

RICH CONTENT and LANGUAGE LEARNING IN A BILINGUAL KINDERGARTEN CLASS

LwL Project goals

- Facilitating learning that integrates discussions, reading and writing
- Engaging students in positive and culturally and linguistically responsive learning
- Supporting students to learn about how language works to make meaning
- Scaffolding deeper learning and academic language development



► **Benerisa Perez** teaches a bilingual (Spanish-English) kindergarten class at Ethel Phillips Elementary School in Sacramento, California. A veteran bilingual teacher, she has been teaching in Sacramento City Unified School District for over 20 years. She first learned about and began using *Leading with Learning* in the summer of 2015.

Letting go so students can lead the way

When I started with *Leading with Learning* this past summer, I didn't know what to expect. I knew I would be learning different techniques to try out, and initially I was nervous about not having as much control of the classroom as I was used to having. But one of the first keystone pedagogies we learned about

was called SPIRAL – sequenced process for interactive read-alouds. SPIRAL helped me realize that in order to learn language, students need to do more of the exploring and find out more for themselves.

Early in my teaching career, there was more cooperative learning, and then there was a shift toward more teacher-directed learning. This year, with *Leading with Learning*, I've done more cooperative learning again, with the kids learning more for themselves and my role being mostly monitoring. Even though they're doing more for themselves, there are still guidelines. I listen to the students and I walk around and I see what they're coming up with.

The interactive read-aloud strategies that I've learned this year have made me more confident about what I'm doing and how I'm teaching, and they've also allowed me to let go more so I'm doing less talking and my kids are working more interactively with each other. When I do interactive read-alouds, I know that my students are building content and language knowledge at the same time.

I look at books differently now – when I pick up a book to read to students out loud, I think about the language, the vocabulary, and how it might help my students.

Language routines throughout the day

One thing that's been particularly useful to me has been learning to integrate what the students are doing in the classroom throughout the day. For instance, when we taught a unit on bees, it wasn't just bees in isolation – we were talking about bees throughout the day, integrated into lots of subjects. So instead of teaching science in isolation, I would use the same strategies I was doing in my read-aloud and during English Language Development (ELD) time so that kids got used to the system. For example, how I introduce and develop a new vocabulary word is the same throughout the day. Whether students are learning new words in science or in ELD, they know the routines and procedures, they know that they're going to turn and talk to each other a lot. This integration has been really nice because last year there wasn't a lot of science in our grade, but this year – because of the way we've integrated things – I've been able to do much more science.

I've found that looking at the vocabulary words in books ahead of time and knowing when to expand on them has helped me a lot as a teacher. Also I look at books differently now – when I pick up a book to read to students out loud, I think about the language, the vocabulary, and how it might help my students. I'm finding that my students are acquiring more vocabulary from doing these read-alouds – the stop and pause, and repetition – these strategies have helped a lot.

My students are definitely talking more, they're saying more in the classroom. I've created an environment in which students feel free to express what they're thinking and feeling. There's never a wrong answer, students are always permitted time to think and improve.

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