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CHAPTER 3

Principles for Teaching Young ELLs in the Mainstream Classroom

Adapting Best Practices for All Learners

Ellen McIntyre

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This chapter will:

1. Identify six principles derived from sociocultural theory and research for teaching English language learners (ELLs).
2. Illustrate these principles through transcripts and observations of a variety of teachers who work to implement these principles.
3. Explain the challenges teachers face in attempting to adapt their instruction to be more inclusive and responsive to ELLs.

Sometimes students, including English language learners (ELLs), are the best persons to articulate just what it is their teachers do that helps them learn best. As part of a research study that extended from a professional development project on sheltered instruction, we asked a group of ELLs the question "How does your teacher help you learn?" Some of the responses included:

> "[The teacher] sat down [with us] and explained many times. If we don't know [understand], she tell us in a new way."
> "We work together and help each other."
> "We do things [projects, activities] about our own country."

The students in the class were mostly Spanish speakers and their teacher was native Cuban, an advantage for those students. But the class spoke of a new student from Russia and how the teacher helped her in particular:

> "We have this girl, she from Russia, and [the teacher] she have to explain her with her hands. . . . She asked girl to draw a picture for her and [the teacher] explain with her hands."
>
> "[The teacher] get a dictionary in Russia for her."
>
> "Some of us [the other students], we can sit with her and explain like that too. We try to do the same thing [the teacher] do."

When prompted, the students mentioned their opportunities for group work as a tool for learning, and one student said their teacher often gave more time to them than to the native English speakers to complete work. These students said their teacher used many visual aids, such as pictures from magazines, books, posters, and the Internet. One student said the teacher often drew pictures for them. The students also said their teacher reads directions to them and then follows by asking them to read the directions themselves. One student explained that the teacher brings in many pictures about what they are studying and has students use tape recorders to practice speaking and reading.

The students also spoke about how meaningful the classroom activities were because they connected to their background experiences. For instance, they all chimed in to discuss their individual research projects on their home countries "using the computer" (likely the Internet), a play in which they acted, poster presentations they made of their country, and a fair in which they displayed what they knew about their countries. Finally, some responses indicated the deep caring the teacher has for her students. The teacher often asks them whether they need help, even if the students do not request it. One said, "She also helps us [the students] sound like Americans" by teaching local language and pronunciation.

The students in this classroom were experiencing instruction from a teacher who had participated in professional development on sociocultural approaches to teaching. The facilitators of the project focused on the standards for teaching developed by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE), formerly known as the Center for Research on Second Language Learning, which is grounded in the famous sociocultural work of Roland Tharp and Ron Gallimore (1988). The facilitators also taught the teachers about the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP®) model (Echevarria, Vogt,

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& Short, 2004) which is also grounded in CREDE principles. Finally, the facilitators used the vast body of research and practitioner literature on instruction for ELLs (August & Shanahan, 2006) and culturally responsive instruction (Dalton, 2007; Foster & Peele, 2001; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Kraemer, & Parr, 2008; McIntyre, Rosebery, & González, 2001; Nieto, 1999; Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000) to help the teachers make explicit connections from their curriculum to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Sociocultural Approaches to Teaching

Sociocultural theory and practice is marked by the discovery of the work in the 1930s by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1987), who emphasized the importance of both history and culture in how and what is learned. Many researchers from the fields of anthropology, linguistics, psychology, and sociology have built on Vygotskian theory to illustrate how learners affect their surroundings as much as their surroundings affect them, and that a learner's academic success or failure is grounded in the child's history, culture, and environment, including schooling and instructional interactions within the school (Rogoff, 2003; Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1991). Sociocultural theory posits a few assertions that are especially relevant for the teaching of ELLs, and each of these is discussed: (1) Outdated assumptions that cast learners, their families, and their backgrounds as deficient are mistaken; (2) all learning is mediated by tools, of which language is the primary tool; and (3) a learner's development occurs through assisted performance.

Deficit Perspective Interrupted

When educators attempt to explain the failure of individuals or groups of students, historically they have suggested that some students are less capable than others, or that particular languages or dialects are barriers to learning (McIntyre, 2010). Some have suggested that children of immigrants lack the appropriate experiences (e.g., visiting museums) that are necessary to learn, or that the families of learners were themselves deficient parents and perhaps could not assist their children in learning. This deficit view has historically been present with immigrant children in U.S. schools as they struggled to learn a new language while learning new content in less than ideal conditions. While less prevalent today, many ELLs were assumed to be slow or to have learning disabili-

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ties when perhaps only language was a barrier. In other cases, students lacked extensive schooling and might not have been prepared for the content. In these cases, the unfortunate students were seen as deficient rather than as students with the ability to learn content through a foreign language.

Today, sociocultural theory and research dispute these deficit perspectives by describing and critiquing the misevaluation of learners (Heath, 1991, 1994; Michaels, 1981; Moll, 1994) and arguing for alternative ways of viewing what counts as knowing (Stone, 2004; Rogoff, 2003; Moll, 1994). Studies have shown that classroom practices can often constrain—and that educators often underestimate—what children are able to display intelligently (Heath, 1991; Moll, 1994). Moll suggests that the rejection of deficit views, particularly the view that the poor, minorities, and children with language differences are devoid of proper experiences necessary for learning is perhaps the most important construct that has governed a sociocultural view of learning.

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Mediation and Tools

As learning began to be viewed as a social process, the study of social interactions and what mediates these interactions became prominent. Vygotsky had been interested in the use of signs and tools in mediating learning, including, and especially, the role of speech. He showed that a child who learns something uses signs and tools to accomplish tasks, such as reading a passage. Wertsch (1991, 1998) explained that a learner's cultural tools are mediators of action, and one cannot truly understand the learner or development without attention to the tools. Wertsch (1991) used the example of the pole for the pole vaulter to illustrate this relationship. For instance, there is a dynamic tension between a learner and an appropriate tool, in that certain tools necessarily affect the learner; the tool might "do some of the thinking" (1998, p. 29) involved in the activity. Vygotsky would have referred to mnemonics or a teacher's interactions as psychological tools or signs, and to a pole or a book as a technical tool. To learn a new language, students use a variety of tools, both material and linguistic, and the teachers involved in the project presented in this chapter mediated the students' learning through these tools.

Assisted Performance

Learning occurs when one's performance is assisted by someone more proficient in that particular skill, much as when a worker (baker, craftsperson, etc.) apprentices alongside someone with much more

experience in that work (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Assisted performance occurs naturally in all cultures as children grow and learn in their early years; novices learn from experts as they work together on meaningful, purposeful tasks. Tharp and Gallimore lamented that learning as assisted performance is easily identified in homes and communities, but less so in classrooms. Yet more researchers are illustrating how teachers can implement a "hybrid" (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Alvarez, 2001; Manyak, 2001) form of teaching that makes teaching and learning reflect what occurs naturally in homes. The teachers in this project were taught to assist the performance of their ELLs as these students worked alongside native language–speaking students and their teachers.

Instructional Assessment

The three assertions of sociocultural theory explained earlier raise important questions for teachers as they plan instruction for ELLs. For example, teachers should learn as much as possible about their students in order to (1) value the students' background knowledge and skills to avoid a deficit view, (2) come to know the best tools for use with each learner, and (3) understand learners' developmental levels to assist performance. Perhaps the teacher might want to know about a student's cultural and historical background. There are numerous potential questions that teachers may ask in this regard:

- How does the child's race/ethnicity play a role in the child's life?
- What languages are spoken in the home and community?
- How do family members identify themselves semantically, culturally, socially, and through everyday routines?
- What is the family makeup, and what characteristics of the family are significant to the child?
- How much education does the child's family members or parents/guardians have?
- Who reads and writes in the family, and for what purpose?
- What do the parents do for a living?
- What do family members or parents/guardians do outside of work and school, and with whom do they do it?
- What sorts of material resources does the family have that affect academic development? What other interests do family members have?
- How does the child spend out-of-school time?

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These sorts of questions assess the student's history and culture, including variables that have been shown to correlate with school success and failure (McIntyre, 2010).

The assertions from sociocultural theory described earlier and the examples provided by students that opened this chapter in part form the foundations for the instructional principles for teaching ELLs described here. These principles are defined below and later described more fully, with several examples.

Six Principles for Teaching ELLs: Sounds Easy; Is It?

The instructional principles described in this chapter were the focus of two professional development projects conducted by Ellen McIntyre and her colleagues. Drawn from the SIOP model (Echevarria et al., 2004), CREDE, and culturally responsive instruction (Foster & Peele, 2001; Gay, 2002; Moll & González, 2003; Irvine, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; McIntyre et al., 2008; Moll, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Tharp et al., 2000), the six principles at the heart of the professional development work include:

- *Joint productive activity:* Providing an opportunity for group work in which there is a definite product, with participation and scaffolding by the teacher.
- *Language and literacy across the curriculum*: Providing opportunities to develop and use oral and written language in all content instruction, including mathematics, science, and art.
- *Curricular connections*: Building curriculum around students' backgrounds, cultures, interests, and linguistic strengths.
- *Rigorous curriculum and teaching*: Taking special care not to dumb down the curriculum for ELLs, but to keep the content at the grade level provided to other students through adapted texts, high-level questioning, multimodal texts, and more.
- *Instructional conversation*: Implementing carefully planned conversations around content, so that students have an opportunity to learn, develop, and practice the language of disciplines, while constructing new understandings about content.
- *Family involvement*: Findings ways to involve families in the education of their students, both in school and out.

Teachers who attempted to implement these principles in their mainstream classrooms that included ELLs for most of the day claimed that the principles reflect what they view as good practice for all stu-

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dents. However, in general, the students found some of these principles easier than others to implement fully. An example of a lesson that incorporates most of these principles follows.

A Lesson Connecting the Past to Present

The following lesson took place in an urban school district in a classroom with nearly all students of color and mostly ELLs. The teacher, Cori, a native English speaker, has excellent command of Spanish as well. Cori's lesson illustrates the classroom-based principles that all teachers, including kindergarten teachers, in the project worked to implement. Although Cori is a seventh-grade language arts and social studies teacher, this example is included because she drew on all principles simultaneously, unlike the examples collected from the elementary teachers. Not all standards need to be in evidence in all lessons, as you will see from the many examples from the elementary classrooms, but it helps to see how this might be possible in one lesson.

Cori's lesson (described more fully in McIntyre et al., 2008) occurred in her first-period social studies class of 25 students. Only six students are White, and 12 are ELLs, mostly Spanish speakers, but some are Bosnian, Russian, and German speakers. They have been studying ancient civilizations. On the chalkboard, Cori has listed the objectives for the lesson, which she reads aloud to the students. Then she asks them, "What area of the world did we talk about yesterday? You can check your notes."

"The Fertile Crescent."

"Why do we call it the Fertile Crescent?"

A girl answers in Spanish. Cori, who can speak Spanish (a convenient but not necessary skill for teaching Hispanic ELLs), responds briefly first in Spanish and then in English, slowly and deliberately, "Yes, it has a lot of rich soil—it is *fertile*. The land can grow a lot because of all of the water nearby." She asks, "What is another name we use?"

"Mesopotamia."

"Yes, what does this mean?"

"Land between the rivers."

Cori points to the map on the wall. "Would someone come up and show us on the map?" A student comes to the front and shows the area in the Middle East that they are studying.

"Who can remember the names of these rivers?"

Different students answer "Tigris" and "Euphrates."

Cori asks, deliberately, "What were the people called who lived there?"

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"Sumerians."

The review from the previous day continues with a discussion of Sumerian agriculture. The students had read about frequent flooding of rivers and recalled that the Sumerians depended on irrigation systems to control the water around them. After about 15 minutes, Cori leads the students into today's topic. She says, "Maybe if you've been watching the news you will know what this is."

She invites the students to come up to the front of the room and surround her at a table, so that all can witness a demonstration. Cori has a large bowl, with one side of the bowl packed with dirt as if to demonstrate land. From a pitcher, Cori gently pours water into the bowl almost to the level of the "land." Using more dirt, she creates a "levee" on the land side of the bowl, and slowly pours more water. The students witness the water sitting slightly above the land. Cori explains that today's system of controlling water is both similar and different from what the Sumerians did. She asks, "What would happen if I poke a hole or two in the levee? What will happen if the levee breaks?"

"The water will go to the land," answers one English learner.

"There will be a flood," says another student.

"*Why* might a levee break?" Cori asks.

As the students begin to offer speculations about this question, Cori holds up one finger to indicate, "Don't speak, think." She has taught them this signal, and they have learned that some questions require more thinking time than others. After a few seconds, different students offer reasons why a levee might fail.

Cori then asks a student to cut the levee with a tool. He does. The water seeps onto the "land" portion of dirt in the bowl. The students watch, mesmerized.

"See the big mess we have here?" The students nod. Cori then turns on an overhead projector on which she has several photographs to show the students. First, she shows them pictures of broken levees after Hurricane Katrina. She asks students to turn to a partner and describe the similarities between the broken levee in the classroom bowl demonstration and what they see on the screen. The students begin to talk, their heads turning back and forth from bowl to photographs.

Then Cori puts up several textbook drawings of what land looked like in ancient Sumeria. She asks the students to turn to their partners and compare what they see in the photos of Sumeria with what they see in the photos of the New Orleans levees. Again, the students talk for a few minutes.

When the group convenes, one student explains in Spanish that he saw in a video about Katrina that there are two kinds of levees, those

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that are broken, and those that are about to break. Cori responds to him in Spanish, then said in English, "Can you say that again, this time in English?"

The student slowly explains in English what he had seen on the video. Cori asks the class, "What does that tell you about levees?" The discussion ensues.

Then Cori asks the students to go back to their desks for a longer discussion. In this part of the lesson, she asks the students to think about why cities might emerge so close to the land and why people would live next to a levee.

Cori asks the students to get out the textbooks from which they had been reading about Sumeria. She introduces a "cause–effect" activity that the students are to do in pairs. Each pair is given a "cause" of broken levees, and they are to look through their text and recall the newscasts about Katrina as sources for "effects." After the pairs work together, Cori asks the students to offer the responses they collected in pairs as she creates a summary diagram on the overhead projector. During the process of creating the diagram, a lively discussion occurs about the effects of hurricanes today in New Orleans and in the past in Sumeria. The students discuss the differences in civilization, buildings that would have been destroyed, and what gets killed. Cori asks, "What kinds of animals would survive?"

One child raises her hand, but even after a long "wait time" cannot respond. Cori says to her, "Would you like to ask someone in your group (with whom she is sitting) to respond?" The child says yes and asks her group in Spanish. Cori and the rest of the class wait. Then the child says, in English, "Birds."

"Yes, Juana, but why would birds survive?"

"Because they can fly away."

"What other animals can get away?"

Juana pauses, "I think . . . the ones in the zoo?"

Cori smiles. "Yes, I heard a story on the radio recently about how the animals in the New Orleans zoo survived because the zoo was on a hill."

When Cori revisits the topic about why cities emerge around water, the class gives excellent, historically based reasons why Sumeria emerged as a civilization, whereas other tribes may not have survived. The students have a harder time understanding why people live so near the water today. Unfortunately, this discussion has to be delayed until the next time. As the students leave her classroom, it is clear that they look forward to the next lesson [excerpted from McIntyre et al., 2008, pp. 15–18].

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Adapting Instruction for ELLs in Mainstream Classrooms

Cori's lesson exemplifies the instructional principles defined earlier, as well as the sociocultural principles that undergird the instructional model. The instruction is not wildly unusual or remarkable. It is, however, extremely well planned, so that Cori maintains a rigorous curriculum that includes joint productive activity; multiple physical, linguistic, and pneumonic tools; oral language interaction time; and assisted performance with the literacy activity. Cori has taken special care to make small adaptations in her teaching that help to make the content more comprehensible. Her preparation for the lesson is elaborate and specific for ELLs, as well as for the other students in her class. As stated, Cori was trained in the SIOP model of instruction (Echevarria et al., 2004), which provides teachers ideas on how to prepare lessons when the classroom has ELLs. This SIOP feature, preparation, involves creating objectives for the lesson that include both the content of what it to be covered in the lesson and the language skills to be addressed by the lesson.

Cori also had her students participate in *joint productive activity* when they worked in pairs to make a list of causes and effects of some phenomenon. It is a simple product, yet in order for the students to be successful at this product, they need to see Cori's vivid demonstration and the many photographs and drawings. She made *connections to students' backgrounds* by beginning with an extensive review of the previous day's lesson and emphasizing key vocabulary, such as *fertile*. She linked past and new concepts by comparing ancient Sumeria to vivid, current photos of Katrina, a topic on the minds of all Americans at the time of this lesson. Cori also provided her students multiple opportunities for oral *language learning* in just one lesson. Simply, "Turn to a partner and compare . . ." offers an example of how a teacher can provide multiple opportunities for students to practice Academic English in a psychologically safe environment as they first rehearse their responses with peers. This simple strategy provides an efficient way to get many students to participate rather than simply to have one student offer a response to the whole class, which is highly inefficient (although necessary at times). Cori also had her students write in response to the readings they had done and the class lesson on the causes and effects of broken levees. Finally, Cori kept the curriculum *rigorous* by keeping the content of the lesson at a high level, using sophisticated vocabulary, and asking high-level questions. Her expectation that students make connections from ancient civilization to the current news about Hurricane Katrina illustrates her respect for them as learners and her expectation that they be engaged with current events.

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In Cori's lesson, there was only the beginning of an *instructional conversation*, and there was no evidence of family involvement, although Cori was successful at implementing these principles as well in other lessons. Each of these principles is described further, with examples from other teachers. These sections are followed by recommendations for the gradual implementation of these principles.

Joint Productive Activity

The CREDE standard of *joint productive activity* (JPA) means that students work together in small groups to complete a task, with the involvement of the teacher at points along the way to assist the performance of the learners. JPA often shapes a lesson, because the product often drives the process in teaching. Teachers can use strategies, graphic organizers, and a variety of other tools to organize students for JPA. Also, to create opportunities for JPA successfully, teachers must also attend to grouping patterns. For example, ELLs should at times have opportunities to work with others who speak their language (when possible) and at other times work with native English speakers. ELLs should work in small groups, large groups, pairs, groups of their choice, and assigned groups. When students are provided the opportunity to work together, one or more students can *assist the performance* of others. The following JPA activity illustrates the *indicators* of this standard, as outlined on the CREDE website. It evolved from the professional development projects on the SIOP and CREDE instructional models.

Community Study

One fifth-grade teacher asked her students to work in pairs or groups of three to study the neighborhood of the school or the one in which they lived. The students were to take tape recorders and cameras into a designated section and (1) interview at least one businessperson in the community; (2) photograph the physical surroundings; (3) visit a public agency, such a library; and (4) create a map of the streets they studied. Then, they were to return to the classroom and use the Internet and other tools to create either an "improvable product" (Wells & Haneda, 2009), which in this case included either a short book of their neighborhood, a mural, a map, or a poster. The students worked in pairs and wrote a physical description and narrative about the neighborhood using the Internet and primary sources, such as the businessperson they had interviewed. The pairs of students included native English speakers with ELLs, when possible, and the teacher assisted each group with the final products.

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Of course, this is only one example illustrating this principles or standard. JPA can take an infinite number of forms. From the CREDE perspective, though, key elements include the teacher planning the activity with the students. The teacher also gives input on the final product in ways that push students' thinking about the content of the lesson from which the product emanated; hence, the phrase coined by Wells and Haneda (2009), an *improvable product*, is apt.

Language and Literacy across the Curriculum

This principle established the need for teachers to create classroom opportunities for ELLs (indeed, all learners) to practice oral language, and reading and writing skills as often as possible, using the language of discipline (e.g., mathematics, biology); that is, it is not just enough to *talk*. Children get very good at that quickly. They must learn to talk, read, and write about the topics they are studying, using the language of the discipline as much as possible. In every subject area, oral language development and literacy learning serve as tools to help students learn the content. In Cori's lesson, she invited the children into a high-level discussion comparing ancient history to current events. Thus, rather than always just listening to her, they were participating and practicing, framing sentences about the topic under study. She also had the students work in pairs to complete the cause–effect activity that involved group composition. The example below is how one of the elementary school teachers routinely provided an opportunity for her students to do more talking, reading, and writing about content.

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Talking Back

Fourth-grade teacher April has her students regularly "talk back" to books. The children work in small groups of three or four and read aloud a nonfiction book that corresponds to the social studies or science unit under study. After one child reads a section aloud, he or she talks back to the book, using one of the following prompts:

"I find it interesting that you say . . . "
"I do not understand what you mean when you say . . . "
"I agree with you about . . . "
"I disagree with you about . . . "
"I want to know more about . . . "

Students are permitted to talk about the printed section for as long as they stay on the topic. Then, other children in the group are allowed

to join in, adding, explaining, or questioning. April tries to assist each group, because many children seem to have little to say at first. At times, she assists a learner by reading a section aloud, but allowing the child to do the "talking back." Before she routinely implemented this strategy, April demonstrated it several times with texts she read aloud, showing all kinds of emotions a reader might have: curiosity, puzzlement, dismay, excitement.

As with all the principles, teachers should know multiple ways of organizing instruction to extend and build on students' oral and written skills. The CREDE principle emphasizes the importance of *academic* discourse, not simply the development of more social language. When students use academic language in either speech or writing, they have more opportunity to learn the content, as well as the language.

Curricular Connections to Students' Backgrounds

Connecting to students' backgrounds is often cited as the most important principle for culturally responsive teaching. It requires that teachers get to know their students and also allows students to share their lives through their classwork. Teachers also find ways to connect the already-planned lesson from the state curricular framework with students' past experiences at home, with peers, or from previous lessons. In Cori's lesson, she began with an extensive review of the previous day's lesson, emphasizing key vocabulary, such as *fertile*. She linked past and new concepts by comparing ancient Sumeria to vivid current photos of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a topic on the minds of all Americans at the time. In the JPA "community study" example discussed earlier, the teacher built an activity from the students' own neighborhoods, incorporating language and literacy skills building throughout.

Building background is essential for all learners, but it takes the explicit linking of past to present for ELLs, because they are learning content and language simultaneously. Indeed, in some lessons that are contextualized relative to students' backgrounds, the lesson or activity also helps build skills such as writing. In other lessons, the goal is simply to learn new content. The example provided below illustrates one way a fifth-grade teacher linked a social studies lesson to students' lives and helped them develop literacy skills.

Then-and-Now Books

This teacher had her students create little books that compared their new country with their home country. On the left side of a page, they wrote something about "then"—what it was like in their home country.

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On the right side of the page, they compared it to "now"—what it is currently like in the United States. The students compared their homes, friends, household family size, transportation, weather, and more. An example from one child's book is presented in Figure 3.1.

As a reader of this chapter, it is probably quite evident to you now that the principles for teaching ELLs outlined in this book are integrated. This activity certainly is one that can develop written language skills while connecting to backgrounds. A similar book-making activity can be done jointly, adhering to indicators of JPA. All such activities should be rigorous enough to push students' thinking, and one way to achieve this goal is through an instructional conversation. Many activities can include families in some ways. These latter principles are presented next.

Rigorous Curriculum and Instructional Conversation

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The final CREDE principles are rigorous curriculum or complex thinking and instructional conversation. They are presented together, because instructional conversation is one of the primary tools for ensuring that instruction pushes students' thinking, that teachers reach students in their *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1978)—that place in a student's development where he or she can work on a task with the teacher but might not be able to do the task without assistance.

Another purpose for keeping the curriculum rigorous is that too many educators make the wrong assumption when they learn that students have limited English skills. There is evidence that many ELL students are put in remedial classrooms or taught content far below their level. Also, I have observed teachers using only simple vocabulary when talking with ELLs, when they could be using both simple and advanced vocabulary in an effort to extend the vocabulary of all students. Students need to be exposed to the content and vocabulary at their grade level and supported with adaptations in the pedagogy.

The *instructional conversation* (IC) is a structured form of dialogue that begins with teachers setting a goal about the content they want students to learn through the dialogic lesson (Goldenberg, 1993; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Not all academic talk is an IC. Classroom talk can be merely "dialogue" or "discussion" if it is not rigorous and does not advance the thinking of students (McIntyre, Kyle, & Moore, 2006). Researchers (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1996) who have studied the effects of IC on ELLs in classrooms define ICs as follows:

> Teacher and students engage in discussion about something that matters to the participants, has a coherent and discernible focus, involves a high

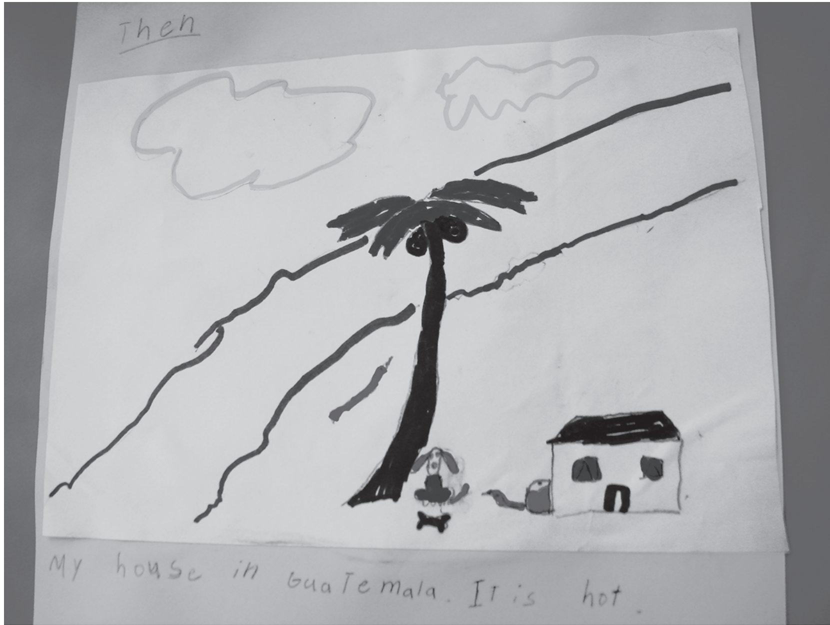

FIGURE 3.1. Example of a then-and-now book.

> level of participation, allows teacher and student to explore ideas and thoughts in depth, and ultimately helps students arrive at higher levels of understanding about topics under discussion (e.g., content, themes, and personal experiences related to a story). (p. 142)

In the IC below, second-grade teacher Genna is leading a guided reading lesson on a children's book that portrays a bully. In the lesson, Genna teaches a reading strategy that asks the students to anticipate the story line and words they might come across as they read. After the reading lesson and the guided silent reading of the text, Genna leads an IC on the book. In an IC, the teacher has a definite goal for the content she wants the students to learn. An IC is not goal-less discussion about whatever the students feel about the book. It is intentional and guided, and pushes students' thinking. Yet even ICs do not always go as planned, as illustrated below. Teachers must be prepared to take advantage of teachable moments.

Genna's goal was for the children to understand that if they witness bullying, it is critical that they inform a teacher, because conflict can escalate and someone could get hurt. The students seemed to grasp that concept immediately; in the book, the bully was physically abusive, and a child was physically hurt. But the conversation turned to identification of bullying if no one gets "hurt." In the longer conversation, all seven children participated. In the excerpt below, only Genna (G) and three students participated, but the others chimed in with "Yeah!" from time to time. Alex (S3) is the ELL in this group. His first language is Spanish, although he was born in the United States. He is still acquiring English.

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S1: I . . . I saw someone take [name]'s ?? [food item] and I told them.

G: You told? Who did you tell?

S2: That's not a bully . . . I mean, he's not a bully.

G: Why do you say that?

S2: He did something bad. I mean, he stole. But he didn't hurt someone.

S1 AND S3: He did! Yeah . . .

S2: Well, I mean . . .

G: What? What do you mean, Simon?

S2: Well, no one got *hurt* (*sarcastically*). Did he break her arm or something? Was he starving to death? I mean . . . what he did was bad . . . and [unintelligible] punished, but he didn't hurt anybody.

S3: I think . . .

S1: No . . .

S3: I think . . .

S2: What I am trying to say is . . .

G: (*to S3*): Alex, you are trying to say something? What do you think?

S3: I think maybe [name of child] was hurt. I think he was hurt because he wanted [unintelligible] and it was his own . . .

G: What do you mean by "hurt"?

S2: I mean . . .

G: Let's let Alex explain. He has an idea and he wants to explain. Being hurt doesn't always mean your body is hurt. Alex?

S3: Yeah. He was hurt *inside*. My . . .

S2 AND OTHERS: Yeah! (*Some unintelligible speech.*)

G: So, hurt can happen inside, like when you get your feelings hurt or you are upset about something.

KIDS: Yeah . . .

G: So, if someone hurts you on the inside, is that person a bully?

(*There is 3 seconds of silence.*)

KIDS: Yeah.

S3: Yes, he hurt him.

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From here, Genna goes on to explain to the children that verbal bullying can be just as hurtful as physical bullying. She asks whether they have ever heard anyone called names, and soon a new discussion begins.

In this IC, the students do come to new understandings, even beyond Genna's goal of having them understand that bullying is wrong and should be reported. They come to understand that the concept of hurt can be emotional, as well as physical, and that bullying can come in multiple forms.

Genna was just learning how to conduct ICs. She illustrated some indicators of ICs quite well in this excerpt, while other parts of the IC show her beginning development. First, in this excerpt, she spoke fewer words than the combined amount the students spoke. In ICs, the students must speak more than the teacher; whoever is doing the speaking is doing the thinking. Surprisingly, in traditional discussions, the teacher (one person) does twice or even three times as much talking as all students in the class *combined*! In this excerpt, Genna was aware that there had to be some student-to-student interaction, and she was able to step back a bit and allow the children to respond to one another.

Genna also made sure that Simon did not dominate this conversation, and she jumped at the chance to involve Alex, the one ELL in the group. In typical class discussions, it is easy to permit the same children to contribute repeatedly. Genna also asked high-level, open-ended questions that pushed students' thinking. "Why do you say that?" and "What do you mean?" are scaffolding questions that ask students to dig a bit deeper, to use vocabulary they might not be used to, and to form thoughts while forming sentences.

Genna also made mistakes common to all teachers attempting rigorous ICs. At one point, when she saw where Alex was going and knew it was important, she said, "Let's let Alex explain. He has an idea and he wants to explain." Yet she went ahead and provided the answer for Alex! She said, "Being hurt doesn't always mean your body is hurt. Alex?" Well, he had little else to say, because his teacher had provided the words from his head. That moment would have been a perfect opportunity for Alex to practice explaining a difficult concept.

Still, this is the sort of conversation that teaches, and Genna conducted it quite well. It would be easy to see how this sort of conversation could extend from a JPA that also connected to students' background experiences. The integration of the principles can illustrate outstanding teaching of all students, not just ELLs.

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Family Involvement

Much has been written about the importance of family involvement. Research has shown that family involvement in schools increases student engagement in school and, ultimately, student achievement (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997; Hoover-Dempsy & Sandler, 1997; Kyle, McIntyre, Miller, & Moore, 2002). Many teachers know that connections with families can reap these positive results, but they struggle with how to make that happen. Some teachers wonder about whether their students' families care about education or would show up in schools if invited. Yet most studies of families of school-age children illustrate that parents and guardians care deeply about their children, want them to learn, and want something better for their children than what they have for themselves (Kyle et al., 2002). Many families see schools as the "ticket" for their children's entry into middle-class life, as well as the chance for them to grow into independent decision makers.

Yet this work is not easy for either families or teachers. Some parents or guardians may not know how to help their children succeed in school, and others may have different goals for their children than the schools have. Many teachers are reluctant to reach out to families due to several barriers. With respect to ELLs, language is the primary bar-

rier for school–home communication and collaboration. Time is also a barrier, because both teachers and families work hard and find it difficult to schedule time together. Despite these issues, many teachers and whole schools have been successful in involving families in schools.

Family involvement of ELLs cannot be conducted in typical ways, such as through homework and at traditional parent conferences. The strategies must focus on connecting personally to the families and building from what they know. A few ideas follow:

- Get to know your students' outside-of-school interests and passions, their families, family members' jobs and interests, and home routines and literacy practices, then use this information to connect your curriculum to what students already know.
- Use family knowledge to invite speakers into your classroom, especially when the family knowledge builds on the curriculum.
- Have students study their own community, as in the example in this chapter.
- Have students interview their elders and compare life in this country with life in their home country.
- Plan a family night in which families and students work together on a project. Be sure to have interpreters there to assist with the language.

These ideas are only a beginning. Details on planning family events are beyond the scope of this chapter. However, specific examples from the projects mentioned in this chapter have been described (Epstein et al., 1997; Kyle et al., 2002, 2005; McIntyre et al., 2008).

Reflections and Future Directions

It takes a career to learn to teach. Change in instructional practice must be based on new students, new contexts, new learning opportunities, and new technologies. The job of teachers is to assess their practice continually to see whether it is working with their current students in the current context. No doubt, the principles and practices you read about in this chapter and book are already somewhat familiar to you. Adapting these familiar practices for ELLs will take some trial and reflection.

The principles described in this chapter are intended to be intertwined across all teaching activities. For example, a community study that involves families can be contextualized in the background knowledge of the students and can include a written product jointly created by students, assisted by the teacher, and a rigorous instructional conversa-

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tion about the improvable product. Thus, all principles described in this chapter are included.

However, some teachers prefer to work on one principle at a time, attending to each of the specific *indicators* (Dalton, 2007) of that principle. Teachers often begin by planning a joint activity that addresses the core content they intend to teach, ensuring that all students participate and that teachers assist in scaffolding the product. Becoming expert at IC, too, takes dedicated attention to assess whether students are constructing new understandings through teacher questioning. And teachers of ELLs often need to pay special attention to building in classroom interaction time, so that students have increasing amounts of time to discuss the academic content in safe places, where their oral language can be scaffolded by their peers and the teacher. Thus, it is recommended that teachers tackle one or two of the principles described here at a time. These principles are a guide for teachers' constant reflection, tweaking instruction for the population of students in their classrooms. When teachers see that learning to teach is a career-long endeavor, they often become the sort of reflective practitioners (Ross, Bondy, & Kyle, 1993) who can adapt to any learner.

The education of ELLs in the future must rely more on educational research from multiple paradigms. Studies from a sociocultural perspective often focus on student engagement and teacher–student connections. These are critical studies, and many more are needed to understand what engages students, what keeps them in school, and what links home to school. Equally important, however, are large-scale, comparative studies of instructional approaches that measure student learning. With advanced statistical procedures, it has become more possible to link teacher behaviors and/or socioeconomic or cultural variables to student achievement, while controlling for confounding variables.

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ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Ask yourself the following questions: Why do some children fail in schools while others succeed? Why do some populations of children succeed more than others? Then ask yourself how you came to believe these assumptions about learners. Were they ideas passed down to you from parents or guardians? Were they ideas you developed through popular media sources? Were they ideas you learned from books? Which of your viewpoints reflect a deficit perspective and which reflect a culturally respectful perspective? Why?
2. Choose an ELL in your school, one you do not yet know well, one you are responsible for teaching. Invite the child and a parent or guardian to an interview. Tell them you are trying to learn more about the child so you can better teach him or

her. Ask the following questions and others that come to mind. Some questions are most appropriate for the child. Others might be best for the adult. The idea is to learn as much as you can about the child, so you can improve your own instruction. Take notes, so that you remember everything.

- "Do you have a country you call 'home country' other than the United States?"
- "Some people whose parents were born outside the United States call themselves by their two home countries, like 'Mexican American.' What do you call yourselves?"
- "What languages are spoken in the home and community?"
- "Tell me about you and your family. What do you like to do after school and on weekends? What work and play are important to you?"
- "What sorts of reading, writing, and mathematics do you do at work or at home?"
- "What other interests do you have?"
- "What goals do you have for schooling?"
- "What do you like and dislike about school?"
- "How can I help you learn best?"

3. Use the information you learned from your interview with the student and guardian to plan a lesson, or series of lessons that includes as many of the following instructional principles as possible: JPA, language and literacy development, linking home to school, rigorous curriculum, and IC. Invite others who have similar backgrounds, interests, or needs to join the lesson. Videotape yourself teaching to analyze your interactions. Most importantly, ask your students: What do I do that helps you learn the most? What should I do more of? What does not help you learn so much? You may be surprised at how astute your students are at determing what effective instruction is.

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