

Welcome to the new and improved ELL Outlook, formerly known as the Course Crafters Newsletter! After reading your comments from our recent survey, we've taken many of your suggestions and implemented them. We've added several new features, reorganized some of the existing sections, and introduced more detailed information on English language learner (ELL) funding, law, and pedagogy. Each issue of The ELL Outlook now offers:

1. *In the News: Links to articles about ELL issues in the news.*
2. *ELL Update: What's happening with ELLs around the country?*
3. *Just the Facts: ELL facts, figures, and statistics.*
4. *From the States: A state or district analysis of ELL law, funding, and teaching.*
5. *At Issue: In each issue we'll pick a new topic to explore, focusing on how this topic affects materials and curriculum development.*
6. *From the Field: A classroom or district profile of a teacher, an administrator, or an in-the-field member of the ELL community.*

As Course Crafters' research into ELLs on the national, state, and district level grows, so will the information in The ELL Outlook. We are working hard to give you the most practical, up-to-date, and accurate information possible and hope that you will continue to ask questions and provide your feedback.

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**THE ELL OUTLOOK** "The Resource for the English Language Learner Market" Vol. 2, Issue 1, January 2003

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~~ **IN THE NEWS** ~~

*Just cut and paste links into your browser to view stories.*

**Goals put focus on skills in English** *The Chicago Tribune*

Illinois adds English acquisition test results to school assessment program, a controversial change that some say could cause more schools to fall short.

[http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/printedition/chi-0212270327dec27\\_1\\_4688609.story?coll=chi%2Dprintnews%2Dhed](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/printedition/chi-0212270327dec27_1_4688609.story?coll=chi%2Dprintnews%2Dhed)

**From English to Spanish, and Back, the Play's the Thing** *The New York Times*

A bilingual production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* brings the Bard to the Bronx and into the lives of teenage performers.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/25/nyregion/25ROME.html>

**National Study Sheds Light on Impact of School Programs on Language Minority** *Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE)*

Five-year study documents the varying effectiveness of different program types on the academic achievement of ELLs.

[http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/about/press\\_releases/pr\\_1.1.html](http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/about/press_releases/pr_1.1.html)

**Helping English Learners Increase Achievement Through Inquiry-Based Science Instruction** *Bilingual Research Journal*

Study of K-6 science education reveals that science instruction through kits and other inquiry-based methods can help boost the achievement of ELLs in other subjects as well.

[http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol26\\_no2/pdf/ART2.PDF](http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol26_no2/pdf/ART2.PDF)

**New Testing Adds Urgency to Bilingual Ed Battle** *The LA Times*

A loophole in California's Proposition 227 allows for parents to request waivers allowing native-language instruction for their children, and some want to cut back on the number that districts allow.

[http://www.latimes.com/la-me-bilingual4jan04\\_0\\_7145413.story](http://www.latimes.com/la-me-bilingual4jan04_0_7145413.story)

~ ~    **ELL UPDATE**    ~ ~

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

During 2002, especially in the last quarter of the year, the California State Senate and Assembly passed some particularly innovative bills that would have radically changed the ways in which ELLs--or English Learners (ELs), as California calls them--would have been educated in the state of California. Unfortunately, these bills were vetoed by Governor Gray Davis, mainly for fiscal reasons. With state shortfalls of up to \$39 billion, new bills outlining new programs were especially difficult to pass. What is important to note though is that these bills took some broad steps to increase ELL achievement through educational materials and state wide accountability. Although vetoed this year, similar sweeping education reform for ELLs is bound to be revisited again, especially in better economic times.

## **SB 1665 and AB 741**

Originating in the California Senate and Assembly respectively, SB 1665 and AB 741 were very similar bills. The fact that both the California Senate and Assembly moved separately to pass similar legislation on the education of ELLs in the same year is noteworthy.

The two bills proposed that:

- Scores from the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) would be included in a school's Academic Performance Index (API). Districts and schools would be held accountable for the academic performance of ELLs in structured immersion and alternative (e.g., bilingual) classrooms through the API. Currently, ELL scores on the CELDT are not included in the API.
- Under the "Legislative Alerts" section of the California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE), CABE says the bill "requires students of limited English proficiency to be offered classes in the other core subject areas appropriate to the student's age and grade level, so that the student can make the transition to regular instruction without lagging behind in academic content." Instead of offering schools the choice of either sequential instruction (English language development followed by subject area learning) or simultaneous instruction (English language development at the same time as subject area learning), schools would be required to convey content to ELLs with reauthorized credentialing of ELL teachers (this is more of the case with SB 1665). Along with this content, appropriate, standards-based educational materials for ELLs are also required.
- Specific to AB 741, reclassification criteria for the transition of an ELL to the mainstream classroom would require "mastery of academic content" in addition to basic skills requirements.
- Also specific to AB 741, school districts who exceeded API growth targets for ELLs--in addition to native speakers of English and other student subgroups--would receive monetary awards from the Governor's Performance Award Program, not to exceed \$150 per pupil.

### **Outcome:**

Governor Davis vetoed both SB 1665 and AB 741 on September 28, 2002. His reasons included:

- a) costs potentially exceeding \$100 million for these changes;
- b) already existing educational materials for ELLs in English language arts/English language development;
- c) "separate expectations for English learners [that] would jeopardize the cohesiveness of the current system";
- d) and his belief that "reclassification should continue to be based solely on students' English proficiency."

### **Analysis:**

If both bills had passed, the requirement that subject area content be taught to ELLs during a one-year structured immersion program would have put meat on the bones of the rather ambiguous Proposition 227. Instead of falling behind native speakers of English during the one-year immersion programs, ELLs would at least have the potential of learning the same subject area materials as their mainstream peers. Significantly, schools and districts that excelled in teaching ELLs (along with native

speakers of English) would have been provided monetary rewards for successful subject area and language learning. ELL materials catering to one-year immersion classes--and, for that matter, all ELL materials--would have had to be expanded to include subject area teaching. California school districts would have had the added pressure of identifying and using teachers, methods, and textbooks that encouraged short- and long-term ELL success.

### **AB 2363**

In another piece of legislation (in addition to AB 741) introduced by Assembly Majority Floor Leader Marco Antonio Firebaugh, the California Legislature attempted to strengthen ELLs as an educational subgroup by prescribing qualifications for four of the ten State Board of Education members that the Governor appoints and two-thirds of the California Senate approves.

Specifically, the bill proposed that:

- One member of the State Board would be a public school teacher with experience teaching ELLs; one would be an employee of a school district; one would be a parent of student enrolled in a public school; and one would have experience in the methodology, research, and practice of teaching ELLs. The entire membership of the State Board of Education would be drawn from different geographical parts of California.
- Ten business days before a meeting of the State Board of Education, the public would be provided with "sufficient background materials on each item on the agenda." The State Board of Education would also post this background information on the Internet.

### **Outcome:**

On September 18, 2002, Governor Davis also vetoed AB 2363. His explanations were short, citing reduced flexibility of the governor and the fact that he was "proud of the world class academic standards adopted by the current Board."

### **Analysis:**

There is no doubt ELLs would benefit from a State Board of Education that included a teacher with experience with ELLs and a member with experience in the methodology and research behind teaching ELLs. Background material on actions the State Board was considering would also be of obvious use, especially to concerned parents, researchers, and publishers. If not for the flexibility appointing members to the State Board of Education that Governor Davis would have lost in signing AB 2363, the background materials on agenda items probably would have passed.

~ ~    **JUST THE FACTS**    ~ ~

### HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (HISD) FACTS AND FIGURES

- Houston ISD is the seventh-largest public school system in the US, and the largest in Texas (HISD, 2002). It is also the 5<sup>th</sup> largest ELL district in the country (Course Crafters' analysis, 2002).

- In 2001-2002, HISD had 210,670 enrolled students. Of those, 59,903, or 28%, were classified as ELLs. This was an increase of 10.3% over 2000-2001 (HISD, "Revealing the Success of English Language Learner (ELL) Students in the Bilingual Program in Houston").
- 62% of ELLs in the Houston ISD are in a bilingual program, 28% are in an ESL program, and the remaining 10% receive no services (HISD, "Revealing the Success of English Language Learner (ELL) Students in the Bilingual Program in Houston").
- Six different languages are represented in Houston ISD's bilingual programs: Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic, Urdu, and Serbo-Croatian (HISD, "Multilingual Programs").
- The 1999-2000 dropout rate for ELLs in HISD was slightly lower than that for non-ELLs (2% vs. 3%) (HISD, "Revealing the Success of English Language Learner (ELL) Students in the Bilingual Program in Houston").

~ ~    **FROM THE STATES**    ~ ~

A STORY OF SUCCESS: THE EDUCATION OF ELLS IN HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

As a recipient of the inaugural Broad Prize for Urban Education in October of 2002, Houston Independent School District (HISD) must be doing something right. (HISD, "Innovations and Improvements Earn HISD Prestigious National Education Prize") In fact, a lot of somethings.

HISD's Multilingual Programs Department, in charge of supporting schools with ESL/bilingual and migrant education programs, is no exception to this rule. In 2002 alone, 10 out of 31 valedictorians in HISD started in ESL/bilingual programs (6 bilingual and 4 ESL). HISD ELLs that have exited from ESL/bilingual programs were retained less often and dropped out less often when compared to native speakers of English (HISD, "Revealing the Success of English Language Learner (ELL) Students in the Bilingual Program in Houston"). According to a newly released Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) study by Dr. Wayne P. Thomas and Dr. Virginia P. Collier (a press release for this study is given in "In the News"), "The Houston data makes a very compelling case for U.S. school reform efforts to address language minority students' needs through strong (not watered down), effective, enrichment bilingual programs. . . .Based on their strong testing results, we believe that the Houston school district's program and implementation strategies are worthy of emulation by other school districts" (Thomas & Collier, 2002) Rod Paige, the current U.S. Secretary of Education and a former HISD superintendent, probably has similar praises for his former district. While HISD's Multilingual Programs Department admits that "too many students who are of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, or of limited English proficiency, experience low achievement and develop a poor self-concept," the overwhelming success of ELLs in HISD speaks to the fact that well-designed, well-staffed, and well-funded language learning programs can overcome these challenges.

**Program Models**

In line with Texas' strong commitment to educating students in their native language to foster later success in learning English, "We [HISD's Multilingual Programs Department] believe that a strong linguistic foundation in the primary language ensures academic success in the second language. . . that children learn best in an environment that validates their culture and language." Section 29.051 of the Texas Education Code requires that all school districts in Texas offer bilingual education programs to all elementary ELL students whose home language is spoken by more than 20 students at the same grade level in the entire school district. Depending on the native language of an ELL (traditionally bilingual education is only available in Spanish and Vietnamese in Houston), an ELL may be enrolled in various types of bilingual or ESL classrooms or, by parent's request, opt out of a specialized English learning program altogether:

1. **Transitional Bilingual Program (TBP)** -- From Pre-K until the end of Grade 3, ELLs receive native language instruction for concept development while acquiring English. In Grades 1-3, depending on the progression of native language learning, grade level ESL Science and Social Studies are introduced. English instruction gradually increases over time with transitioning expected in Grades 4 and 5.
2. **One-Way Developmental Bilingual Program (DBP)** -- Up until the end of Grade 3, all subjects are in an ELL's native language, with 30-45 minutes of ESL instruction per day, depending on grade level. By Grade 4, 50% of the instruction will be in an ELL's native language and 50% will be in English. This division, of half-native language and half English, will continue through graduation. Native language instruction, especially in the early grades, is meant to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).
3. **Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Program (TWBIP)** -- In HISD, this program is open to an equal number of ELLs and native speakers of English. All subjects are offered in an ELL's native language until the end of grade 3. By Grade 4, 50% of the instruction is in an ELL's native language and 50% is in English. While ELLs have increasing amounts of ESL daily, native speakers of English are separated from their classmates for English language development. Another option, a partial immersion model of TWBIP, would offer separated reading and language arts time so that ELLs and native speakers of English could learn to read and write in their native languages.

Once an ELL in HISD reaches middle school, bilingual programs are less likely to be offered, especially with schools encountering shortages in bilingual staff. ELLs in high school face the same problem. In both cases, content courses in an ELL's native language are encouraged if resources are available.

4. **ESL Programs** -- In the case that a school cannot offer bilingual education because of an insufficient number of certified bilingual teachers, a school may offer an ESL program as an alternative to bilingual education. These programs develop proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the English language. ESL methods are also used to learn content area subjects. In addition, "Whenever possible, teacher aides or community volunteers who are proficient in the students' home language can provide native language support for LEP students in ESL classes, particularly those who are pre-literate or beginning level" (HISD, *Bilingual/ESL Program Guidelines Handbook*).

Depending on proficiency, an ELL can be assigned an ESL instructional level from 1 to 5 (Preliterate, Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, Transitional). At the beginning level, English instruction focuses on oral language development and concepts in situations which an ELL is familiar with. At the intermediate level, English instruction continues to focus on oral development with intensive instruction in subject areas that require less reading (i.e., math and science). At the advanced level, English instruction focuses on reading and writing, with intensive ESL instruction in math, science, and social studies. For those ELLs in middle school and high school, "schools are encouraged to offer content area course sections/periods specifically for LEP students, i.e., ESL Algebra, ESL World History, ESL Biology, in order to facilitate their mastery of the essential knowledge and skills" (HISD, *Bilingual/ESL Program Guidelines Handbook*)

### **Teachers in HISD**

In the 1999-2000 *Survey of States' LEP Students & Available Education Programs* published by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA), states responded that for every certified ESL teacher there are approximately 30 ELLs and for every teacher certified in bilingual education there are roughly 76 ELLs (NCELA, 2002). Because HISD has such a strong belief in L1 (teaching in the first, or native, language) to L2 (English) transfer, this creates a dilemma that is especially important: bilingual education cannot run without bilingual teachers. To counter the effects of teacher shortages, HISD has developed district-specific programs with monetary incentives and opportunities for teacher training:

1. Teacher Stipends -- Approved by the Houston Board of Education, up to \$3,000 per year can go to either bilingual or ESL teachers with proper certification or permits.
2. "Grow Your Own" -- HISD will reimburse teachers aides and other paraprofessionals seeking bilingual teacher certification for tuition, fees, and books.
3. Project Maestro -- Project Maestro ("teacher") facilitates ELL instructional programs, including professional development and student teaching, in schools that have a predominantly ELL population.

### **Money Talks**

In the 2001-2002 school year, the Dallas Independent School District (DISD), with roughly the same number of ELLs as Houston (47,507 vs. HISD's 54,075), spent about \$17 million, or 2.9% of total expenditures, on bilingual/ESL education. On

average, the state of Texas spent only 4.3% of instructional operating expenditures on bilingual education (AEIS, 2002).

HISD, on the other hand, spent almost \$125 million (or 15.5% of total expenditures) on bilingual/ESL education. Compared to DISD, HISD spends about \$100 million more than DISD (which is about seven times as much). In the entire state of Texas, HISD alone spends almost 20% of the total funds for bilingual/ESL education.

~~ **AT ISSUE** ~~

WHAT IS CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION FOR ELLS AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

By Dr. Suzanne Irujo  
*ELL Outlook* Contributing Writer/Consulting Editor

As with so many other terms related to the education of ELLs, the term *content-based instruction* means different things to different people. To ESL teachers, it might mean using a math problem or science experiment to make their teaching of the English language more interesting. To bilingual teachers, it might mean learning vocabulary in English to accompany concepts being learned in the native language. To mainstream teachers, it might mean trying to figure out how to teach grade-level content to learners at low levels of English proficiency.

Perhaps the easiest way to make sense of the various forms of content-based instruction is to think of a continuum. At one extreme is teaching that focuses almost exclusively on *language*; content instruction can be used as a means of learning English, but is not an end in itself. At the other extreme is teaching that focuses almost exclusively on *content*; language instruction may be provided when necessary to help learn the content, but is not an end in itself. Instruction that falls near either of these extremes can be useful in some circumstances, but ELLs in K-12 classrooms have a great need for instruction that focuses equally on content and language. This has commonly been called *sheltered instruction*, with teachers trained in both the content area that they teach and in ESL techniques.

Until relatively recently, it was presumed that once ELLs had acquired a certain level of language proficiency, they could transition from language-based ESL classes directly into mainstream content classes. Although many of them were not successful in mainstream classes, it was assumed that the problems were due to lack of motivation, lack of parental support, and so forth, since presumably they were proficient in English. This view did not take into consideration the different skills required for academic language proficiency (often called Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, or CALP) vs. conversational language proficiency (often called Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1981). Conversational language proficiency normally develops more rapidly than academic language proficiency, so ELLs often appear proficient, and can pass the typical language proficiency tests, but are still unable to do grade-level academic work without continued support.

Extensive research by Thomas & Collier, tracking thousands of ELLs in all parts of the country from kindergarten through 11<sup>th</sup> grade, shows significant advantages for those who receive content-based ESL instruction, whether as part of a bilingual education model or an all-English model: "... in our study, students who received L2

taught through academic content (by teachers trained in second language acquisition and the content area, who were also socioculturally supportive of students) made greater progress than students receiving ESL classes focused on the teaching of the English language" (Thomas & Collier, 1997). English instruction must be cognitively complex and on grade level, but presented in ways that make it meaningful for students at any proficiency level.

### **Some Models for Content-Based Instruction**

Two recently developed models of content-based instruction can provide guidance for teachers and materials developers as they learn how to best meet the academic needs of ELLs.

**The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach** (CALLA; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994) integrates essential grade-appropriate academic content, development of the language skills needed in school, and instruction in learning strategies. The model can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and mainstream classrooms, and is particularly well suited to serve as a bridge from bilingual or ESL programs to mainstream classrooms. CALLA expands the theory of content-based instruction from a receptive learning model to an active learning model. Cognitive theory, on which CALLA is based, explains why it is not sufficient to simply ensure that the instruction provided for ELLs is comprehensible to them. Research into learning strategy instruction shows that learning is an active process in which learners use strategies to help them select, understand, and retain new information. Materials for ELLs (and for all learners) must facilitate this active learning.

**The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol** (SIOP; Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 1999) is another content-based instructional model that serves as a bridge to the mainstream, and can be used in any context in which students are learning content through a non-native language. It was developed to address the issue of variability in the design and delivery of sheltered instruction, and is based on the professional literature, experienced teachers' practices, and research studies. The model is captured in an observation protocol containing 30 items that are divided into sections covering preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review/assessment. This observation checklist has been used to assess the quality of instruction, to provide feedback to teachers, as a professional development resource, for lesson planning, and as a research tool. With this research-based model of sheltered instruction, teachers, teacher educators, supervisors, researchers, and materials developers no longer need to wonder what makes a sheltered instruction lesson or course effective.

### **Content-Based Instruction in Action**

We can see content-based instruction in action in a California elementary school classroom. This is a mainstream classroom where 90% of the students in the class are native speakers of Spanish, with English proficiency levels ranging from beginner to native fluency. The teacher has an elementary teaching credential with a CLAD (Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development) emphasis, available in California for teachers who work with ELLs. Language development strategies are integrated into everything she does. For example, as the children learn about forests from a National Geographic Web site, they work in pairs to research unknown

vocabulary, present word meanings to the class, and write "found poetry" from the word lists they create. This teacher creates many of her teaching activities and materials herself because she says that most textbooks don't provide enough support for ELLs (TESOL, *Integrating the ESL Standards Into Classroom Practice, Grades Pre-K-2*, 2000).

In a secondary school, content-based instruction (or sheltered instruction as it is more often called at this level) can look very different. Because of the difficulty of finding teachers trained in both ESL and secondary subjects, team-teaching is often used. A sheltered Science Concepts class in Fairfax County, VA, provides an example. The students, whose native languages are Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Farsi, and Chinese, are at high beginner/low intermediate levels of English. They are in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades, and their previous preparation in science ranges from almost nothing to well above grade-level. The class is designed to prepare ELLs for mainstream biology, physics, chemistry, and earth science classes, and includes a lot of group problem solving and vocabulary work based on the science vocabulary students are learning. Because there are no commercial materials available for this kind of class, the science teacher and the ESL teacher must plan the entire course, basing it on existing science curricula, and integrating the national ESL standards with the Virginia science standards throughout the course (TESOL, *Integrating the ESL Standards Into Classroom Practice, Grades 9-12*, 2000).

These models and examples can provide guidance to publishers as they develop ways to better serve the ELL population. Publishers of materials for mainstream classrooms must ensure that second language teaching and learning strategies are integrated into all aspects of the materials. A page in the front matter of the teacher's guide providing general suggestions, or one-sentence "tips" inserted into lesson plans that provide no other support for ELLs, are not sufficient. For the ESL market, materials must be developed specifically for sheltered content classes, combining content learning with language development and also incorporating sociocultural awareness. Knowing what it is that makes sheltered instruction effective will make this task easier.

These models and examples also help illustrate a basic premise of content-based instruction: It is possible for ELLs to learn language and content simultaneously, even when native language instruction is not available. Language and content instruction do not have to be sequential; content instruction does not have to be postponed until learners are fully proficient in English. Using techniques such as those incorporated into the CALLA and SIOP models, content courses can be taught to learners at relatively low levels of language proficiency.

We know that content classes taught totally in the native language, or ESL classes that focus totally on language, do not adequately prepare ELLs for transition to the mainstream. Content-based language instruction is essential, yet it is extremely difficult for teachers to implement because of the lack of appropriate materials. With the mandates of No Child Left Behind, it is no longer possible to continue with educational practices and materials that do not result in academic success for ELLs.

~ ~ **FROM THE FIELD** ~ ~

A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW ON BILINGUAL INSTRUCTION

By Michelle Adam  
*ELL Outlook* Contributing Writer

**Jackie Gandia** has been teaching English as a Second Language for 22 years, enough time to draw her own conclusions about the effectiveness of bilingual instruction for her students.

"It's a waste of time for more than a year," were her exact words when asked about the effectiveness of native language content programs geared toward her Spanish-speaking students at Rubén Darío Middle School in Miami, Florida. "Of the teachers I have talked to, they've learned the [English] language in their native countries and most of them are in favor of immersion."

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Gandia attended an American school and learned English from kindergarten on. From a young age she was immersed in the language, a process that she refers to as "sink or swim."

Today, Gandia has served as ESOL department chair at Rubén Darío since 2000, and has ten years' experience teaching language arts at her present school, and four years' experience at an elementary school. Prior to that Gandia taught English in Puerto Rico and then obtained her Masters in ESOL at Nova Southeastern University in Miami.

Located in the heart of Miami, Rubén Darío receives a large percentage of Hispanic students. Gandia oversees 11 language arts classes, broken down into Levels 1/2 and 3/4, and made up of 99 percent Hispanics (the other one percent consists of an Arab, a Japanese, and two Brazilian students). In these classes, students learn English grammar and literature, primarily in English and separate from content. They are also required to take ESOL electives in reading, writing, and comprehension.

Throughout 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, ESOL students take language arts classes. At the same time they participate in BCC (Bilingual Content Curriculum) courses. At the onset of BCC, bilingual teachers teach subject matter in Spanish, but are then expected to wean students off of Spanish and primarily into English by the end of the first year.

Said Gandia, "By the end of the year they should be 90 percent English and 10 percent Spanish, but what is really happening is the other way around. I would say that only one of the BCC teachers teaches bilingually, but 90 percent of them teach in Spanish only."

Students are tested annually, and in doing so are expected to pass from ESOL 1/2 to 3/4, but Gandia has seen far too many students stay behind. "The kids never want to leave level 1/2 because if they do they are thrown in with the wolves. They use the Spanish as a crutch," she said. When students enter ESOL 3/4 classes they not only begin studying literature, but are also taken out of the BCC classes and put into regular English-speaking classes in math, science, and social studies.

When students try to fail tests in order to stay behind in their comfort zone, or when they reach the eighth grade, Gandia pushes them forward into ESOL 3/4. She does so with an added pressure from her own administration, which requires that she find out why select groups of students haven't reached level 3 after two years.

"At the beginning the students come crying to me, begging me to put them back into level 1/2. It's a shock for them to be taken out of their comfort zone," said Gandia. "We believe that they should be given bilingual classes for the first year while they get adjusted, but afterwards forget about the bilingual classes. That's the concern that a lot of teachers I've spoken to have."

Only the Spanish-speaking students at her school receive BCC classes, since a minimum of 15 people from a similar language background are required in order to

create a separate bilingual class. Therefore, Japanese, Russian, or Brazilian students that Rubén Darío has had in the past have been thrown directly into English-speaking content classes. The result, in Gandia's eyes, is that "these kids learn faster than the Spanish-speaking students. They are not pampered."

Of the Spanish-speaking students who are placed into the regular content courses, some are unprepared, but Gandia finds that they too "start adapting themselves." As she described, "After two or three months they start swimming easier. At first they are Oscar-winning actresses and actors. But eventually a high percentage of these students do well."

Gandia serves as a bridge for many of those students who are eventually placed in regular English courses while continuing to take ESOL classes. She, as well as other teachers, provides tutoring to these students, assisting them in areas that they may find especially difficult to understand. Often, students come to her with questions in social studies, asking her to explain cultural and historical facts that seem so distant and unfamiliar to their own lives. "The hardest class for them is civics. They do not understand civil rights and electoral votes," said Gandia.

Many of Gandia's students are immigrants, especially from Nicaragua, who are coping with large cultural changes, and therefore perform better when they are able to contrast their culture and other cultures with what they are learning in the classroom. Few of the textbooks used in Rubén Darío's language and content classes provide this approach. Even in Gandia's literature classes (levels 3/4), textbooks rarely provide an alternative reference point to American literature.

"The textbooks for regular science and social studies are excellent. The problem is that they are using the same ones for the ESOL students," said Gandia (only one mainstream social studies teacher is using ESOL textbooks for his bilingual students). Within the BCC classes, teachers use the regular English textbooks and translate from them. "They need to cover the same objectives but with lower and easier vocabulary words," she said.

While Gandia would like to see students move quickly into English-speaking classes, she recognizes the need for more supportive textbooks--with easier vocabulary, more illustrations, and greater contrast and comparison of cultures--to make this transition possible. She also believes that "the communication channels need to be more open between content classes and language classes."

Until then, Gandia remains an inter-mediator, filling the gaps of culture and knowledge that many first generation students experience in this country. "I feel that many of them do not trust the system," she said. "I feel I have been their counselor, mentor, and friend."

*The opinions expressed in "From the Field" do not necessarily represent those of Course Crafters, Inc.*

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### **Course Crafters, Inc.**

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