMSBA in grades 4 and 8. The testing window for this assessment is February 28 - March 17, 2005.

## Cross Cultural Resource Library



As of May 3, the Cross Cultural Resource Library will resume regular hours as follows:

Monday and Wednesday:

8:00-5:00

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday:

8:00-4:30

Closed daily for lunch:

12:00-1:00

LIBRARY SPECIALIST: Jo Ann Gonzales  
883.0440, ext. 147, Montgomery Complex

### Congratulations... to Joycelyn Jackson, APS

Multicultural Education Coordinator! She has been invited to participate in *The Ohtli Encuentro*, a regional gathering to honor and celebrate women leaders of color from the Latino, Native American, and African American communities. "Ohtli" is a Nahuatl word that means pathway, and "encuentro" is a Spanish word for gathering. This event, sponsored by the Intercultural Development Research Association and funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, will be held May 25-26 at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Hotel. The goal of the session is to provide a space for these recognized leaders to share their stories while fostering leadership, networking, and positive change agendas in local and regional communities. To enlarge this circle, invited leaders are asked to bring an emerging community leader, and Valerie Webb Jaramillo, Principal at Lavaland Elementary, will accompany Ms. Jackson.

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