Bridging Words and Worlds
Effective Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners

Moker Klaus-Quinlan, M.A. & Sally Nathenson-Mejia, Ph.D., Authors
Suzanne Plaut, Ed.D., Editor
Who We Are…
Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC) is a partnership of education, business and community leaders working together to support and encourage excellence in Colorado’s public schools.

Our Mission…
Public Education & Business Coalition drives cutting-edge practices and informs and provokes the public to improve education for all.

Our Vision…
To cultivate schools and systems worthy of our students.

What We Do…
The guiding principle driving our work is that all students will graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge to succeed in the 21st century. Our work is organized around three areas of focus:

Professional Learning
PEBC provides professional learning for K-12 teachers, principals and district personnel to ensure that quality instruction, student learning, and assessments are aligned and focused on increasing student achievement. This is accomplished through Best Practice Instruction and Coaching; Lab Classrooms; Leadership and Coaching; and Institutes and Seminars.

Boettcher Teachers Program
The Boettcher Teachers Program (BTP) is an urban teacher residency program that prepares teachers to make a profound and lasting impact in high-needs urban schools. Graduates of the program are specifically trained to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students and earn a master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver and a Colorado teaching license.

Education News Colorado
EdNews Colorado is the only news service in Colorado devoted to continuing, in-depth coverage of education policymaking in the legislature and state government and to comprehensive coverage and serious analysis of such issues as school choice, accountability, and education reform. The goal is to provide the kind of detailed, balanced news and analysis that readers do not get from interest groups and professional associations or from the commercial media.

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Moker Klaus-Quinlan, M.A., Sally Nathenson-Mejia, Ph.D. (Authors); Paula Miller, Veronica Carrejo Moreno, Kim Schmidt, Susan L. Kempton, Suzanne Plaut, Todd Engdahl (Contributors); Suzanne Plaut, Ed.D. (Editor)
In this document, we lay out a six-part Framework of Effective Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners ("CLDL Framework") that names key components of the teaching practice and student learning that is most central for CLD students. The framework is built around enduring understandings both for teachers and for students: what is most important for them to understand in order to be most successful in their shared endeavor.
Colorado’s student population is transforming: we have experienced a 297% growth rate in English language learners since 1997, and 30% of the state's students are Hispanic.

And our expectations are evolving. Academic standards are increasingly rigorous, as are the demands of the workforce and post-secondary education. Students must leave secondary school highly literate in academic English, and able to master new content increasingly independently. Thus, it is imperative that educators understand and meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners.

“As empathetic and knowledgeable teachers, the primary responsibility is on us to make our classrooms comfortable, empowering, and familiar places. We need to build on CLD students’ experiences and cultural strengths as well as making the learning norms of the school comprehensible and the language and learning dynamics of the classroom accessible to CLD students. No program or methodology can do this for us.”

(Pransky, 2008, p 204)

The Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC) is recognized nationally for our exemplary professional development with schools and districts, particularly regarding students’ literacy development. We believe that all students can and should develop strong language skills, master challenging content, and become confident and effective learners. In this document, we share with educators, business leaders, and policy makers the specific supports CLD students need, and the requisite professional learning their teachers deserve. Specifically, we examine the following question:

When working with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, what are the principles of effective practice to ensure all students have the respect and support necessary to develop English language skills and understand key content?

Two key findings emerged:

• The instructional practices PEBC promotes for all learners are just as crucial for CLD students.

• Teachers of CLD students must also be more intentional and precise in key areas in order for students to experience academic success.

In this document, we provide a framework that names enduring understandings we consider central for effective teaching practice and CLD student learning. This framework is applicable regardless of the “program” – immersion, bilingual, transition, early or late exit – that a school or district adopts to serve its English learners.
Executive Summary

The framework (See Appendix 1) includes six components, all of which we consider foundational:

- Understanding and advocating for ourselves as learners; understanding our teaching beliefs
- Understanding and supporting each other in a community
- Understanding authentic content through purposeful inquiry
- Understanding the power of language in various oral and written forms
- Understanding how to develop academic language and vocabulary
- Understanding how thinking strategies support students in making meaning

For each component, we name “learning targets” – specific behaviors for teachers and students to strive toward as they embark on this shared journey. We also describe the work of highly effective teachers in action.

All students have the ability and right to learn at high levels. And CLD students are in all classrooms. The PEBC invites educators to embrace this challenge and respond proactively and constructively.

Policy Context

Looking ahead, several key issues face state policymakers, district leaders and teachers as they seek to address the needs of CLD students, including continued growth in the enrollment of those students, updating state law as needed to reflect changing classroom practice, the needs of older CLD students, ensuring an adequate supply of trained teachers and an awareness of both the financial pressures and local control structure that characterize education in Colorado.

About PEBC

PEBC’s Professional Learning work is customized to meet the needs of individual schools, site-based to support on-the-job learning and asset-based to honor the strengths that exist in any system. Our support structures include:

- **Leadership support:** to create a learning-focused culture and build leadership capacity
- **Whole-faculty learning:** to build shared vision and strategies
- **Small group study:** to build common language, expectations, and instructional practices
- **Individual coaching:** to develop teachers’ expertise and efficacy

Educators must bridge students’ home worlds and the world of school, to the benefit of all.

No single solution, program, or set of practices will work with all students. In this document, we provide a starting point for educators working together to create the kinds of schools and classroom communities that will enable all students to thrive.

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Introduction

A Quick Look at the Numbers

Who Are Colorado’s Students?
Total state enrollment in 2008: 818,443

Who Are Colorado’s English Learners?
From 2003-2008 the number of English Learners receiving services in Colorado has grown from 71,471 to 98,444

State total student enrollment growth rate from 1995-2008: 16.6%
State English Learner growth rate from 1995-2008: 297%

In 2007-2008, Colorado had:
1. Spanish speakers: 107,968
2. Vietnamese speakers: 2,816
3. Russian speakers: 1,414
4. Hmong speakers: 960
5. Arabic speakers: 891
6. Tagalog speakers: 380
7. Somali speakers: 356

CDE English Language Learners in Colorado - A State of the State, 2008
21st Century Demands

Nationally, educators and business people agree that in this global economy, all students can and should do more: become excellent readers and writers, understand complex content, and know how to learn new content independently.

The new Colorado P-12 Academic Standards reflect these increased expectations. Yet we no longer define success as simply graduating high school. Colorado students must leave secondary school prepared to succeed in the workforce or post-secondary education. A challenge, certainly. Yet even more daunting for the thousands of students who come to our system sometimes with limited schooling, often with limited English, and always with limited knowledge of how the U.S. “does school.”

Students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CLD students) are no longer just in “ESL” classes with specially trained teachers. They are in all classrooms. These students – diverse not only in their language but also in their familial and cultural backgrounds – deserve the respect and support required to thrive in our schools and our society. Educators have an opportunity and obligation to respond proactively and constructively to this challenge. Doing so requires shifts and support at both the school and system level. Yet first, we must understand who these students are.

It’s about More Than Numbers

Colorado has a large and growing number of English learners. But there is more to the story than the numbers tell. The statistics reported by the state reflect only those English learners identified by school districts in their yearly October counts: students who currently receive language support services, those who have been exited from support services due to their scores on the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA, the yearly assessment given to identified English learners), and those who have not – for whatever reason – received any language support services. However, all English learners need academic language support throughout their schooling. This is because the language demands of school intensify as students advance through the grades (Ovando et al, 2003; Freeman & Freeman, 2009). While CLD students may be highly proficient at carrying on a conversation in English, they face different challenges when working with complex content in science, literature, social studies and math. K-12 teachers, in every content area, need background in effective techniques and practices for supporting English learners as they work toward content and language proficiency.

It’s about More Than Language

Often, educators overlook English learners’ varied familial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. A school might have children who were born in the U.S. to immigrant parents and children who came to the U.S. anywhere from infancy to high-school. Children may not have been exposed to English instruction, and may have grown up with a home language and culture different from that of U.S. schools. Some children may have had no schooling or background knowledge in academic content before coming to the U.S. Other children may be new immigrants with strong academic backgrounds, strong academic skills and knowledge, even though they are not proficient in English.

Some may have moved around, and thus had months, perhaps years, when they could not attend school (either in another country or the U.S.). Others may have attended school regularly, but in different schools, districts, or states. They may have changed programs, perhaps beginning in a bilingual program and moving to an immersion program. Many may lack strong academic development in either English or their home language.

All parents try to provide a good education for their children. Parents whose first language is not English may incorrectly think that they should speak English at home to help their children speak English; or, lacking English themselves, insist that their children still speak English at home. Yet research shows that a strong foundation in one’s native language will support and facilitate the learning of another language (for a research summary, see Ovando et al., 2003). Students who know how to express themselves well and have a wide vocabulary in their home language are more prepared for school and for learning a new language.

(cont’d on page 8)
A Literacy Orientation: Home/School “Match”

Students and families also may differ in terms of what Ken Pransky (2008) calls literacy orientation: whether their home culture is “matched” or “mismatched” to U.S. academics. “Match” is not about foods, transportation, or holidays. Rather, it refers to the family’s orientation to literacy and academics.

We tend to assume that school culture is “neutral.” Yet U.S. schools reflect a particular cultural paradigm. CLD students who come from a “literacy-oriented” home culture usually have a good sense of what school is all about and have strong content backgrounds and wide academic vocabularies in their own language. They need support in learning English and expressing their ideas through this new language. But they already know how to “do” school.

By contrast, students from families without a literacy orientation consistent with the dominant cultural paradigm need to learn everything at once. They need to know what U.S. school expectations are, how American schools work, how teachers and students interact, what academic language sounds like, content concepts, huge amounts of vocabulary, how to get help… and they need to learn English.

These are not excuses; this is the reality of Colorado's student population. We have a wealth of languages, cultures, backgrounds and world views. Colorado's educators must build on these riches and provide a high quality education for all of our students. Students’ futures depend on it, as does our civic society and our economy.

Why PEBC is Addressing Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners

Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC) seeks to create schools and systems worthy of our students. Since 1983, PEBC has provided long-term customized professional development to districts, schools, and teachers. Given the demographic shifts happening in Colorado and nationally, PEBC has become increasingly focused on how to help teachers meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students by providing precise research-based support. PEBC is the proud home of the Boettcher Teachers Program (BTP) – an urban teacher residency program that combines the best-known research and practices for teacher recruitment, preparation, induction, and support in high-needs schools – and has been influenced by BTP's strong work supporting systems that serve students from diverse backgrounds.

PEBC can support teachers and administrators as they identify appropriately high expectations for English learners, identify English learners’ strengths and needs, and learn how to accommodate and differentiate instruction for English learners.

PEBC’s Inquiry Process and Key Insights

PEBC helps to bridge educational research and practice. And just as we encourage teachers to engage in inquiry so they can understand current thinking in the field, we approach our own ongoing learning from that same inquiry stance. For this position paper, we examined this broad question:

When working with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, what principles of effective practice ensure that all students have the respect and support necessary to develop English language skills and understand key content?

From 2008-2010, a study group of PEBC staff developers and lab teachers, in collaboration with Dr. Sally Nathenson-Mejía, reviewed current educational research on the following:

- literacy and language development of English Language Learners,
- the instructional practices that have proven most effective given CLD students’ strengths and needs, and culturally responsive instruction

From our extensive study and application, two key insights emerged:

The instructional practices PEBC promotes – such as building classroom community, using the workshop model of instruction, and explicit thinking strategy instruction – are as effective and important for CLD students as they are for all learners.

Yet teachers of CLD students must become more intentional and precise in key areas if their students are to experience academic success. Key beliefs and practices are required if teachers seek to build a bridge between students’ home language and culture to the language and culture of school.

Bridging Words and Worlds

Above, we refer to the need for teachers to “bridge” students’ home worlds and the world of school. This metaphorical bridge is invitational, multi-directional,
and focused on strengths. CLD students should not have to “leave home” in order to succeed in school. All students come to school with assets that should be welcomed and developed. We must not take a deficit stance, focusing on what CLD students “don’t know” or “can’t do.”

Rather, by beginning with the language and cultural assets students already possess and building on them, teachers can build a bridge between the home language and culture and the school language and culture. CLD expert Ken Pransky encourages us to consider: “What are our students’ home language and culture strengths, and how can we bridge the gaps between those and the requirements of the classroom language and culture so we can turn CLD students’ home experiences and language acculturation into another form of classroom luck?” (2008, pg xviii.) For example, teachers need to uncover students’ existing background knowledge and then build the additional background knowledge necessary for students to engage both in the classroom community and in the language of learning.

Framework of Effective Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners

In the following pages, we lay out PEBC’s Framework of Effective Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners that names key components of teaching practice and student learning (For full framework, see Appendix 1). We built this CLDL Framework around enduring understandings we consider central for teachers and students in order to be successful in their shared endeavor:

- Understanding and advocating for ourselves as learners; understanding our teaching beliefs
- Understanding and supporting each other in a community
- Understanding authentic content through purposeful inquiry
- Understanding the power of language in various oral and written forms
- Understanding how to develop academic language and vocabulary
- Understanding how thinking strategies support students in making meaning

All sections of the framework operate in concert to create the teaching and learning context our CLD students most need. Undergirding all categories of the framework are three fundamental beliefs:

- **Take an asset stance:** honor and build on students’ strengths.
- **Scaffold for student success:** use Gradual Release of Responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) to build student efficacy and independence.
- **Teach individual students, not just content:** attend to students’ social, emotional and intellectual development, as well as the academic skills and standards.

How to Read this Document

For each of the six components of the CLDL Framework, we do the following:

- State an overarching goal for students and the related goal for teachers and their instruction.
- Name bulleted learning targets, phrased in “I can . . .” statements (based on this concept from assessment expert Richard Stiggins, 2005). These targets describe the specific practices and outcomes we would hope to see in any classroom serving CLD students.
- Describe actual teacher-student interaction through “Pictures of Practice” – vignettes that bring the targets to life, showing exemplary instruction in action.

**What are our students’ home language and culture strengths, and how can we bridge the gaps between those and the requirements of the classroom language and culture so we can turn CLD students’ home experiences and language acculturation into another form of classroom luck?**

(Pransky, 2008, p xviii)

After reading the full framework, you might consider the following actions:

- **Full faculty:** use the learning targets and “self-rate” how well you are doing for each. Name and celebrate your strengths, then set a goal.
- **By team or department:** select one component of the framework and a few specific learning targets on which to focus. Collaborate to plan lessons around that target, and then gather to examine student work.
- **Individually:** incorporate the student learning targets along with content goals for each day’s lessons.

Given our shared commitment to ensuring every student reaches his or her full potential, we hope this document helps to build shared vision about what is possible, what is necessary, and how to begin.
Supporting CLD students requires more than just effective instruction; teachers must also take an asset stance and must fundamentally believe that all students bring strengths and can achieve at high levels. Similarly, they must foster a sense of efficacy – the belief that “I can” – in their students. (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Plaut, 2009).

In Table 1, below, we describe the specific learning targets – for students and for teachers – that undergird all effective instruction, particularly when working with CLD students. Following the table is a classroom vignette that will bring these principles to life.

“Our team works together to understand our own class biases, to recognize the position of privilege from which we come, and to share what we’ve learned from our own international travels. Only through teamwork can a faculty provide the level of support needed to recognize and build on students’ assets.”

Lisa Blackburn, 7th grade teacher

Table 1, Belief: Understanding and advocating for ourselves as learners; understanding our teaching beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students understand themselves as learners, view themselves as capable, and develop a sense of agency.</td>
<td>Teachers understand their beliefs and act upon them reflectively and intentionally. They take an asset stance toward their students, seeking to empower them as learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a student, I can:</td>
<td>As a teacher, I can:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognize that the culture of my classroom may be different from my home culture, and be confident that I can learn to succeed in both cultures.</td>
<td>• recognize the need to learn more about my students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds and how this background impacts their learning of English and their success in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop a positive identity as a capable learner.</td>
<td>• analyze my own thinking processes, know myself as a learner, and use this knowledge to benefit my students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• think about my thinking; be metacognitive.</td>
<td>• embrace and intentionally act on the belief that all students can learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reflect on my own learning in order to advocate for myself.</td>
<td>• name and critically evaluate my own cultural biases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• name when I’m successful and why.</td>
<td>• examine, challenge, and refine my beliefs; align my classroom practice with those beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• hold myself accountable for my own learning.</td>
<td>• name strengths each of my students possess, and intentionally build on those assets in my instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• take pride in my growth and progress as a learner.</td>
<td>• work for longer and longer periods of time on harder &amp; harder things; develop stamina.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pictures of Practice:  
How Lisa Blackburn builds on students’ strengths

By Paula Miller, PEBC Staff Developer

Lisa Blackburn teaches 7th grade at Goddard Middle School, which houses the largest ELL program in the Littleton School District: Goddard serves 750 students, 29% of whom are minorities, and 30% of whom qualify for free or reduced lunch.

At age 13, Ameen has experienced life in a war zone, witnessed his father beat his mother, and lived in three countries as a refugee. He now steps into his first day in an American seventh grade Language Arts class unable to control the rage he feels, yet expected to learn a new language and fit into a new culture. It’s hard to focus on school work; it’s hard to focus on anything.

No reading kit will unravel Ameen’s reading difficulties. To begin to understand his new culture, and believe in himself, he needs a safe and caring micro-community that will replace the chaos of the upheaval he has experienced. He also needs a teacher who believes in him.

In her work with Ameen in his sheltered ESL classroom, Lisa Blackburn gives him this support. She knows he is capable, and encourages Ameen to use the functional words he has rather than relying on directly translating from his own language into English. During the opening ritual of class, Lisa invites students to share about their weekends. “Ameen, would you like to share what you did? Don’t be afraid to group together words you know to describe what you mean. Once I understand what you want to communicate, I can give you more accurate words to add to your vocabulary.”

She builds on what he does know, rather than focusing on what he doesn’t know yet.

Lisa’s encouragement helps Ameen feel safe enough to try this out. “I went on the box in a line in the mountains,” he tells the class. “It was a box thing.”

Lisa says, “We call that a gondola. You went on the gondola in the mountains.”

“How do you spell that?” Ameen asks, poised his pen to add the new word to his personal word list.

This kind of flexibility – using English words to communicate even when they’re inaccurate - is crucial.

“Without this play with words,” Lisa explains, “new language learners shut down for fear of not saying things exactly right. Perfection becomes the enemy.” To become effective communicators, to become empowered by language, students like Ameen need to be supported in taking risks, making mistakes, and experimenting with language.

Lisa asks him to keep work in a portfolio. This becomes his scrapbook of language acquisition and allows Lisa to reflect with him about progress made. “Remember, Ameen, earlier in the year when you drew pictures to represent words and labeled them? And look! Now you’re writing sentences with all the words you know.” Lisa urges Ameen to set a new goal to write a bit more and to build stamina for both his writing and reading. Ameen revisits his portfolio and works with Lisa to set new “small goals” for himself. These portfolio reviews help Ameen hold himself accountable, serve as a concrete reminder of progress made, and build confidence in his abilities.

As the class studies geography, Lisa asks students to interview Ameen about his homeland. This routine practice – having students interview one another on topics which they have background knowledge or special expertise -- lets them share their cultures with each other, gain respect, and build a caring classroom community.

Lisa often tells Ameen, “It’s an asset to be able to communicate in multiple languages. The experience of learning a second language increases your ability to learn and puts you in a strong position.” These conversations help Ameen overcome the stigma he often feels as he speaks to American peers.

Ameen still has hurts as a result of the traumas he has experienced, and still faces challenges learning a new language and school system. But because of the multifaceted support Ameen has received from his teacher and classmates, he has become more confident in his place in the classroom and his developing English ability. Lisa puts her beliefs about working with immigrant and English language learners into practice in order to support her students’ confidence and ability to advocate for themselves.
Creating a supportive classroom community is another key to supporting CLD students. All learning is social and involves risk; learning in a new language or culture magnifies the required risk, and thus magnifies the need for support from teachers and peers. Students may arrive at school with limited or interrupted schooling, limited English proficiency, or the many stresses associated with poverty. We must explicitly teach CLD students the expectations and norms for successful participation in U.S. schools and classrooms, and give students support and opportunities to practice the daily rituals and routines (Cloud et al., 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Ovando et al., 2003; Uribe & Nathenson-Mejía, 2008).

In Table 2, we describe what it looks like when students are active, constructive members of the classroom community, and name specific actions teachers can take to foster a safe and supportive learning environment.

Table 2, Community: Understanding and supporting each other in a community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students understand and support each other in a classroom community marked by empathy, active listening, and collaboration.</td>
<td>Teachers understand and build a strong classroom community marked by empathy, active listening, and collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a student, I can:</td>
<td>As a teacher, I can:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• value the diversity of cultures and languages in my classroom.</td>
<td>• become familiar with my students' cultural backgrounds and understand how that impacts their learning and behavior in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• share confidently about myself and my life with my classmates and teacher.</td>
<td>• recognize that students' perceptions of &quot;school&quot; may be different from mine; take time to explicitly develop and reinforce classroom expectations and norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop supportive and trusting relationships with others.</td>
<td>• use my understandings about my students to plan instruction that is responsive to them, and help students learn to be successful at school as well as at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop empathy.</td>
<td>• share about myself with my students in order to develop meaningful and trusting relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• contribute to the development of positive classroom norms, and hold myself accountable to follow those norms.</td>
<td>• listen closely in order to understand my students as people and as learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate active listening.</td>
<td>• support my students' character development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• work collaboratively on academic tasks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pictures of Practice: How Veronica Moreno builds a strong classroom community

By Veronica Moreno, PEBLC Lab Host

Veronica Moreno teaches grades 4 and 5 at Harrington Elementary in Denver, Colorado. Of Harrington’s 471 students, 98% qualify for free or reduced lunch, 43% are identified as ELL, and 96% as minority.

It’s 8:10 a.m., mid-January. Students are settling in, writing down homework, putting backpacks and jackets away while singing along to Bob Marley. By the time the song comes to a close, the students quietly gather in a circle for “hook-up” time, legs and hands crossed, eyes closed, preparing themselves for the day as Bach plays in the background.

I welcome them: “With your eyes closed, gently place your hands in your lap, lifting your shoulders up and slowly dropping them down. Take this time to let go of anything that might be on your mind, knowing that from this point on you can start your day all over again. Take three long, deep breaths in. Notice that with every breath you take, calm begins to enter your soul and any silly or icky feelings begin to leave you. Whenever you’re ready, slowly begin to open your eyes.”

Once all the students open their eyes, we begin the next ritual of our morning.

“Good morning Anayansi, how are you doing today?” I ask.

“I’m feeling exhausted and frustrated today.”

“Gosh, those are powerful words, why are you feeling this way?”

“I have a lot on my mind and I didn’t get enough sleep.”

“Did hook-up help at all?”

“Yeah, just a tiny bit.”

“I’m glad. Let me know if there’s something I can do to support you. Good morning Darli, how are you?”

“I’m ecstatic because I got a wonderful sleep.”

“What made your sleep wonderful?”

“I went to bed at 7:30.”

“Wow, that is a wonderful sleep.”

“Good morning . . .”

Within these five minutes, by greeting each individual student, I build relationships and trust, as I share about my life and the students share about theirs.

Next, I refer to the chart where I have written, Humanity: What are the important words/phrases? What is it? What does it look like? I look to my students. “So we’ve been talking about humanity lately. What are the most important words or phrases in the definition that stick out in your mind and why?”

Rafael says “Society, because they are equally valuable in the community.”

Briana chimes in, “Different cultures because when you play with someone it doesn’t matter where they come from because we are all the same.”

After a few more contributions, I say, “Let’s go ahead and read aloud The Robot and the Bluebird by David Lucas. As I read, I want you to notice where you see humanity.”

At the beginning of the school year, things didn’t always look or sound like this. Building our community started slowly. It began by me breaking down each of these rituals, one by one, and explicitly teaching them to my students. And we practiced and practiced.

For example, I begin each year with a chart outside my classroom that states, “Entering a Classroom . . . What does it look like? What does it sound like? Why is it important?” We begin our discussion out in the hall – backpacks and lunches in hand – even before we ever head into the classroom. I guide my students in constructing their own set of rules for how we enter the classroom, rather than giving them “my” rules. This allows them to take ownership and hold each other accountable on this important ritual.

We do the same for each ritual and routine, constructing and recording our common expectations for everything from whole class discussions, to partner work, to walking in the hall, to classroom cleanup. Each day we review the charts and add more if need be. Whenever the students forget (as they often do) all I need to do is point to the chart and say “Remember, these are the rules that you all came up with. Let’s see what you said.”
For CLD students to understand and retain content, they need to actively participate in authentic, purposeful learning experiences. The learning targets we outline in Table 3 are supportive to all learners, yet critical to CLD students. Students need to construct understanding of content by connecting to their own backgrounds and experiences (Echevarría et al., 2008; Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Pransky, 2008). They need to be empowered as active learners who are engaged in pursuits that are purposeful and authentic. Instruction that feels irrelevant may leave students feeling disenfranchised within the mainstream U.S. school system.

Table 3, Inquiry-Based Learning: Understanding authentic content through purposeful inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students come to understand authentic academic content through purposeful inquiry.</td>
<td>Teachers understand how to plan learning experiences that are authentic, purposeful, rigorous, and connected to students’ backgrounds and interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a student, I can:
- recognize that my background knowledge and perceptions may be different from my teacher’s and classmates’, and that these differences can enhance my learning rather than impede it.
- construct meaning by engaging in inquiry.
- learn through discovery; ask and pursue questions I’m curious about.
- take ownership of the learning that’s taking place in my classroom.
- read, write, listen and speak when learning in all content areas.
- demonstrate understanding by explaining, interpreting, and applying ideas using various media.
- revisit and revise my thinking.
- embrace the struggle that is a natural part of coming to truly understand something.
- connect new learning to my prior knowledge and experiences in a way that is meaningful to me.

As a teacher, I can:
- consider students’ linguistic, cultural and academic backgrounds as I plan for responsive instruction.
- use content standards to “plan backward” as I create learning experiences that are rigorous and culminate in true understanding.
- select content and materials that connect to and expand on students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds and interests.
- identify when to build on students’ existing background knowledge and when to provide new knowledge.
- make decisions about depth over breadth when designing units of study.
- use formative and summative assessment data to guide instruction and plan lessons.
- design tasks that have authentic purposes & audiences and various ways for students to demonstrate their learning and understanding.
- use the workshop model of instruction to promote student inquiry.
- provide opportunities for students to ask and pursue authentic questions.
- be flexible in order to respond to where students’ questions lead us.
- tolerate the messiness of learning through inquiry; trust that by engaging in the inquiry process, my students will uncover and dispel misconceptions.
Pictures of Practice:
How Emily Quinty’s students construct content knowledge

By Moker Klaus-Quinlan, PEBC Staff Developer

Emily Quinty teaches science at Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts (MESA) in Thornton, Colorado, which uses the Expeditionary Learning model. MESA serves grades 7-12; 62% of their 550 students are minorities.

Emily plans for inquiry instruction by thinking about the enduring understandings, knowledge, and skills she wants her students to possess by the end of any unit (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

In her 10th grade Astrobiology unit, students look at the life cycle of stars, and think about the habitability of planets. Emily posts unit learning targets:

I can investigate the possibility of life on other planets.
I can evaluate evidence to infer how the solar system was formed.
I can analyze gravitational forces to explain the behavior of the visible universe.
I can investigate the structure of stars, galaxies, and the universe using electromagnetic data.
I can express my scientific ideas in a well-organized short constructed response.

She next plans the learning sequence, making sure to set an explicit purpose for each lesson, and that students actively construct understanding by posing questions, then reading, writing, and talking to form answers. She rarely lectures.

Today, students construct a concept web using 40 vocabulary words from an interactive word wall related to gravity and light (which they had created earlier in the unit). In addition to the content targets (above), Emily always sets thinking/behavior targets. For this lesson, she has two such targets:

I can justify connections between words and concepts using an interactive word wall.
I can demonstrate responsibility by actively contributing to my group.

Emily models with one small group while the rest of the class watches. The group dumps on to the table an envelope of vocabulary words and connecting symbols (arrows, equal signs, etc.). They first select two words and one symbol, and discuss how the concepts are connected, adding ideas and thinking to clarify the connection. They justify the connection orally, then find another word to add to the web.

Groups now know how to get started. Emily starts the timer. Each group gets 40 terms on cards (e.g., universe, galaxy, sun, supernova, neutron star, red giant, mass, and light), which they spread out on their tables. The cards support students’ sight word development as they read, re-read and manipulate the words.

Students dive into conversation. Emily listens, posing questions to elicit more thinking.

“What’s bigger, the universe or the galaxy?” asks José. His partner, Enrique, hesitates. Emily asks, “What’s the connection? Say it.”

“Doesn’t it go from red giant to super giant?” Fernando asks as a way to clarify his own prior knowledge. “What evidence do you have?” Emily asks.

“Another conversation takes place at a table nearby: “What’s a supernova?”

“Doesn’t it go from red giant to super giant?” Fernando asks as a way to clarify his own prior knowledge. “What evidence do you have?” Emily asks.

“Students demonstrate tremendous growth in their content understanding, their confidence, and their willingness to articulate and justify their thinking verbally and in writing.”

Emily Quinty, H.S. science teacher

Emily continues circulating, stopping to listen to the conversation at the next table. Claudia has laid out the following: Yellow star = sun = stars = light. Emily says, “Explain this train of thinking.”

The students aren’t just memorizing words: they are asking questions, making connections, and deepening their conceptual understanding. Emily has high expectations, clear routines, and many visual supports – such as the word cards, the small group demonstration. She asks strategic questions, and repeatedly refers students back to their notes and previous understandings. And she encourages students to engage in the real work of learning, asking and pursuing their own questions.

This activity is a grounding experience for CLD students to refer back to as we move through our inquiry. Students demonstrate tremendous growth in their content understanding, their confidence, and their willingness to articulate and justify their thinking verbally and in writing.”

Emily Quinty, H.S. science teacher

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Scholars and practitioners working with CLD students strongly agree that oral language development is critical (August, 2003; Cloud et al., 2009; Hadaway, 2001; Ovando et al., 2003). Students become proficient in English with ample opportunities to talk and listen, and with teacher support that is targeted directly at their current language abilities. Language development is an active, not passive process. Teachers must give students opportunities and time to talk, which means teachers must make key shifts: talking less, listening more.

In Table 4, we describe what it means for students to actively develop language and construct meaning through language, and how teachers can help their students build these skills.

Table 4, Language Development: Understanding the power of language in various oral and written forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students understand and engage in talk that builds their oral language and their understanding of content.</td>
<td>Teachers explicitly develop, support, and reinforce students’ language use and their ability to communicate their ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a student, I can:</td>
<td>As a teacher, I can:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• construct meaning through classroom conversation both in my native language and in English.</td>
<td>• explicitly develop students’ language based on what I see they actually need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• practice newly-acquired English language skills.</td>
<td>• include clear vocabulary and language objectives in my lesson plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• orally “rehearse” what I want to say before writing.</td>
<td>• plan my lessons to provide ample opportunities for students to produce oral and written language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• activate and build my background knowledge through talk with peers and adults.</td>
<td>• reinforce verbal/oral language with visuals, realia, and/or kinesthetic movement to make input comprehensible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “talk through” my understanding of a concept or idea.</td>
<td>• support and encourage my students to use their first language to communicate and enhance their comprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be confident that I can ask questions when I don’t understand.</td>
<td>• balance teacher talk time with student talk time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• engage in “accountable talk”; focus my conversation on the learning at hand.</td>
<td>• scaffold students’ ability to have meaningful conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use self-talk to help me plan, carry out, and reflect on learning tasks.</td>
<td>• help students develop confidence to ask questions that clarify understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use “sentence stems” to support my developing ability to express myself in English.</td>
<td>• provide students with consistent opportunities to engage in accountable talk so they can build language from each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reflect on the growing sophistication of my English language use.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pictures of Practice: How Sue Kempton helps students build language

By Sue Kempton, PEBC Lab Host

Sue Kempton teaches Kindergarten at Harrington Elementary School in Denver. She works intentionally to build students’ oral language while also building their background knowledge.

“Who’s got something to share?” My kindergartners, sitting cross legged on the oval, look up at me. “I do,” Ashante responds, as she looks at an illustration in a Zoobooks Wolves magazine “I discovered there are baby wolves.”


“Does anyone else . . . ?” My eyes scan the periphery of the oval looking for input from others. Silence.

“It’s called a pup,” I say. Can all of you say that?” The children respond in unison, “Pup.”

“What are the pups doing?”

“They’re all together,” Ashante answers.

“They’re all huddled together,” I expand. “Remember that rich word . . . ? Can you show me ‘huddled’?” The children quickly lean into one another, giggling.

“Do you know what you call a group of pups?”

“A pack!” several shout out.

I smile, pleased they remembered this word from a previous discussion in which we reenacted the scenario of a pack of wolves surrounding a weak moose and attacking it. By reenacting new content through movement, the children retained, and reapplied the vocabulary. They now often refer to language such as “weak,” “surround,” and “pack” in other contexts.

“So, Ashante, what do you see in front of the litter of pups?”

“A tunnel,” she responds.

“Can you describe it?” I wait, then ask another question. “Is it long or short?”

“It’s long,” she responds proudly.

“Tell me something else about the tunnel?”

She looks confused. “Is it a narrow tunnel or a wide tunnel?” The look on her face tells me she doesn’t understand my question, and I know intuitively it has to do with the language “narrow” and “wide.” I describe its width, using my hands to make a small circular shape in the air as I say the word “narrow” and a large circular shape as I say the word “wide.”

Because I want to anchor this language through movement, I direct everyone by saying, “Can you show me ‘narrow’ with your hands and say that rich word?” All simultaneously echo the word “narrow” as their hands form a small sphere in the air. I ask them to do the same for “wide.” To further anchor, and distinguish, these words, I grab our narrow and wide tubes as visual aids.

“Who do you think built this tunnel . . . and why? Do you think the pups dug it?”

“No,” she says, immediately shaking her head from side to side.

“Hmmm . . . think about who takes care of the pups?” I prompt.

“The mommy!”

“Yes!” I say, adding, “Why do you think it’s the mommy and not the daddy?”

“Because the mommy takes care of them!”

“You’re so smart, Ashante. And, why do you think the mommy would build such a long tunnel?”

“Cause she wants to protect her babies!”

“Wow! That’s exactly right. If wolves live in the forest, what animal might try to attack the pups?”

Before I can even finish my question, several of them interject, “a bear!”

“Talk is the root of literacy. To make their way in the world, children need not only knowledge, but the ability to articulate that knowledge – not just to know but to show. Language is the primary way we show what we know, the way we make our thinking and learning visible. Daily, everything I do in the classroom aims to promote thoughtful talk – to help children open up and take risks with language.”

Sue Kempton, Kindergarten teacher

what’s new learning for you?”

She carefully states, “I discovered mommy wolves dig tunnels to protect their babies.”

“What kind of tunnels, and to protect them from what?” I nudge.

She restates, “I discovered mommy wolves dig narrow tunnels to protect their babies from big animals.”

“Great thinking, you guys! Bears live in the forest, and they very well could try to eat wolf pups. You’re right! Not only bears, but any . . . ” My arms spread apart wide deliberately trying to elicit the word “big” from the children. They collectively respond “big animal” with my prompting.

“So, what did you discover Ashante;
CLD students typically pick up social language rather quickly, and often appear to be “fluent” in English. However, being able to have a casual conversation does not guarantee that they are proficient in the academic language required to succeed in school (Chamot & O’Malley, 1996; Cummins, 1983; Freeman and Freeman, 2009; Zwiers, 2006).

Just as teachers cannot assume that students come to school knowing classroom community norms and expectations, they can’t assume students possess the academic language needed to engage in reading, writing, and discussion of content concepts. While teachers typically teach content vocabulary directly, they must also attend to “Tier 2” vocabulary (Beck & McKeown, 2002), which includes synonyms for common words, and procedural words such as “identify,” “contrast,” or “examine.” Such instruction is crucial, particularly as students move into secondary school, where the cognitive demands of specific academic disciplines becomes increasingly rigorous.

In Table 5, we name how students should be able to cope with the demands of academic language and learning, and the specific teacher actions to support students in this area.

### Table 5, Language Development: Understanding how to develop academic language and vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students understand and use content-specific vocabulary and language structures.</td>
<td>Teachers understand and teach the academic language needed for student success in a given academic discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a student, I can:</td>
<td>As a teacher, I can:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learn to speak the “language of school” in the United States.</td>
<td>• understand the difference between conversational and academic language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• engage in academic discourse; think, talk, read, and write like a scientist, mathematician, reader, writer, or historian.</td>
<td>• recognize similarities and differences between English academic language and students’ native languages; build from the similarities and make the differences explicit and comprehensible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• organize ideas semantically and hierarchically (rather than just autobiographically) in order to remember and use information I have learned in an academic context.</td>
<td>• identify, explicitly teach, and model the use of high level academic vocabulary (key verbs, procedural terms, specialized academic words, and synonyms for common terms) that students need in order to understand my content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• examine how successful U.S. English communicators craft their messages in various disciplines, recognizing similarities and differences with my native language.</td>
<td>• scaffold my students’ ability to have an academic discussion by modeling and giving them structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use language stems to enhance my use of English academic language.</td>
<td>• give my students opportunities to practice and receive feedback on their use of academic language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide language stems to scaffold my students’ use of academic language.</td>
<td>• provide language stems to scaffold my students’ use of academic language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pictures of Practice: How Rachel Rosenberg scaffolds students’ mathematical discourse

By Moker Klaus-Quinlan, PEBC Staff Developer

Rachel Rosenberg teaches math and science to 4th and 5th graders at Harrington Elementary in Denver. Rachel helps students talk like mathematicians, explicitly building students’ content vocabulary as well as their vocabulary about character traits that support them as learners.

“Today is Monday December 7th. We’re going to learn about perseverance. We’ll also think about how activating prior knowledge helps us understand multiplication.” Rachel turns a rain stick upside-down, which signals her students to gather at the carpet.

“What do you think perseverance means?”

“Pursuing a goal,” offers Fabian.

“What makes you say that?”

“Because of “per” like in pursue.”

“So you’re looking at the prefix. Great! Who else has some thinking?”

“I think it means never backing down.”

Several peers nod. Rachel picks up on this, and says to Keisha, “I see you nodding.”

“Yes, because I agree.”

Rachel writes each contribution on a chart paper titled “Persevere.” “So, I’m hearing you say that setting a goal helps you persevere. Turn and talk to your neighbor about what ‘persevere’ means to you so far, and how you are going to show perseverance today during math.”

Students turn so that their knees are touching and tell each other how they will demonstrate this character value. When they hear the chimes, they turn back to face front.

“Now I want to activate your prior knowledge. The other day we did the math fact family 5*6 = 30.” Rachel refers to a triangle diagram with 30 at top, 5 and 6 at bottom, and * and / signs in the middle. “Now think about something you want to have a go at with 7. We’re setting a goal, right? When you have it, go get your things and come back.” The rain stick sounds, which indicates that students should go get a white board and marker and return to the carpet.

Rachel shows students how to set up two-column notes titled Number 7, with the left column titled “determine importance” and right titled “p.k. (prior knowledge: what do I know?” She gives them some time to capture a variety of ways to represent seven.

Acquavia shows her white board, on which she has written 1x7=7; 7/1=7.

“Explain that to me, please.”

“One times seven equals seven. Seven divided by one is seven. That’s it.”

“That’s so smart – seven is a prime number.” To the rest of the class, she says, “Star one or two things on your board that push your brain.” She waits. “Turn to a neighbor. Share, and let them respond. Marquis shows his white board: 1x7, 7x1, 4x2-1, 10-3, 11-4

Felix asks him, “Do you have any division? I do: 21/3”

Marquis thinks, then says, “Wait, there’s a pattern: 10-3, 11-4, 12-5, 13-6…”

Rachel calls the class back together. “Wow, these guys knocked my socks off. Who would like to share their thinking?”

Vonte says, “The important thing is 7*1; My PK is the identity property.”

“Wow, remember when we first started? ‘Identity property’ was new word knowledge. Now it’s PK! How can you explain ‘identity property?’”

Vonte begins, “Something times one …”

“Can we become stronger in our vocabulary?”

Maggie raises her hand. “The identity property is that any number times one is the same number.”

Rachel facilitates the dialogue by saying, “Maggie is piggy-backing off Vonte. Vonte, do you agree or disagree?”

“I agree, because any number times 1 is itself”

“I believe, and expect, that over time, all kids will be able to successfully use academic language. To get there I constantly come back to the most important words kids need, and also teach them to build on one another’s ideas and words. I do this through explicit modeling, and also by requiring them to both say and show their understanding. It doesn’t happen in one day or one month, but that’s OK. In the long run, being able to talk like a mathematician or scientist empowers them to see themselves as mathematicians and scientists.”

Rachel Rosenberg, 4th/5th math teacher

“Who would like to bring up another thought, either adding on to Vonte or something else?”

Aquavia says, “Seven divided by one.”

“What does this remind you of?”

Fabian smiles broadly and exclaims, “The turnaround fact!”

Haley raises her hand. “I would like to add on to Fabian.”

Several more students share their thinking, and then Rachel concludes the discussion by asking,

“Think for a second. Is there something that pushed your thinking or made you smarter? Turn to a neighbor and share”

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Just as CLD students need to be apprenticed in how to interact in a U.S. classroom, they also benefit from direct instruction in using the thinking skills that promote academic engagement and understanding. Much research supports the practice of modeling and promoting the use of cognitive strategies used by proficient thinkers (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Keene & Zimmerman, 2007; Pransky, 2008).

Learning to name one’s own thinking empowers CLD students to advocate for themselves as learners, solve problems when they are confused, and identify approaches to learning that work for them as individuals, thus helping teachers understand and meet individual learners’ needs. For CLD students, several strategies are particularly important: the ability to activate and build relevant background knowledge, create sensory and emotional images, and ask questions.

In Table 6, we elaborate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6, Thinking Strategies: Understanding how thinking strategies support students in making meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students understand and use the thinking strategies (cognitive behaviors) in order to construct meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>As a student, I can:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learn to think about my thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognize confusion, see it as a natural part of learning, and take steps to repair it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognize and use my prior knowledge and experiences to make meaning and to identify when I need help understanding something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• know and intentionally apply the “thinking strategies” used by proficient learners to help me construct understanding across content areas and with various text structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reflect on how I am using the thinking strategies so I can grow in my ability to make meaning of content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • teach students how the thinking strategies help them successfully engage with challenging texts. | •
Pictures of Practice: How Sue Kempton’s students learn to read like writers

By Kim Schmidt, PEBC Staff Developer

Here again we see the instruction of Sue Kempton, Kindergarten teacher at Harrington Elementary in Denver. In this vignette, Sue and her students focus on the language that authors use to help readers visualize, or create mental images.

Sue holds up a copy of Salt Hands, a story about a little girl’s encounter with a deer. She begins by saying, “Good readers use a specific tool to make pictures in their heads. There’s a really rich word for that: visualizing. A good reader makes a picture of the story. The way a writer gets you to make pictures in your heads is to use really rich words. I want you to notice all of the rich words she puts in the story, because after we read, we’re going to try this in our writing.”

Having set a clear purpose for students’ listening, Sue slowly begins reading. In the night I woke; I heard something outside like a rustle. “There’s a rich word: rustle.” Sue reaches down and crinkles dry leaves with her finger tips. I went to the door quietly . . . I didn’t want to frighten the deer. Instead of the author just saying ‘I went in,’ she said ‘I went quietly in’. You could almost hear her tiptoeing. Then, she didn’t just say ‘I put some salt in my hands,’ she said ‘sprinkled.’ Show me sprinkled.” Students grab imaginary salt shakers and sprinkle salt in their hands. Experiencing new words kinesthetically, students anchor these words in their memory.

After reading the story and discussing how the author’s rich words help readers create mental images, students transition to writing time. Their goal is to apply the thinking strategy of visualizing as writers, working to choose language that evokes images for their readers. Everyone gathers around an anchor chart of sensory words that the students helped to create. Sue adds a new word to the list, “I heard something outside like a rustle - What kind of word is that? A sound word … rustle. Today, when you get to your table, reread the last story you were working on. Before you pick up your pencil, close your eyes and think about visual words you can use: taste, touch, smell…” Revisiting the chart helps students keep sensory words fresh in their minds, which they can apply in their own writing.

Once students are settled at their tables and have started writing, Sue scoots in close to confer with Ivan, who is writing about baking with his grandma. Ivan reads aloud, “I went to my grandmas (sic) to bake sweet chocolate cookies. My grandma put the cookies in the oven to bake for 5 minutes.”

“I love how you described that. You used two great taste words, ‘sweet’ and ‘chocolate’. Then what happened?”

Ivan replies, “Sweet cream.”

“When kindergartners are shown how to think about what they know and make connections, ask questions, determine what’s most important … this opens a world of understanding for them. Thinking strategies are a set of tools that can be applied throughout all contexts of learning and carried through a lifetime.”

Sue Kempton, Kindergarten teacher

“What do you mean by sweet cream? Close your eyes and picture yourself at grandma’s.”

Ivan chimes in, “We took the cookies out of the oven and put sweet cream on top of them.”

“Ivan, I feel like I am right there!”

Writing time ends with students gathering to celebrate all they now know and can do. Sue says, “I want Ivan to share because he used some really rich words in his writing. He thought about the author of Salt Hands and how she helped us create pictures in our minds. He tried to do the same thing in his story.”

Ivan slowly flips through the pictures and reads each word of his story.

Sue responds, “Did any of you hear a taste word?”

The kids chorally reply, “Sweet.”

“And he used a lot of visual words. He said, ‘We slowly ate them up.’ He didn’t just say we ate them, he said, ‘We slowly ate them up.’ Give him a huge clap.”

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We at PEBC believe that all students have the ability and the right to learn at high levels. Since PEBC’s founding in 1983, educators nationwide have valued our ability to help teachers know their students as individuals and build on students’ strengths. And for the past decade, PEBC has effectively approached this work strategically at the whole school level. Our recent emphasis on the needs of CLD students, and the schools and systems serving them, is a natural outgrowth of this strong history.

Ongoing Professional Learning for teachers and school leaders is essential. As teacher and scholar Ken Pransky says, “For institutional change, there has to be a genuine desire among teachers to dive into this endeavor and an administrator who supports teachers and makes sure there is enough water in the pool they’re diving into. CLD students in schools where staff members both individually and collectively engage in a reflective process around these issues are fortunate, indeed!” (2008, p 206).

PEBC can serve as a strong partner to schools and districts seeking to support their CLD students. The framework we provide in this document articulates the “content” of supporting CLD students: what teachers and students should understand and be able to do. In terms of the “process,” PEBC provides myriad structures for Professional Learning to support educators. We list some of these below, along with the benefits.

**Leadership support: create a learning-focused culture and build leadership capacity**

- **Strategic planning:** plan backward for what success would look like at the district, school, and classroom level
- **Action planning:** build a yearly action plan of Professional Learning goals, activities, and requisite resources and support
- **Leadership support:** form and train school-based leadership teams to shepherd ongoing Professional Learning

**Whole-faculty learning: build shared vision and strategies**

- **Asset mapping:** identify existing strengths, and set clear goals
- **Whole group professional learning:** build expertise about instructional strategies outlined in the framework
- **Peer learning labs:** implement structured peer observation as a way to observe students in action and share teacher expertise

―="CLD students in schools where staff members both individually and collectively engage in a reflective process around these issues are fortunate, indeed!"

Ken Pransky, Teacher and Scholar
Small group study: collaborate to build common language, expectations, and instructional practices

Goal setting: set targets based on CLDL Framework; identify strengths, gaps, next steps, and shared focus

Inquiry groups: form inquiry groups to investigate compelling questions about student learning and mastery

Look at student work: analyze students’ thinking based on their written products or non-linguistic representations

Analysis of student data: examine qualitative and quantitative data for patterns, gaps, and opportunities

Backward planning: work in course teams to plan year-long or unit goals, performance measures, and instruction

Resource development: develop materials that address CLD students’ background knowledge and interests

Rubric development: co-create assessment tools in student-friendly language

Professional reading: delve into texts by researchers and/or practitioners about CLD students’ strengths and needs

Individual coaching: develop teachers’ expertise and efficacy

Demonstration lessons by PEBC staff developer: model best practice with CLD students

Coaching by PEBC staff developer: provide teachers with ongoing feedback and opportunities for reflection

Planning with PEBC staff developer: support individual teachers as they plan units or daily instruction, including how to scaffold for CLD students

Examining beliefs: Critically reflect on one’s own assumptions and expectations about CLD students

The Policy Context: Considerations as We Strive to Improve the System

Beyond classroom practice, a number of issues face state policymakers, district leaders and teachers as they seek to address the needs of CLD students. Here, PEBC does not advocate for specific policies or programs. Rather, we seek to inform the public about these issues, so policy makers feel provoked to act, and can make informed decisions. Some of these issues pertain specifically to the language development of English Language Learners. Others pertain more broadly to the cultural dimensions of these students’ backgrounds, as well.

Six specific issues merit policymakers’ attention:

Recognize and prepare for the continued growth of the English Language Learner population.

The Colorado Department of Education expects the number of ELL students to grow at about 5 percent a year for the next decade.

Consider whether state law governing services for CLD students is in tune with changing needs and practice in the classroom.

The English Language Proficiency Act, the state law that defines ELL students and sets requirements for school districts to serve them, was passed in 1981. The most recent amendments, passed by the 2010 legislature, only updated some terms and definitions.

Requirements for serving and assessing ELL students also are set by federal court decisions and laws, including the No Child Left Behind Act. There has been wide debate in the education community about the value of NCLB, and Congress is past due to approve reauthorization of the law. So, school leaders need to be aware that future changes in federal law are possible, but that it’s uncertain when those might be passed or implemented, given political and budgetary conditions in Washington.

Attend to the needs of older ELL students.

Even students classified as Fluent English Proficient (FEP) lag behind all students in CSAP proficient scores in the middle and high school grades. ELL students also score below the state mean composite score on the ACT test.

Compared to an overall 2007 statewide graduation rate of 75%, ELL students had a rate of 55.4%. That compares to 57.1% for all Hispanic students and 63.2% for all economically disadvantaged students.

Ensure well-prepared and supported teachers to serve CLD students.

Colorado does not have enough trained teachers to work in programs for ELL students. According to the Department of Education, at the end of the 2008-09 school year, there were 4,531 teachers with various

(contin’d on page 24)
endorsements that qualified them to teach nearly 100,000 ELL students. “Teacher training has historically not encompassed the needs of ELL students,” according to the “Immigrant Integration” handbook published by the department.

Assistant Commissioner Barbara Medina, who heads CDE’s Office of Language, Culture and Equity, notes that the statistics on qualified teachers are inexact, and that the department is “trying to get at that number” – a more exact total of the number of Colorado teachers who are endorsed to teach ELL students.

She explains that the number is hard to track because of changes in endorsements over the last several years and because data on qualified teachers is self-reported by school districts. Some districts, particularly larger ones, have their own training programs, Medina said.

She said she hopes implementation of the new unique educator identifier numbers will make it easier to track the number of trained English language proficiency teachers. But, she concludes, “in general we have not built the instructional capacity to support the population.”

Some districts, such as Aurora, are making an intense and concerted effort to ensure that all teachers are prepared to serve CLD students. Other districts should follow suit.

Remember that English language proficiency programs are affected by the same financial pressures that are stressing the entire K-12 system.

There are two major sources of earmarked funding for ELL students, about $12 million a year from the state and about $11 million a year in federal Title III funds. Districts are required to apply to the state for the funds, which are awarded on a per-student formula basis.

Medina says districts also are expected to make appropriate use of their regular state per-pupil funding, federal Title I funds and local resources to support ELL students and language proficiency programs.

But, a long-running concern that districts have with state funding is that it can be used only for ELL students in the first two years they are in language programs. Expansion of the program is considered unlikely in the short- to middle-term because of state budget problems.

Remember that English language proficiency programs, like many aspects of K-12 education, are somewhat decentralized because Colorado is a local control state.

While state and federal law guarantee access, define ELL students, and mandate assessments, the design or selection and the implementation of language acquisition programs is largely left to local districts.

State policies and funding aside, the bottom line is always student achievement. Given the small numbers of teachers with qualifying endorsements compared to the large number of ELL students in the state, it is imperative that teachers receive professional development and find resources that increase their understanding and abilities to work with CLD students.

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1 English Language Learner (ELL) is the term used by the state of Colorado. We have used culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in this document to highlight the importance of students’ culturally diversity as well as their linguistic diversity.

Conclusion

We hope that this document will serve as a resource to educators, policymakers, and business people in order to understand the challenges CLD students face, and how best to meet those challenges.

The student population is rapidly changing. The teaching force – still predominantly white middle-class English-speaking women – has the capacity to understand all students and serve them well. We must expect nothing less, and must offer educators the tools and support they need to ensure all students thrive within our public education system.

“Overall, the system is stacked against many CLD students. As empathetic and knowledgeable teachers, we need to be strong allies and advocates, both for our students, their families, and for ourselves as professionals”

(Pransky, 2008, p 203.)
Appendix 1: PEBC’s Framework of Effective Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners

Understanding and advocating for ourselves as learners; understanding our teaching beliefs

**Students**
Students understand themselves as learners, view themselves as capable learners, and develop a sense of agency.

As a student, I can:
- recognize that the culture of my classroom may be different from my home culture, and be confident that I can learn to succeed in both cultures.
- develop a positive identity as a capable learner.
- think about my thinking; be metacognitive.
- reflect on my own learning in order to advocate for myself.
- name when I'm successful and why.
- hold myself accountable for my own learning.
- take pride in my growth and progress as a learner.
- take responsibility for my behavior in the classroom.
- develop empathy.
- develop supportive and trusting relationships with others.
- share confidently about myself and my life with my classmates and teacher.
- value the diversity of cultures and languages in my classroom.

As a teacher, I can:
- recognize the need to learn more about my students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and how this background impacts their learning of English and their success in school.
- analyze my own thinking processes, know myself as a learner, and use this knowledge to benefit my students.
- embrace and intentionally act on the belief that all students can learn.
- examine, challenge, and refine my beliefs; align my classroom practice with those beliefs.
- name strengths each of my students possess, and intentionally build on those assets in my instruction.

**Teachers**
Teachers understand their beliefs and act upon them reflectively and intentionally. They take an asset stance toward their students, seeking to empower them as learners.

As a teacher, I can:
- become familiar with my students' cultural backgrounds and understand how that impacts their learning and behavior in the classroom.
- recognize that students' perceptions of "school" may be different from mine; take time to explicitly develop and reinforce classroom expectations and norms.
- use my understandings about my students to plan instruction that is responsive to them, and help students learn to be successful at school as well as at home.
- share about myself with my students in order to develop meaningful and trusting relationships.
- listen closely in order to understand my students as people and as learners.
- support my students' character development.

Understanding and supporting each other in a community

**Students**
Students understand and support each other in a classroom community marked by empathy, active listening, and collaboration.

As a student, I can:
- value the diversity of cultures and languages in my classroom.
- share confidently about myself and my life with my classmates and teacher.
- develop supportive and trusting relationships with others.
- develop empathy.
- contribute to the development of positive classroom norms, and hold myself accountable to follow those norms.
- demonstrate active listening.
- work collaboratively on academic tasks.

As a teacher, I can:
- support my students' character development.
- listen closely in order to understand my students as people and as learners.
- share about myself with my students in order to develop meaningful and trusting relationships.
- become familiar with my students' cultural backgrounds and understand how that impacts their learning and behavior in the classroom.
- recognize that students' perceptions of "school" may be different from mine; take time to explicitly develop and reinforce classroom expectations and norms.
- use my understandings about my students to plan instruction that is responsive to them, and help students learn to be successful at school as well as at home.
- demonstrate active listening.
- work collaboratively on academic tasks.

**Teachers**
Teachers understand and build a strong classroom community marked by empathy, active listening, and collaboration.

As a teacher, I can:
- become familiar with my students' cultural backgrounds and understand how that impacts their learning and behavior in the classroom.
- recognize that students' perceptions of "school" may be different from mine; take time to explicitly develop and reinforce classroom expectations and norms.
- use my understandings about my students to plan instruction that is responsive to them, and help students learn to be successful at school as well as at home.
- share about myself with my students in order to develop meaningful and trusting relationships.
- listen closely in order to understand my students as people and as learners.
- support my students' character development.

Understanding authentic content through purposeful inquiry

**Students**
Students come to understand authentic academic content through purposeful inquiry.

As a student, I can:
- recognize that my background knowledge and perceptions may be different from my teacher's and classmates', and that these differences can enhance my learning rather than impede it.
- construct meaning by engaging in inquiry.
- learn through discovery; ask and pursue questions I'm curious about.
- take ownership of the learning that's taking place in my classroom.
- read, write, listen and speak when learning in all content areas.
- demonstrate understanding by explaining, interpreting, and applying ideas using various media.
- revisit and revise my thinking.
- embrace the struggle that is a natural part of coming to truly understand something.
- connect new learning to my prior knowledge and experiences in a way that is meaningful to me.

**Teachers**
Teachers understand how to plan learning experiences that are authentic, purposeful, rigorous, and connected to students' backgrounds and interests.

As a teacher, I can:
- consider students' linguistic, cultural and academic backgrounds as I plan for responsive instruction.
- use content standards to "plan backward" as I create learning experiences that are rigorous and culminate in true understanding.
- select content and materials that connect to and expand on students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and interests.
- identify when to build on students' existing background knowledge and when to provide new knowledge.
- make decisions about depth over breadth when designing units of study.
- use formative and summative assessment data to guide instruction and plan lessons.
- design tasks that have authentic purposes & audiences and various ways for students to demonstrate their learning and understanding.
- use the workshop model of instruction to promote student inquiry.
- provide opportunities for students to ask and pursue authentic questions.
- be flexible in order to respond to where students' questions lead us.
### Understanding the power of language in various oral and written forms

#### Students
Students understand and engage in talk that builds their oral language and their understanding of content.

**As a student, I can:**
- construct meaning through classroom conversation both in my native language and in English.
- practice newly-acquired English language skills.
- orally “rehearse” what I want to say before writing.
- activate and build my background knowledge through talk with peers and adults.
- “talk through” my understanding of a concept or idea.
- be confident that I can ask questions when I don’t understand.
- engage in “accountable talk”: focus my conversation on the learning at hand.
- use self-talk to help me plan, carry out, and reflect on learning tasks.
- use “sentence stems” to support my developing ability to express myself in English.
- reflect on the growing sophistication of my English language use.

#### Teachers
Teachers explicitly develop, support, and reinforce students’ language use and their ability to communicate their ideas.

**As a teacher, I can:**
- explicitly develop students’ language based on what I see they actually need.
- include clear vocabulary and language objectives in my lesson plans.
- plan my lessons to provide ample opportunities for students to produce oral and written language.
- reinforce verbal/oral language with visuals, realia, and/or kinesthetic movement to make input comprehensible.
- support and encourage my students to use their first language to communicate and enhance their comprehension.
- balance teacher talk time with student talk time.
- scaffold students’ ability to have meaningful conversations.
- help students develop confidence to ask questions that clarify understanding.
- provide students with consistent opportunities to engage in accountable talk so they can build language from each other.

### Understanding how to develop academic language and vocabulary

#### Students
Students understand and use content-specific vocabulary and language structures.

**As a student, I can:**
- learn to speak the “language of school” in the United States.
- engage in academic discourse; think, talk, read, and write like a scientist, mathematician, reader, writer, or historian.
- organize ideas semantically and hierarchically (rather than just autobiographically) in order to remember and use information I have learned in an academic context.
- examine how successful U.S. English communicators craft their messages in various disciplines, recognizing similarities and differences with my native language.
- use language stems to enhance my use of English academic language.

#### Teachers
Teachers understand and teach the academic language needed for student success in a given academic discipline.

**As a teacher, I can:**
- understand the difference between conversational and academic language.
- recognize similarities and differences between English academic language and students’ native languages; build from the similarities and make the differences explicit and comprehensible.
- identify, explicitly teach, and model the use of high level academic vocabulary (key verbs, procedural terms, specialized academic words, and synonyms for common terms) that students need in order to understand my content.
- scaffold my students’ ability to have an academic discussion by modeling and giving them structure.
- give my students opportunities to practice and receive feedback on their use of academic language.
- provide language stems to scaffold my students’ use of academic language.

### Understanding how thinking strategies support students in making meaning

#### Students
Students understand and use the thinking strategies (cognitive behaviors) in order to construct meaning.

**As a student, I can:**
- recognize confusion, see it as a natural part of learning, and take steps to repair it.
- recognize and use my prior knowledge and experiences to make meaning and to identify when I need help understanding something.
- know and intentionally apply the “thinking strategies” used by proficient learners to help me construct understanding across content areas and with various text structures.
- reflect on how I am using the thinking strategies so I can grow in my ability to make meaning of content.

#### Teachers
Teachers notice, name, and develop students’ ability to use thinking strategies to construct meaning.

**As a teacher, I can:**
- recognize and build on the prior knowledge and skills my students bring.
- explicitly teach and model proficient use of the “thinking strategies” used by proficient learners to make meaning: activating relevant schema, asking questions, inferring, determining importance, visualizing, monitoring for meaning, synthesizing.
- notice and name students’ effective use of the thinking strategies.
- strategically select from among the thinking strategies and focus on those that will be most beneficial to my students’ learning.
- provide scaffolded opportunities for students to practice applying the thinking strategies with increasing independence and flexibility.
References


