The Multilingual Educator

Voices for Change

Arts in Education

Common Core Instruction for English Learners

Dual Language Immersion

Equitable and Fair Assessments

Standard English Learners

Los estándares comunes en español

Parent Voices
Given the cultural and linguistic diversity in today’s classrooms, it is my belief that in order to make the Common Core State Standards attainable for all students, especially English learners, my instruction must begin with a critical examination of my belief about language, literacy and learning.

Research strongly indicates a critical need for our educational system to improve academic achievement among ELs (Cummins, 2000; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Olsen, 1997; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007), and suggests this civil rights issue is a structural problem that must be addressed along the entire educational pipeline (Olsen, 2010). Culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy recognizes and builds upon the assets brought by ELs and their families, as well as accounts for the economic and social circumstances—poverty—that often accompanies ELL status (Bunch, Kibler, & Pimentel, 2012). More significantly, recent empirical research on the academic achievement of ELs indicates strong evidence that the educational success of ELs is positively related to sustained instruction through the student’s first language (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Genesee & Riches, 2006; Lindholm Leary & Genesee, 2010).

Guided by the latest research on second language acquisition and multilingual education, and in consideration of the demands of the 21st century, global economy, socially conscious educators, policy-makers and researchers have made substantial strides toward successfully steering the contemporary discourse on ELs away from a language of deficit-thinking. They have powerfully shifted the conversation to an understanding of language development and multilingualism as socially situated and context dependent. A convergence of research clearly indicates that multilingualism is not just an economic asset but also a necessary cultural asset. However, there is more work to do.

To address the challenges and opportunities in the Common Core Era, a five-year federal grant was awarded to fund Project CORE, a national professional development program through the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). Project CORE is a San Diego-based professional development program tasked with implementing a system-wide response to confront the education debt owed to ELs. The goal is to transform education for ELs through CCSS, especially Common Core Language Arts Standards (CCLAS). The project involves stakeholders along California’s educational pipeline including the University (College of Education), the County Office of Education, and three local school districts. Through these partnerships, Project CORE coordinates professional learning communities (PLC’s) for College of Education faculty, county and district leaders, pre-service teacher candidates and in-service teachers.

The pronounced shift in the CCSS’s ramping up the level of text and task complexity alone will not ensure positive outcomes for learners lacking academic proficiency (Kinsella, 2012). Project CORE intentionally and creatively foregrounds educators’ values and beliefs regarding culture, language...
and power in order to address the following challenges as identified in the research literature on academic achievement of ELs and as implied by the CCSS: 1) the need to improve literacy development in ELs across all domains of language, including reading, writing, speaking and listening; 2) the need to use research-based instructional practices to provide ELs access to grade-level, rigorous academic content, and 3) the need to develop assessment methods for measuring ELL achievement in academic English (August, 2012; Dabach & Callahan, 2011; Durán, 2008; Goldberg, 2008; Gottlieb, 2011; Olsen, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). This article gives a general look at the ways Project CORE is realizing short-, mid- and long-term goals pertaining to these challenges so that ELs are given access to the rigor of the CCSS and the opportunity to acquire 21st century, college- and career-ready skills.

**Foregrounding Values, Beliefs and Practices**

If we expect this educational reform to be different in terms of truly addressing the needs of ELs—then College of Education faculty, that prepare teachers and administrators, need to work side by side with school districts to rethink and dialogue about values, beliefs, and practices. In this manner we can create a common understanding and common language in the Common Core Era.

**School Principal, Project CORE Partner**

Project CORE brings together College of Education faculty, County Office of Education leaders, and leaders from three partner districts to coordinate PLC’s for College of Education faculty, county and district personnel, pre-service teacher candidates and in-service teachers (see Figure 1). This collaborative approach ensures that as many educators as possible receive requisite professional development so that all students are positioned to meet expectations of the new and very rigorous CCSS. The thinking is simple: since the CCSS requires all students to achieve at higher levels and research shows that ELs achieve at higher levels when teachers provide culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, then the University in step with local educational agencies must prepare more culturally and linguistically proficient teachers, specifically Dual Language teachers. However, enacting change is not easy: Project CORE engages educators’ values and beliefs surrounding cultural and language diversity and its impact on classroom instruction in order to assess and build upon their strengths in providing equal educational opportunity. The questions are always: What does the research tell us? What are educators doing well? How can we build upon these strengths? and What do we need to learn more about?

Project CORE gradually scaled up its work focus, starting with district leaders and faculty participants in the first year, followed by pre-service teacher and in-service teacher participants in the second year. District leaders receive professional development alongside College of Education faculty participants at planning retreats, focused symposiums and periodic conferences. College of Education faculty participants, representing eight departments, also receive professional development from colleagues and lead researchers who specialize in the CCSS, instruction and assessment for ELs and biliteracy, so that their methods courses addresses the demands of the CCSS and the needs of ELs. Additionally, pre-service teacher participants attend a series of symposiums throughout the academic year as a supplement to their coursework, and in-service teacher participants take one of two certificate programs: the English Language Development for Academic Literacy Certificate program or the Dual Language for Academic Literacy Certificate program. PLC’s will continue for the remainder of grant funding through 2016.

From conception, leaders from the County Office of Education and Project CORE’s three partner school districts showed tremendous enthusiasm for the opportunity to work closely with the College of Education that prepares the vast majority of their teachers. An all-day Collaborator’s Retreat, attended by county and district leaders, College of Education faculty and Project CORE’s lead researchers, set a tone of partnership for the planning
of targeted professional development for College of Education faculty participants, pre-service teacher and in-service teacher participants.

In addition to the vocal support of district partners, College of Education faculty showed an overwhelming interest in the work of Project CORE because of the urgency to adjust content of teacher preparation courses in light of the new CCSS and the persistent achievement gap of ELs. To date, faculty participants have attended three all-day symposiums that included an in-depth unpacking of the K-12 Anchor Standards with an emphasis on the vertical and horizontal planning across grade levels and content areas. Faculty participants also discussed strategies for aligning their course syllabi to the major shifts of the CCSS and they are presently overhauling their course syllabi to mindfully create access for ELs to the CCSS.

Pre-service Teacher Candidate Professional Development—Preparation of Biliteracy Teachers

In response to the partner school districts’ urgent demand for culturally and linguistically proficient teachers who can effectively serve their majority Latino and ELL student population, Project CORE selected and awarded scholarships to its first 2012-2013 cohort of 32 pre-service bilingual participants. Project CORE lead researchers, College of Education faculty, and County Office of Education leaders facilitate three symposiums per semester, which cover fundamental information relating to the CCSS, Common Core en Español and the Next Generation ELD Standards. This program of study supplements pre-service participants’ standard coursework. Project CORE closely monitors pre-service participants’ areas for improvement using formative assessment tools, and gives ample opportunity to apply the information they have learned in group work and simulated instruction. Through pre-service participants’ evaluations of project activities, the following topics were marked as important areas in need of attention and support: Project CORE finds that, after professional development, pre-service participants know how to read the CCSS document and what the standards mean, but they need assistance using the CCSS to write lessons that address these standards for their classrooms. A communication system is in place to communicate to their professors how they can best support and provide an intervention in their methods courses based on participant feedback. Future pre-service teacher symposiums will address the application and assessment of the CCSS, the alignment of the CCSS and the New Generation English Language Development Standards, as well as more professional development on the Common Core en Español.

In-service Teacher Professional Development—English Language Development for Academic Literacy and Dual Language for Academic Literacy Certificate Programs

In-service teacher participants from Project CORE’s partner school districts take a series of four courses to earn an English Language Development for Academic Literacy Certificate or a Dual Language for Academic Literacy Certificate. Project CORE awards 30 full scholarships, per year, for in-service teacher certificate programs, which prepare teachers with the skills to align CCSS with levels of language proficiency. These certificate programs prepare in-service teacher participants to lead professional development in their respective schools. These teachers will sustain a trainer-of-trainers model so that their skills will be shared with other current teachers in the three partner school districts.

Project CORE’s work is focused on its long-term goal of institutionalizing and creating an infrastructure for professional development programs that address the dynamic needs of ELs. This can only be realized through well-funded and strategically supported Dual Language teacher preparation programs at the University level. Current efforts to achieve this goal are promoted through Project CORE’s strong coalition with the County Office of Education and local school districts, who have been increasingly vocal about the need for Colleges of Education to increase the number of Dual Language teachers and to more effectively prepare English Language Development teachers.

- Understanding common underlying proficiencies for L1 and L2
- Teaching for language and skill transfer
- Explicit teaching of text structures of informational text to enhance language learning
- Close reading for ELLs
- Teaching and learning strategies that improve metacognition and language skills
- Instruction/clarification of the CCSS in specific content areas
- Lesson planning and assessment integrating the CCSS
Teachers as Intellectuals

To actualize the goal of 21st-century literacy skills for our increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student population, we must take inquiry as a stance to become scholar-practitioners. We need to study our community, the latest research, and rethink our current practice. Then we can determine how to best ride the Common Core Wave.

ELD Teacher, Project CORE Partner

Project CORE recognizes teachers as intellectuals with the capacity to enact meaningful pedagogy, informed by research, for ELs in both Biliteracy and English Only programs. In order to realize this shift in educational culture, Project CORE employs a participant-operated Online Learning Community. The Online Learning Community intends to build capacity through making research-based resources available to teachers so they can design relevant curriculum and instruction. It is necessary to build an infrastructure that effectively disseminates best practices through ground-up community and insider research, rather than top-down professional development, so that teachers take ownership of teaching as inquiry. Figure 2 illustrates Project CORE’s process for connecting theory and practice.

The Project CORE Online Learning Community was developed to facilitate the sharing of resources, the latest research, strategies for the deconstruction and implementation of the CCSS, and best approaches pertaining to the CCSS for ELs. It also serves as an electronic library of relevant materials and updates regarding Project CORE events and activities. Users create their own library of resources and post this library to share with others. Ultimately, Project CORE envisions the Online Learning Community as a central hub for connecting all stakeholders, including Project staff, College of Education faculty, County Office of Education leaders, district leaders and classroom teachers, in order to increase awareness of important issues related to ELs, Dual Language and the CCSS.

Authentic Dialogue

Authentic dialogue with College of Education colleagues, district partners, and lead researchers in the area of ELs and CCSS has caused me to question and to rethink the fundamental principles, beliefs and values in my current practice. In this short time, I have found the dialogue to be informative and critical to remaining relevant in the field of teacher preparation.

SDSU Faculty Project CORE Participant

In addition to the individualized professional development programs, Project CORE offers large-scale semiannual professional development symposiums meant to ground the project in the latest research and best practices on CCSS and the education of ELs. Individuals representing every stakeholder group attend Project CORE’s symposiums. Information ranging from macro-level, historical background and policy analysis to micro-level deconstruction of anchor standards and strategies for their alignment to the New ELD Standards provide attendees a common awareness about the CCSS. These symposiums cultivate authentic dialogue, which, in turn, informs the program content of Project CORE’s PLC’s. That Project CORE brings together representatives at every point along the educational pipeline including students, classroom teachers, school administrators and support staff, school district leaders, county leaders, university faculty and administrators, researchers and policy-makers supports Project CORE’s long-term goal of promoting and coordinating a strong shift toward biliteracy and critical consciousness-raising at the school, university, county and state levels.

Conclusion

Project CORE faculty and district partners’ initial symposiums focused on how to create access for ELs to the CCSS through critically analyzing issues around Long Term English Learners, Biliteracy Development, Context Dependent Pedagogy, and Understanding Language. Additionally, in May 2013, Project CORE will credential 32 CCSS prepared Biliteracy Teachers and in December 2013, 30 in-service teachers will receive either a Dual Language Academic Literacy Certificate or an English Language Development Academic Literacy Certificate. Furthermore, a College of Education and District Partners Symposium entitled “Assessment for ELs in the Common Core Era: Smarter Balance and the Role of Technology in Assessment,” is scheduled to kick-off the 2013 Spring Semester.

In summary, the three guiding principles that inform Project CORE’s efforts to spark institutional change in schools, school systems, and universities include: 1) clear articulation of the ways stakeholders’ knowledge, experience, values and beliefs inform their disposition, interpretation and delivery of the CCSS, 2) teachers as intellectuals with the capacity to enact meaningful pedagogy, informed by research, for ELs in both Biliteracy and English Only programs, 3) authentic and critical dialogue among all stakeholders.

Dialogue among critical partners has propelled a vibrant and creative force around the notion of an “evolv-
“ing criticality” that prepares educators at both the ideological and pedagogical levels for the pronounced shifts in the CCSS. During Project CORE’s first year of implementation great strides have been made in uniting key stakeholders from university methods courses to the reality of the culturally and linguistically diverse classroom. The easy process of seeking a comfortable consensus, among stakeholders, has been abandoned. Too often in Colleges of Education consensus that is proclaimed around the education of ELs becomes a pseudo agreement. Project CORE participants work collectively to dig deeper into the foundational principles necessary to develop a common language and a common understanding in the CCSS Era.

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http://coe.sdsu.edu/projectcore/index.html

Looking For A Few Good Writers...

CABE’s Multilingual Educator provides CABE members and the wider community with the opportunity to share research, perspectives, stories, and poetry. The Multilingual Educator provides its readers with timely, relevant information about quality practices and program for English Learners.

Theme: Literacy and Biliteracy…In our Schools and in our Community
Information and guidelines will be disseminated in March
Questions? Email CABE at info@bilingualeducation.org

Works Cited
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