



# The ACIE Newsletter

News from the American Council on Immersion Education

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## Reading Support for Primary Immersion Students

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Theme Issue:  
Struggling Learners

“Niños, miramos la cubierta de este libro que vamos a leer. ¿De qué piensan que van a leer en este libro?” The small group of average first grade readers huddled around the table, looking at their new guided reading book. Sra. Hall, the first grade immersion teacher, encouraged predictions about the book, translating student responses in English to Spanish, modeling new vocabulary and proper syntax. This group of students was reading a leveled book equivalent to a Reading Recovery level 8 around mid-January. The goal was for all students in first grade immersion to reach the benchmark of level 16 by the end of the year. Much remained to be accomplished.



First-grade immersion students from Nitrauer Elementary School work on making syllables from letter combinations.

### LEARNING TO READ IN L1 VS L2

By mid-year, average to above average first grade immersion students have learned many reading strategies. In kindergarten, the Spanish phonetic foundation is established, in part through a sequential writing program, which helps develop phonics, vocabulary, and the rudiments of Spanish syntax. In first grade, the teacher builds upon this foundation with a comprehensive review of phonics at the beginning of the year. The students also review concepts about print, such as reading left to right and top to bottom, use of punctuation, and the difference between sounds, letters, words, and sentences.

In learning how to read, English-speaking students draw on three cueing systems: semantics, syntax, and phonics. For them, semantics and syntax have been developing since birth. While the English first grade students are concentrating on learning how to decode (sounding out) through the use of English syntax and meaning, the immersion students must learn the three main cueing systems simultaneously. For example, when reading a book about a horse, an English-speaking student can look at the picture and immediately offer the word “horse” and can use the word *horse* in a syntac-

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## THE ACIE NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Number 3

### American Council on Immersion Education

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The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

Even though research studies over the past thirty years have consistently found that immersion students equal or surpass their peers in all-English schools on standard measures of academic achievement, any immersion teacher can quickly identify the exceptions in her classroom. Helping struggling learners improve their academic achievement poses unique challenges in an immersion setting where separating out learning disabilities from the normal hurdles of learning through a second language can be a murky undertaking.

In this, our third year of special spring issues, we present some of the most current research and best practice recommendations regarding special needs learners in immersion settings. Our authors are teachers, researchers, and parents who are working on the

frontlines. They are struggling to accurately identify children with learning needs, learning to adapt their teaching practices to better serve those special learning needs, and making difficult emotional decisions to keep or remove their children from immersion schools. For educators who would like to explore this topic further, we recommend this summer's CARLA institute, Meeting the Challenges of Immersion Education: Is Immersion for All? (see the CARLA website for registration information).

And, don't forget to join us next October for the international immersion conference, Pathways to Bilingualism, held in Minneapolis. You won't be getting another newsletter before the conference, so register now (see facing page).

Have a relaxing and rejuvenating summer!

— Kimerly Miller, Editor

## Reading Support, continued from page 1

tically correct sentence. The English-speaking child is learning to listen to the initial sound of the word *horse* (/h/) and match that sound with the written word *horse* on the page. As the student becomes more skilled, he will be able to match ending, and then medial, sounds. Through this process, he cross-checks himself, using the cues of syntax and semantics.

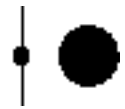
In contrast, a Spanish immersion student looks at the picture of a horse and can offer the English word "horse." However, this will not help him decode the word "caballo" on the written page. Unlike his English-speaking counterpart, as the immersion student is learning how to decode the word "caballo," he is also learning the meaning of the word. In addition, he is still learning about Spanish sentence structure and syntax. Fortunately for Spanish language learners, Spanish is very phonetically consistent. Most Spanish immersion students acquire the decoding aspect of learning to read without much difficulty. Nevertheless, there are students who struggle.

In our Spanish immersion program we see and remediate many types of reading difficulties with our early readers. Often students confuse the two languages, by reading Spanish words with English sounds. This is especially true with students who are still in the letter naming stage, and have not internalized the sounds that letters make. Additionally, students may know the sounds of letters in isolation, but have a difficult time combining the sounds into syllables and the syllables into words. Also, many of our second language learners have difficulty retaining the meaning of Spanish words, once they have been introduced. Even with repeated usage, some students cannot remember what words mean when they come to them in a sentence, thus impairing the comprehension of the text. Diminished fluency is often a result of these difficulties, which, in turn, also impedes comprehension.

To remediate these reading challenges, we use many different strategies. The strategies are not new or unique to immersion. However, we have found that we may implement the

STRATEGIES FOR READING REMEDIATION

Reading Support, continued on page 8



## Pathways to Bilingualism: Evolving Perspectives on Immersion Education

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, OCTOBER 21-23, 2004, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

If the Pathways to Bilingualism Conference is not already on your calendar, now is the time to set it in ink. Registration is available online (see details in the sidebar) for pre-conference workshops on October 21 and for the conference itself on October 22 and 23.

In addition to the Thursday pre-conference workshops (detailed in the February issue of the ACIE Newsletter), over fifty break-out sessions will be offered during the Friday-Saturday conference focusing on the following four broad themes: Program Design and Development, Assessment and Program Evaluation, Language Development and Immersion Pedagogy, and Policy and Advocacy.

Presenters for break-out sessions represent school-based programs from around the world (including the U.S., Canada, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Ireland, and Finland) that embrace the

concept of additive bilingualism—the acquisition of a second language while continuing to develop the first. The programs speak to the diversity of immersion contexts: one-way and two-way immersion programs, schools that teach common languages such as Spanish or French and less common languages like Japanese or Gaelic, settings where the language taught has no specific connection to the community of learners and settings where it is, in fact, part of the language learners' cultural heritage (e.g., Hawaiian or Cree).

The conference will be held at the Radisson Hotel Metrodome which is conveniently located on the University of Minnesota campus. Sign up now for the first U.S. conference in nearly ten years dedicated exclusively to immersion teaching and learning! See sidebar on p. 7 for possible grant funding. ○

### Thursday, October 21, 2004

9:00 am–6:00 pm	Registration
9:00 am–4:00 pm	Pre-Conference Workshops
5:00 pm	Welcome and Opening Remarks; Keynote: <i>Bilingualism in the Global Village</i> Fred Genesee, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

### Friday, October 22, 2004

8:30 am	Plenary: <i>Program Design and Development</i> Merrill Swain, University of Toronto, Canada
10:00 am–5:00 pm	Breakout Sessions
1:30 pm	Plenary: <i>Assessment and Program Evaluation</i> Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA

### Saturday, October 23, 2004

8:30 am	Plenary: <i>Immersion Pedagogy and Language Development</i> Roy Lyster, McGill University, Montreal, Canada
10:00 am–3:30 pm	Breakout Sessions
3:45 pm	Plenary: <i>Policy and Advocacy</i> Myriam Met, University of Maryland, College Park, MD
5:00	Adjourn

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

**Full Conference:** \$150 (\$125 before June 15, 2004) includes the Thursday evening plenary and reception, lunch on Friday and Saturday, and all materials. Note: Full conference registration does not include the pre-conference workshops.

**One-Day:** \$100 includes lunch on the day of registration and all materials.

**Workshops:** \$75 each – includes the cost of instruction and all materials. You do not need to register for the conference to register for the workshops. Enrollment is limited, so register early!

**Current ACIE members** receive a **\$25 discount** on full or one-day conference registration. No discount for workshop-only registrations.

### How to Register...

1. Register online at <http://www.carla.umn.edu/conferences/immersion/registration.html> (credit card only)

If you wish to register using a P.O. from your school, please fax or mail in your registration using the downloadable PDF form.

2. Fax (Credit Card • P.O. only) or mail (Credit Card • P.O. • Check: University of Minnesota)

All registrations must include payment.



## POINTS FOR PARENTS

*Parents often are looking for a place to access ideas about how to support their children's education. Immersion parents who may or may not be fluent in the language their child is learning at school have many questions and concerns.*

*In this regular feature, we offer concrete suggestions for extra-curricular support of language learning. In addition, we address specific parent concerns and invite parents to share their experience and expertise.*

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## *Dyslexia in the Immersion Classroom*

*By Mona Anton, Parent, L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion School, St. Paul, MN*

When we learned that our daughter had dyslexia, my husband and I had many questions. The first was, "What do we do about school?" Our daughter, Susan, had been in a French immersion school since Kindergarten and had just started third grade. The clinician's answer was simply, "You've got to get her out of that school." She reasoned that my daughter would be too confused to learn to read and write in either language and she would fall farther behind every year. Then, before our meeting was over I mentioned that I was inclined to have her complete this year in her current school so we could make a careful decision about the move. Everyone agreed this was a good idea and we left the therapist's with a recommendation regarding the kind of school suitable for my daughter. We spent much of that year looking at schools, both public and private. We visited schools large and small, some with dyslexia-specific Special Education services and some without any additional services. Each school was English-only.

### TEACHER FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTATIONS

We began to realize that Susan was already in a good learning environment. She had a small class of only fourteen students. Her teacher was aware of her needs and my daughter received extra help with math. She was given smaller pieces to memorize for the reading and writing assignments. In writing lab, Susan learned to put her ideas down on paper and edit out the spelling mistakes. She brought the editing home so I could decipher her spelling. She was given five spelling words instead of ten and would bring them home over the weekend to begin studying for the following week.

In third grade, Susan started after-school private tutoring for reading. The tutoring was always in English and this helped with word

decoding and comprehension. She did well in science and was keeping up in social studies. Because formal reading in English wasn't introduced until third grade, we worried that moving to a new school would be putting our daughter into a larger classroom where she would be several reading levels behind the rest of the students.

My daughter was also evaluated by a school district social worker. The social worker arrived, visited with my daughter for less than five minutes, and then spoke only to the adults. Her analysis was very simple: since her work wasn't consistently one year behind her classmates in every subject, she did not qualify for any Special Education services. The social worker pointed out that because this was an immersion classroom and English instruction was just beginning, it was normal to be reading below grade level.

I read everything I could find on dyslexia in the classroom. It is difficult to find books that have much information or a consensus of opinion regarding children with learning disabilities in second language classrooms. Dyslexia is not just one issue or one diagnosis—it encompasses problems with reading, writing or math in varying degrees of severity. Many children with dyslexia have difficulty with organizational issues or study skills. The more I read, the more I realized that there was no right answer, but this might be Susan's one chance to learn a second language. I could find no conclusive studies showing immersion was harmful. She stayed in immersion for fourth grade.

For third, fourth and fifth grades my daughter had teachers from Canada, Belgium and Switzerland. All three were new to this school district and their abilities to deal with a special needs student were minimal. Susan has never had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) requiring any special instruction or program



adaptations. Anything that has been done to help her has been due to the kindness of her teachers and my continued persistence. I have met with teachers, volunteered in the classroom and made myself available for quick informal meetings about “what we should do.” Susan continues to see tutors for reading and math. These small-group tutorials have made a vast difference in her reading and math achievement and have probably been the main reason she has been able to stay in an immersion setting.

#### DISTRICT POLICIES

While the attention my daughter has received from teachers has been caring and helpful, the district’s testing policies are punitive to immersion students who don’t test well on annual standardized tests. We have received letters from the district saying, “Your child will attend summer school.” The first of these letters arrived three days before school let out at the end of fourth grade. We had already enrolled Susan in a summer tutorial program, plus some recreational camps of her choosing. While she had received a perfect attendance award and really liked school, she viewed summer school as punishment. Similarly, our school recommended that my daughter sign up for Area Learning Center (ALC), an after-school homework program. Again, we received a letter stating, “Your child will attend ALC.” The program is loud and packed with K-6 students. A few teachers circulate around the room helping children with homework. It looks a lot like after-school childcare. We recycled both letters. I couldn’t take my daughter out of her after-school activities (which she enjoyed and which provided opportunities for success) to spend more time in school.

By the end of fifth grade, Susan’s reading scores had started to approach average grade levels and she had started staying up late at night reading in her bed! Despite the advice of the first expert, my child is now in sixth grade in the same French Immersion program. Each year we have made the decision that this is the

right place for her. We have been lucky to have responsive teachers who are willing to adapt the curriculum to something more manageable for our daughter. She has found a way to succeed in school and to get her homework done on time. We feel that this has been the best school choice for her.

There are no easy answers to dyslexia difficulties in any classroom but for our daughter, the gift of second language fluency in elementary school has been well worth the extra work.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

While no two children’s educational experiences are the same, a dyslexic child can fit well into an immersion classroom if:

- ☛ parents and teachers are willing to communicate and keep the needs of the child a priority. This may mean that the decision to leave or stay in the immersion setting must be reevaluated annually.
- ☛ realistic goals are set for your child’s progress. Even though a dyslexic child is progressing at her individual rate, progress is success. Your child may not be as verbally fluent in either language as her peers. She is still receiving a rich language experience she can build upon her whole life.
- ☛ we recognize that learning a second language may seem much easier for young children, but is not easy. Be patient with homework and be willing to spend extra time letting your child listen to tapes and explain homework in English as needed.
- ☛ Families recognize that time spent learning the second language may indeed be time away from English and supplementing with instruction at home or with a tutor may be necessary. ○

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

*Cronin, E. M. (1997). Helping your dyslexic child: A guide to improving your child’s reading, writing, spelling, comprehension and self-esteem. Rockland, CA: Prima Lifestyles.*

*Davis, R. D. (1997). The gift of dyslexia: Why some of the smartest people can’t read and how they can learn. New York: Berkley Publishing Group.*

*Pollock, J., & Walker, E. (1994). Day-to-day dyslexia in the classroom. New York: Routledge.*

“

...There are no easy answers to dyslexia difficulties in any classroom but for our daughter, the gift of second language fluency in elementary school has been well worth the extra



## RESEARCH REPORTS

In an effort to push the edge of what we currently know about learning, researchers continue to design and publish new studies on issues important to immersion education. Keeping up to date with current research is a time-consuming task.

This regular feature will help inform the immersion education public about recent research by providing our readers with brief summaries of selected studies.

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## Underachieving Students and the Child Study Team: Determining Eligibility for Special Education Services

By Kristine M-W. Woelber

*Kris Woelber (M.Ed. in Special Education: Learning Disabilities, M.A. in ESL) has been a special education teacher for 12 years. Her areas of certification are learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral disorders, elementary, and ESL education. After teaching for four years overseas, Kris became the special education teacher and team leader at Normandale French Immersion Elementary School in Edina, MN. Her recently completed M.A. research explores the processes and practices of one child study team whose task it is to determine special education eligibility.*

**F**rom a special education perspective, the immersion education setting brings to light the daily challenges of teasing apart issues of language development and academic challenges that arise due to a learning disability. The challenges that multidisciplinary teams face when determining if students qualify for special education services are many. For educators making these decisions in an elementary language immersion setting, the issues become even more difficult and complex. This study addresses the nature of the decision-making process in determining eligibility of special education services for elementary French immersion students with learning disabilities in accordance with a state department of education's categorical label of Specific Learning Disability (SLD). The research question explored in this study is: What is the nature of the decision-making process in determining eligibility for special education services in one early total French immersion school in the U.S.? The aim of this study is to observe and document this decision-making process.

A preliminary review of immersion, foreign language, and English as a second language research on this topic revealed the limited volume of detailed, immersion-specific information currently available to educators. Moreover, all of the existing research involving immersion programs came from studies carried out in Canada. Thus, any explanation of the process of adhering to a particular state's guidelines throughout the pre-referral process, a U.S.-specific consideration, was lacking. For example, this study's state guidelines specify three preconditions for

student eligibility for special education services under the categorical label of SLD. There must be: 1) a discrepancy in ability (I.Q.) and academic achievement, 2) evidence of severe underachievement in the classroom setting, and 3) a noted information processing condition. Providing evidence for all three of the domains in one content area, such as math, reading and/or written language, qualifies a student for special education services under the categorical label of SLD (Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, 1999).

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The research methodology that corresponds to this research question is the case study—a research design particularly well-suited to exploring educational phenomena. In this instance, the focus is on the policies and procedures of the school's Child Study Team (CST) that result in a multidisciplinary team assessment and determination of SLD special education services. Thus, the CST's decision-making process and comprehensive assessment practices make up the bounded unit, or rather, the case under study. To strengthen reliability and validity, the case study approach entails a rich description of this process, enabling the reader to make comparisons across settings. Additionally, triangulation—whereby the researcher seeks multiple participant perspectives on a case through a variety of data collection techniques—strengthens study findings (Merriam, 1998).

Individual interview and focus group data, as well as current document review are used to

construct a holistic description of one immersion school's process and reflect the observations and understandings among various CST members, as well as parents whose children qualified for SLD services. CST members included the school principal, psychologist, special education teacher, speech/language pathologist, social worker, Foundations of Learning/Success Center lead teacher, nurse and three immersion teachers. As the school's special education teacher and coordinator of the CST, the researcher's own observations and understandings are also incorporated into the study.

## STUDY SITE

This study takes place in a K-5 early total French immersion school in the Midwest. Established in 1990, K- Grade 2 students in this school receive academic instruction only in their second language, French. Specialist classes, such as art, music and physical education are instructed in the students' first language, English. As of third grade, English language arts instruction is scheduled 70 minutes a day; this amount of English instruction continues throughout the fourth and fifth grades. This school adheres to the same curriculum that is followed by the other five elementary schools in this suburban district; however, most subject matter curriculum is taught in French.

Approximately 575 students attend this school. Over 95% of the student body speak English as their first language and English is also the language spoken in their homes and in the community at large. The majority of parents have no formal education in the language of French; they have chosen this program in an effort to provide their child with an education that includes the goal of proficiency in a second language. There are approximately 35 teachers on staff and 25 students per class. Other demographics that shed light on this student body are as follows: 1% are eligible for free or reduced lunch, 5% receive special education services, 2% speak a language other than English at home; and 95% are European American.

## SELECT RESEARCH FINDINGS

Results from this case study indicate that ten identifiable phases guide the decision-making process of the CST at this site. These ten phases occur within a broader framework that includes three key events: 1. Initial CST Meeting, 2. Follow-Up Activities for Initial CST Meeting, and 3. Implementation of Assessment Procedures. An overview of these findings is presented below. This report outlines what occurs in each of the ten phases and then discusses the main strengths and gaps of the current decision-making process as articulated by study participants.

### TEN PHASES OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

#### I. INITIAL CHILD STUDY TEAM MEETING

##### 1. *The teacher observes low student performance.*

- The referring teacher completes a pre-referral form for the next CST meeting agenda to discuss the student concerned.

##### 2. *Gathered data are shared at the initial CST meeting.*

- The referring teacher presents her concerns about the student.
- Specialist questionnaires, work samples, cumulative and health office files, and general parent concerns are discussed.
- CST brainstorms classroom interventions/accommodations to be tried.

##### 3. *Initial CST meeting concludes with follow-up plans in place.*

- CST determines who will be in contact with the parents.
- CST determines if the student's progress will be monitored while documenting interventions or schedules a parent meeting with select members of the CST.

#### II. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES FOR INITIAL CST MEETING

##### 4. *A meeting with the speech/language pathologist occurs (if determined necessary).*

*Underachieving Students, continued on page 11*



## FUNDING RESOURCES

*Wondering how you might access financial support to participate in the Pathways to Bilingualism Conference? Check out these grant opportunities, published in the May 2004 NCLRC Language Resource (v. 8, n. 4).*

### **NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education's Learning & Leadership Grants**

**Website:** [www.nfie.org/grants.htm](http://www.nfie.org/grants.htm)

*The NEA Foundation provides \$2,000-\$5,000 grants to teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff in public schools, colleges, and universities for high-quality professional development or implementing innovative ideas that raise student achievement. Eligible applicants may apply at any time. Tel: 202-822-7840.*

### **Washington Mutual, Inc.**

#### **Teacher Development Grants**

**Website:** [www.wamu.com/about/community/support/givingguidelines/givingguidelines.htm](http://www.wamu.com/about/community/support/givingguidelines/givingguidelines.htm)

*Washington Mutual provides funding for K-12 public schools in low- to moderate-income communities.*

*Grants are available for professional development of teachers, leadership training for principals, organizational development for schools or districts, and information about school performance for parents. Proposals should have clearly measurable results and provide opportunities for teachers to grow professionally, learn from experience, and work with their peers to improve performance. For more information, visit the website or call 1-800-258-0543.*



## THE BRIDGE

*Educational research is vital to validating effective practices, challenging ineffective ones, and encouraging innovations. Yet research is only valuable if teachers read and implement findings in their classrooms.*

*The Bridge feature is included as an insert to encourage teachers to collect them for future reference. We hope this pull-out insert will help immersion educators stay abreast of the latest research and allow it, when applicable, to affect their own practice.*

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**K**aty Arnett is nearing completion of a Ph.D. in Second Language Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto and is currently teaching secondary level French in Maryland. For the past several years, she has been researching the educational experience of students with learning disabilities in the foreign/second language classroom and the ways in which FL/SL teachers can make their classrooms more inclusive.



Katy Arnett

## Reading Support, continued from p. 2

strategies in a slightly different way to meet the unique challenges of learning to read in a second language.

Guided reading forms the core of both our first grade immersion reading program and our remediation program. In the classroom, small, flexible groups of students meet three to four times a week with the teacher to read and interact with a specifically chosen text. The text is matched with the level of the readers in that group. Additionally, the teacher selects a teaching point based on the text. Examples of teaching points are the use of punctuation, sentence structure, grammar usage, and vocabulary. The text is usually a small, leveled book with pictures on most pages, and somewhat controlled vocabulary and sentence structure. Most of the texts are translations of English guided reading sets. At times, this poses some difficulty, as translated words can be much more difficult than what was originally intended for that level of text. However, we have found them to be generally useful for developing basic vocabulary and semantics.

For students who need reading remediation, guided reading is also used. This allows the students three to four more exposures to Spanish text at their reading level every week. This increase in exposure does a lot to aid some struggling readers. In addition, the reading specialist can review letters, sounds, and vocabulary on a more individualized level with each student. Much emphasis is placed on reading completely through the word, and fluently re-reading words and sentences once they have been decoded successfully. There is a

lot of repetitive practice.

Another strategy that we use in our first grade immersion classroom is “Making Words.” This strategy is very helpful in reinforcing sound blending which leads to fluency. While this strategy can be done with the whole class, we find it to be more manageable and productive with a small guided group. The teacher gives each student a predetermined set of letter cards. The teacher then guides the students to make smaller words or syllables with their letters. These chunks are then combined to make longer, multi-syllabic words. For example, the teacher distributes the letter cards *c, m, s, i, a, a* to the students. First, she asks the students to make the word *mi* and then asks the students to form the syllable *sa*. This is followed by having the students combine the two chunks to make the word *misa*. Finally, the students are asked to take the remaining letters and combine them with *misa* to make *camisa*, the Spanish word for *shirt*. Other words that could be made from these letters include *casa*, *saca*, and *cima*.

For students needing additional reading remediation, the reading specialist uses the Making Words strategy to reinforce patterns and vocabulary taught in the classroom, as well as text used for guided reading in the reading support classroom. The same procedure is followed as in the classroom, but with different words and syllables. This helps struggling readers to generalize and to develop fluency. The reading specialist often sends home letter cards for specific words in a guided reading text with the first graders. This allows the stu-

*Reading Support, continued on page 15*



# Creating Independent Learners of Japanese via the Internet

By Michael Bacon, Immersion Education Coordinator, Portland (OR) Public Schools  
Atsuko Ando, 4th Grade Teacher, Richmond Elementary Japanese Magnet Program, Portland, OR



**A**s students gleefully run out the door at the end of the school year, a small voice in my head sadly reminds me that most of them will probably not use their Japanese language skills until I see them again in September. Subsequently, I know I will need to spend the first three months of the next school year bringing the students' proficiency back up to the level they were at when they left in June.

Many teachers look for ways to motivate students to use their language skills outside of school. Until recently my list included hosting exchange students, writing letters to Japanese friends, and dancing in the obon festival at the local Buddhist church, but using the internet, a motivation for many students, did not seem reasonable. First, most families do not have a computer with Japanese capabilities. Even if they do, most internet sites in Japanese are difficult given the heavy use of kanji (Chinese characters).

Fortunately, the fourth grade teacher in our program, Atsuko Ando, has developed an extensive list of family-friendly websites. These sites appeal to young learners of Japanese and help families download software which enables a computer to read and input Japanese.

Below is Ando Sensei's list. She says it still needs work, but it's a great start, and hopefully others can

In order to explore Japanese Internet sites, your computer has to have Japanese capabilities. You can make your computer Japanese-capable by downloading free software or simply going to a certain site.

## TO VIEW JAPANESE PAGES

- Twin Bridge Asian Viewer for PC at [www.twinbridge.com](http://www.twinbridge.com)
- JREADER Information Page at [www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/jreader.html](http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/jreader.html)
- Japanese WWW Page viewer at [www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/jviewer.html](http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/jviewer.html)

## TO WRITE IN JAPANESE

### For Windows Users:

- Download Global IME at [www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/downloads/recommended/ime/default.asp](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/downloads/recommended/ime/default.asp)
- Make your PC (Windows 95, 98, NT, 2000 and XP) Japanese capable with Nihongo-OK at [www.nihongo-ok.com](http://www.nihongo-ok.com)

### For Mac Users:

- Mac OS 9 comes with a Japanese Language

Kit. Instructions for installing at [www.nihongoweb.com/Computing/JLK.html](http://www.nihongoweb.com/Computing/JLK.html)

- Mac OS X comes with Japanese Font sets.
- The Japanese version of System 7.5.3 can be installed on an old Macintosh at [www.apple.co.jp/ftp-info/reference/kt753.html](http://www.apple.co.jp/ftp-info/reference/kt753.html)
- Update this to System 7.5.5 at [www.apple.co.jp/ftp-info/reference/kt755.html](http://www.apple.co.jp/ftp-info/reference/kt755.html)

## JAPANESE CHARACTERS

- You can put "furigana (hiragana reading)" on Kanji at [kids.goo.ne.jp](http://kids.goo.ne.jp)
- You can see Kanji animation on Gakushu anime no yakata at [meiko.web.infoseek.co.jp](http://meiko.web.infoseek.co.jp)

## SCIENCE

- You can play a puzzle game and review human bone structure on the Bone Puzzle site at [www.ahv.pref.aichi.jp/game/hone/shousai1.htm](http://www.ahv.pref.aichi.jp/game/hone/shousai1.htm). (Shockwave is needed for this).
- Organ Puzzle at [www.ahv.pref.aichi.jp/game/naizou/naizou1/shousai1.html](http://www.ahv.pref.aichi.jp/game/naizou/naizou1/shousai1.html)

## JAPANESE ANIME SITES

- Doraemon at [dora-world.com/top.html](http://dora-world.com/top.html)  
*Japanese Websites, continued on next page*

Technology and second language education are a natural match, as both enable us to explore our world more directly. In this column, Techno Tips, we highlight successful applications of technology in and around the immersion classroom.

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## Japanese Websites, *continued from page 9*

• [www.so-net.ne.jp/kids/ehon/ehon.htm](http://www.so-net.ne.jp/kids/ehon/ehon.htm)

- Yu-gi-oh at [jump.shueisha.co.jp/yugi/index.html](http://jump.shueisha.co.jp/yugi/index.html)
- Yu-gi-oh official card site at [www.yugioh-card.com](http://www.yugioh-card.com)
- Anpanman at [www.ntv.co.jp/anpanman](http://www.ntv.co.jp/anpanman)

### FUN AND EDUCATIONAL GAMES

- Funahashi Gakushu Juku: This site is full of interesting Katakana, Kanji, Romaji and math online games. Among them are Katakana game/bingo at [homepage3.nifty.com/funahashi/game/game02.html](http://homepage3.nifty.com/funahashi/game/game02.html); Kanji game/bingo (1st grade) at [homepage3.nifty.com/funahashi/game/game01.html](http://homepage3.nifty.com/funahashi/game/game01.html); Kanji game/bingo (2nd grade) at [homepage3.nifty.com/funahashi/game/game03.html](http://homepage3.nifty.com/funahashi/game/game03.html); Romaji game at [homepage3.nifty.com/funahashi/game/game06.html](http://homepage3.nifty.com/funahashi/game/game06.html)
- Review and practice hiragana and katakana in a very fun way on the Ultimate Kana Challenge site at [tell.fl.purdue.edu/ultimate](http://tell.fl.purdue.edu/ultimate)
- Try a Japan Map puzzle at [earth.endless.ne.jp/users/yoshi216/tizu3.html](http://earth.endless.ne.jp/users/yoshi216/tizu3.html)

Kanji wo mitsukeyo!

### JAPANESE MUSIC MIDI

- [www.mahoroba.ne.jp/~gonbe007/hog/shouka/00\\_songs.html](http://www.mahoroba.ne.jp/~gonbe007/hog/shouka/00_songs.html)

### ONLINE PICTURE BOOKS

- [kuruminomori.com](http://kuruminomori.com)
- [www.kidslab.net/dorachan/index.html](http://www.kidslab.net/dorachan/index.html)
- You can hear a story on Ryudon World at [ryudon.pobox.ne.jp](http://ryudon.pobox.ne.jp)



Japan Map puzzle - [earth.endless.ne.jp/users/yoshi216/tizu3.html](http://earth.endless.ne.jp/users/yoshi216/tizu3.html)

- [www.moe-w.com/top.html](http://www.moe-w.com/top.html)
- [www.mahodo.net/bookn.html](http://www.mahodo.net/bookn.html)

### ORIGAMI SITES

- Origami Juku at [www.bunbouguyasan.com/series/origami/origami\\_index.html](http://www.bunbouguyasan.com/series/origami/origami_index.html)
- Learn how to make various kinds of origami by viewing animation on Origami Club. Highly recommended! At [www.origami-club.com](http://www.origami-club.com)
- Tanoshi origami at [home.att.ne.jp/orange/yuyu/index-origami.htm](http://home.att.ne.jp/orange/yuyu/index-origami.htm)
- Origami Land (English) at [www.oriland.com/studio/studio.asp](http://www.oriland.com/studio/studio.asp)
- Experience a lot of virtual Japanese culture including origami on Kids Web Japan at [jin.jcic.or.jp/kidsweb/index-j.html](http://jin.jcic.or.jp/kidsweb/index-j.html) ○

Tell us about your favorite websites, ones that your students can use or ones that are good resources for immersion teachers. Send a synopsis of 500 or fewer words to ACIE editor, Kimerly Miller, [mille379@umn.edu](mailto:mille379@umn.edu). We especially welcome websites in languages other than French and Spanish.

Remember to include the URL!



Kids goo - [kids.goo.ne.jp](http://kids.goo.ne.jp)



## **Underachieving Students,** *continued from page 7*

- The speech/language pathologist will meet with a student who shows signs of significant receptive and/or expressive language processing weaknesses. This observation is for the purpose of evaluating language development and making recommendations regarding the need for further assessment.
- Written parent consent is necessary for the speech/language pathologist to meet with the child.

### **5. Progress is monitored and interventions are documented.**

- This phase lasts for six to eight weeks.
- At the end of the monitoring period, CST may meet again to discuss progress, and/or a parent meeting will be scheduled with select members of the CST and the referring teacher.

### **6. Parent meeting is held.**

- All CST information is shared.
- Any family/genetic learning difficulties and the home environment are discussed.
- The child will continue to be monitored while interventions are documented or assessment procedures begin.

## **III. IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**

### **7. An assessment plan is developed and an evaluation is completed (if determined necessary).**

- The multidisciplinary team creates an assessment plan that states the people involved and their responsibilities.
- Parents give written consent to proceed with the evaluation.
- Evaluation is completed according to due process timelines.

### **8. All information is pulled together for the assessment feedback meeting.**

- A multidisciplinary team reviews the SLD eligibility worksheet in conjunction with as-

essment results and observations in both languages to determine if the student qualifies for SLD special education services.

- Student progress is considered in Foundations of Learning/Success Center, if applicable.
- Emotional/behavioral indicators are considered that may stem from the demands of a second language learning environment.

### **9. Individualized Education Plan is developed.**

- If the student qualifies for special education services, another meeting is held to draft an Individualized Education Plan.
- Services are provided in English with the special education teacher.
- French paraprofessional support is provided for any special education student needing academic assistance, as well.

### **10. The appropriateness of the immersion setting is discussed.**

- An opportunity is provided to dialogue with parents about this topic.
- A support document titled “Possible Factors Influencing Student Performance in French Immersion” is used to facilitate this discussion (Vancouver School Board, 1995, pp. 1-3). *To review this document see p. 13. For information on using the document or to order a copy for your school, see sidebar.*

## **STRENGTHS OF THE CURRENT**

### **DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

During data analysis, recurring themes identified by study participants emerged. These themes highlighted both the strengths and gaps of the current decision-making process. As for strengths, participants spoke to the value of having a process in place for seeking comprehensive, systematic input from professionals. The school’s CST provided this with a multi-dimensional, clearly *Underachieving Students, continued on next page*

## **French Immersion Support Document: Possible Factors Influencing Student Performance in French Immersion**

### **How to Use This Document**

*This document arose out of district wide concerns for students who are experiencing difficulties in French Immersion. This profile was therefore developed to facilitate discussion among the classroom teacher(s), learning assistance teacher(s), and other School-Based Team members. In addition, the profile could be used when working with parents during educational planning for their children.*

### **For more information, contact:**

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Fax: 604-713-5078

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Mabbott, A. S. (1994). *An exploration of reading comprehension, oral reading errors, and written errors by subjects labeled learning disabled*. *Foreign Language Annals*, 27 (3), 293-316.

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*References, cont. on sidebar, p. 14*

## *Underachieving Students*, continued from page 11

defined system for these immersion teachers to follow. During the early phases of the process, the CST served to gather comprehensive student data, provide non-judgmental collegial support for teachers, and filter premature concerns, especially those of parents. In the later stages of a comprehensive student assessment, the multidisciplinary team continued to probe for supporting information such as a genetic history of learning disabilities in the family, inattention, weak language processing skills or lower cognitive abilities. In preparation for the assessment feedback meeting, CST members considered the effectiveness of support services already being offered. They also made certain that assessment data included both first and second language learning tasks. Gleaning additional information from a speech/language pathologist student observation, or a student interview with the social worker, was also found to be insightful.

An additional strength voiced by participants involved the availability of academic support services within the school in English and French. Even before struggling students were recommended for an assessment, they had access to Foundations of Learning (FOL)/Success Center services. FOL is an academic support program available during the school day for students who are underperforming in the areas of math and language arts. It is separate from special education services. Thus, during the time between the initial referral to the CST and in some cases the ultimate identification of a child as learning disabled, additional learning supports were present. Remediation was also provided in French and/or English by licensed teaching staff or French paraprofessional support for as much as thirty minutes per day or week, depending on need. Soliciting feedback from the FOL staff and support services teachers during the assessment phase was seen as invaluable. Such feedback provided key information about the student's status within

the grade-level FOL group, for example, information about how a particular student was meeting projected trimester benchmarks relative to other struggling peers. This helped team members distinguish between students that were likely experiencing a delay in their skill development versus those that were possibly learning disabled as evidenced by severe underachievement as well as an observable information processing condition.

A third strength repeatedly noted by study participants was the CST's ongoing and sensitive interaction with the child's parents. Parents were involved every step of the way. In the initial phases of the decision-making process, parents often needed a knowledgeable sounding board for their immediate concerns regarding language immersion issues. A spokesperson from the CST, often the CST coordinator, psychologist or classroom teacher, helped the parents deal with these initial pressures and uncertainties. Throughout the process, team members sought to help parents balance their concerns about academic achievement with a more developmental perspective. They emphasized that some children take longer than others to learn to read and to grow into being a student. Furthermore, years of experience in the immersion setting had led educators at this site to believe that the timeline for expected "typical" academic benchmarks may need to be extended when students are learning in a second language. They find that it is important to inform parents that students with learning difficulties may need even more time to learn than other children (Mabbott, 1994); but this need not prevent them from learning a second language. The CST was effective at addressing parent concerns and reducing the number of premature assessments and unnecessary transfers out of the program.

## GAPS IN THE CURRENT DECISION MAKING PROCESS

*Underachieving Students, continued on page 14*

# POSSIBLE FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN FRENCH IMMERSION

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Indicate factors pertinent to individual students and add comments when appropriate

Domains	Possible Success Factors	Possible Risk Factors
<b>Social Development</b>	<p><b>Usually the child:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> appears to be a risk taker <input type="checkbox"/> appears to get along with peers <input type="checkbox"/> appears to have positive self-esteem <input type="checkbox"/> appears to be confident	<p><b>Usually the child:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> does not appear to be a risk taker <input type="checkbox"/> appears to be immature and/or exhibit inappropriate social behavior <input type="checkbox"/> appears to have low self-esteem <input type="checkbox"/> appears to lack confidence
<b>School Behavior</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> appears to be receptive to learning French <input type="checkbox"/> attempts to communicate in French <input type="checkbox"/> attends school regularly (the significance being that the classroom provides the major French language learning environment) <input type="checkbox"/> has well established work habits: __ stays on task __ completes assignments __ listens well __ participates actively __ is organized <input type="checkbox"/> appears to have a positive attitude towards school	<input type="checkbox"/> rarely or never attempts to communicate in French <input type="checkbox"/> is frustrated by difficulty communicating in French <input type="checkbox"/> does not attend school regularly <input type="checkbox"/> does not have well established work habits: __ has difficulty staying on task __ has difficulty completing assignments __ has weak listening skills __ displays lack of involvement __ is disorganized
<b>Family*</b>	<p><b>The family (i.e. primary care givers):</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> * appears to be comfortable with choice of French immersion schooling <input type="checkbox"/> Notes from parent interview(s):	<p><b>The family (i.e. primary care givers):</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> * appears to have strong reservations about French immersion schooling <input type="checkbox"/> Notes from parent interview(s):
<b>1st Language Acquisition</b>	<p><b>Usually the child:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> appears to have a well established first language in terms of understanding, oral expression, and vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> * communicates well verbally <input type="checkbox"/> appears to have at least average verbal reasoning skills (i.e., can describe, make inferences, associate ideas, categorize, etc.)	<p><b>Usually the child:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> does not appear to have a well established first language in terms of understanding, oral expression, and vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> appears to have experienced significant developmental delays in the first language: __ semantic and/or syntactic development * __ receptive and/or expressive language skills <input type="checkbox"/> * does not communicate well verbally <input type="checkbox"/> appears to have weak verbal reasoning skills <input type="checkbox"/> has articulation and/or phonological difficulties in conjunction with other possible risk factors
<b>Learner Characteristics</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> appears to have adequate auditory processing skills: __ discrimination __ memory __ sequencing <input type="checkbox"/> appears to participate readily in new learning situations <input type="checkbox"/> appears to readily retain information presented both visually and auditorily.	<input type="checkbox"/> appears to have auditory processing difficulties: __ discrimination __ memory __ sequencing <input type="checkbox"/> appears to be hesitant when presented with new learning situations <input type="checkbox"/> appears to have difficulty retaining information presented visually and/or auditorily <input type="checkbox"/> has family history of learning difficulty in reading, writing, spelling, and/or math
<b>Academic Progress</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> is making adequate progress in French immersion according to Ministry guidelines <input type="checkbox"/> is developing receptive and/or expressive language skills in French <input type="checkbox"/> has made some transfer of reading and writing skills at the late primary/early intermediate level without formal instruction <input type="checkbox"/> is acquiring reading skills according to Ministry guidelines <input type="checkbox"/> is acquiring written language skills according to Ministry guidelines <input type="checkbox"/> is developing visual-motor integration and fine motor skills <input type="checkbox"/> is acquiring math concepts, computation and/or problem solving skills according to Ministry guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/> is making slower progress in French immersion based on Ministry guidelines <input type="checkbox"/> has difficulty with receptive and/or expressive language skills in French <input type="checkbox"/> appears to be experiencing undue stress and frustration related to curriculum demands of the French immersion program <input type="checkbox"/> has difficulty handling the dual language curricula and work load at the intermediate level <input type="checkbox"/> is having difficulty acquiring reading skills based on Ministry guidelines __ sight vocabulary __ decoding (sound-symbol association) __ comprehension <input type="checkbox"/> is having difficulty acquiring written language skills: __ organizing thoughts on paper __ sequencing __ mechanics (i.e., punctuation, capitalization) __ spelling __ grammar <input type="checkbox"/> is having difficulty with visual-motor integration and/or acquiring fine motor skills <input type="checkbox"/> is having difficulty acquiring math concepts, computation and/or

\* This information must come from objective data and/or interviews from parents

**Note: Bold text lists possible success and risk factors which appear to particularly important in French Immersion.**

Enterprises Ltd.

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## Underachieving Students, continued from page 12

While several strengths were readily identified, participants also raised concerns and cited deficiencies in the current process. For example, several CST members felt that there was insufficient information and discussion about a particular teacher's curriculum planning and instructional practices. Team members were often unclear about the kinds of instructional strategies that should be recommended for students who struggle academically. Participants stated that it was a delicate balancing act to support a teacher and be sensitive to their needs, while at the same time advocating for changes within their classroom environment, and/or in their style or approach to teaching students who are struggling academically. The current process could more thoroughly emphasize, as Baca (1990) would propose it should, the need for varied teaching strategies, learning activities and multiple ways to modify curriculum. To improve, team members need to be more diligent in systematically using documents that offer specific suggestions and provide teachers with research-based instructional ideas.

In addition to the issue of instituting appropriate instructional adaptations, participants discussed concerns about testing practices. Before beginning the assessment process, parents are informed that best practice in immersion schools, as well as second language research recommend that testing for possible learning difficulties be conducted in the child's first language (English) in combination with other assessment tools that include a sampling of skills in both languages (Alberta Education, 1997). To ensure reliability and validity, a number of state-mandated standardized testing instruments must be administered in English. A standardized assessment in French-only is not advisable (Demers, 1994; Swain 1984; Wiss, 1987) until such instruments represent a national sample of French immersion children (Wiss, 1987). However, reflecting on what would be considered best assessment practices

in an immersion setting, French language diagnostic tests currently being used with Canadian French immersion students should be explored for possible use within this immersion program. With these data a more complete profile of the child's strengths and weaknesses in both languages would likely be obtained.

Alberta Education (1997) highlights the importance that "tests be interpreted by someone with a good theoretical understanding of the immersion approach, someone who is able to judge whether and to what degree the difficulties encountered are caused by transfer and interference between languages or by the natural delays to be expected during the first few years of instruction in a second language" (p.108). This school's CST is made up largely of monolingual English speakers, with little to no prior education in French or the language immersion context. Given the importance of noting an information processing condition as part of meeting SLD criteria, it is interesting that this issue did not surface as a special challenge when determining eligibility for immersion learners. Because processing information is inextricably linked to processing language, determining an information processing condition for a learner who is processing information in a second language would seem highly complex. In retrospect, this general oversight may reflect a lack of awareness of the complexity of processing a second language and its impact on learning and assessment results. Second language programs, such as immersion schools, need to be sensitive to this information by providing training and support for a monolingual staff. Close dialogue with bilingual people who are knowledgeable about second language acquisition and immersion education is necessary for special services teams in order that they might be more accurate with assessment procedures and interpretation of assessment outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

GUIDE FOR  
CONTRIBUTORS

We welcome submissions to be considered for publication and give preference to those that relate to our current features, including best practices, parent communication, new teacher tips, technology and second language education, immersion research, guest editorials, and "The Bridge," an insert with a focus on bridging research and practice.

Manuscripts should be between 750 and 1,500 words. All references and notes should follow the specifications described in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 5th edition, and must be placed at the end of the article. Please include the title of the article, your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, institution, a short biography as well as pictures.

Manuscripts can be submitted, preferably by email, to:

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mille379@umn.edu  
Editor, ACIE Newsletter

Postal address:  
Kimerly Miller  
ACIE Newsletter  
695 Lincoln Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105

**Submission Deadlines**

August 15      November issue  
November 15   February issue  
February 15    May issue

**ACIE NEWSLETTER/MAY 2004**

*Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition*

*University of Minnesota  
619 Heller Hall  
271 19th Avenue S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455 USA*

The American Council on Immersion Education (ACIE) is an organizational network for individuals interested in immersion education – teachers, administrators, teacher educators, researchers, and parents.

Conceived by immersion teachers in Minnesota and funded in part by the National Language Resource Center (NLRC) in the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition

(CARLA) at the University of Minnesota, ACIE aims to facilitate communication among immersion teachers and others interested in immersion education.

Please help expand the network by sending in your membership (**new** or **renewal**) today!

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School or affiliation name and address \_\_\_\_\_

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Home address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Indicate preferred mailing address  home  school

Work phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Work fax (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Home fax (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Years in the teaching profession \_\_\_\_\_ Years in immersion teaching \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your check—payable to the University of Minnesota—and this form to: ACIE, Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota, 619 Heller Hall, 271 19th Avenue S., Minneapolis, MN 55455



## ***Underachieving Students,*** *continued from previous page*

Finding clarity within the complexity of these issues requires communication with the parents and a wide variety of educational specialists, observations of the child in diverse settings, viewing work samples in both languages, and proceeding with caution. Comprehensive input and assessment data enrich the discussions when discerning if a child's problems are environmental, developmental or related to neuropsychological functioning. Initially, such information helps to determine if an assessment was appropriate; in the end, it helps to determine eligibility for SLD special education services.

It is hoped that all immersion schools have parent-sensitive Child Study Teams and interim support services available in both languages of instruction, but the reality may not be so. Professional support services such as these are key to

accurately diagnosing second language learners, or rather foreign language learners in the immersion context, with learning disabilities. It can only be hoped that school districts will make the CST process a priority with each building staff and provide the necessary training and time for teachers to become effective problem solvers in their efforts to advocate for and instruct all dual language learners appropriately. ○

## ***Reading Support,*** *continued from p. 8*

dents to practice their skills at home and helps parents learn an easy way to support their young readers.

A "tried but true" recipe that we find successful to implant vocabulary is the use of flashcards, matching word with picture. Games such as Concentration and Bingo are effective and fun for first graders. For students needing additional remediation, the reading specialist initially focuses on high frequency words such as the days of the week, months of the year, colors, shapes, etc. Patterned writing is also effective for solidifying frequent patterns in Spanish such as *me gusta* for which students often use the horrifying *yo me gusta*.

For a percentage of all students, early literacy learning can be challenging in the first language. For immersion students, this challenge is even more complex and demanding. With the use of the practices outlined above, the majority of our Spanish immersion students acquire the skills to transition into reading authentic literature. ○

### RESOURCES FOR READING SUPPORT:

*Rigby*  
1000 Hart Road  
Barrington, IL 60010-2627  
Phone: 1-800-427-4429  
[order@rigby.com](mailto:order@rigby.com)

*Wright Group*  
19201 120<sup>th</sup> Ave NE  
Suite 100  
Bothell, WA 98011  
Phone: 1-800-523-2371  
[WG\\_Support@McGrawHill.com](mailto:WG_Support@McGrawHill.com)

*Enriquez, G., Inskeep, J. H., Ibarra-Johnson, S., and Ulibarrí, J. (2002). Formando palabras en español: Making words in Spanish using the Four-Blocks Strategy. Greensboro, NC: Carson Dellosa Publishing.*



*First-grade teacher Jodie Hall works with an emerging reader at Nitrauer Elementary.*





# Strategies for Helping Underperforming Immersion Learners Succeed

*Katy Arnett, Baltimore County Public Schools*

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## Introduction

One of the more complex and persistent challenges confronting educators in language immersion programs is the issue of the under-performing learner. In immersion programs students receive a minimum of 50% of their subject matter instruction in a second language. Through this experience they are expected to acquire the subject matter knowledge and concurrently build proficiency in the second language. Research evidence lends clear support that for many students language immersion programs are a successful means to both of these end goals (Genesee, 1987; Turnbull, Lapkin, & Hart, 2001).

While research strongly indicates that immersion programs can achieve their stated goals of academic achievement and high levels of proficiency and literacy in English and the immersion language, there is also evidence that many students enrolled in these programs struggle and eventually leave the program. After a review of the literature on studies investigating the topic of transfer, Stern (1991) approximates transfer rates from French immersion to non-immersion programs for Canadian K-6 students at between 40-50%.

Several studies have examined the reasons behind student transfer. Survey data collected in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Canada's French immersion programs found that poor academic achievement and frustration were frequently cited by parents and teachers as the main reasons for an immersion student leaving the program and attending a non-immersion program instead (Bruck, 1979; Kamin, 1980; Morrison, Pawley, & Bonyun, 1979). In an effort to examine the critical factors that might predict transfer before it occurred, Bruck (1985) analyzed data gathered from immersion teachers, immersion students who were struggling academically, and their parents before reaching a decision about transfer. She found that *non-academic* variables, specifically—learner-identified discomfort speaking French in front of the class and teacher-identified classroom behavior issues, proved to be more predictive of opting out of immersion than *academic* variables related to a child's reading skill or ability to provide a high level of detail in the oral production task.

Hayden (1988) sought to shed further light on the reasons for students leaving immersion and designed a study to investigate perspectives from parents, teachers, and the students themselves. Her participant pool consisted of 28 elementary-level students, 18 boys and 10 girls, and their parents and teachers. Consistent across all participant groups was the identification of difficulties with lan-

guage arts, in the primary grades reading and decoding in French and in the upper elementary grades reading and writing in French and English. Teachers described the language arts challenge as trouble with grammar, vocabulary assignments and writing tasks. In grades 1 and 2 teacher-identified struggles focused largely on decoding text. In the words of one of the first graders, “I got reading wrong” (p. 232).

More recently, Keep (1993) carried out a dissertation study on the issue of attrition in the French immersion programs of Canada. She collected data on 37 immersion students who successfully completed ten years in immersion programs and compared them with 34 students who transferred out of immersion by grade 6, and 54 Grade 1-6 students still participating in the program. Within the transfer student group, she found that twice as many were male as female. All were functioning between one to two or more years below grade level, the vast majority (94%) were referred and assessed because of academic difficulties, and 85% demonstrated cognitive processing weaknesses particularly in the areas of memory, language, and visual perception. Students who transferred out of the program differed significantly from successful immersion students who displayed significantly higher IQ scores in both verbal and nonverbal domains, and overall performed at or above grade-level in school. If referred for assessment, the successful students were referred for concerns related to a need for enrichment, or social-motivational, emotional-behavioral and visual perceptual issues.

In summary, research findings are inconsistent with regards to whether students eventually leave the immersion program for primarily academic or non-academic concerns. However, the majority of studies suggest that under-achievement and academic difficulty with reading and language arts in particular are necessary, if insufficient, factors in student transfer. Thus, the question becomes how can immersion programs improve support for students who are struggling academically and create a classroom environment that meets the needs of a wide range of learners?



In August 2003, during one of the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition’s week-long immersion institutes, a group of 36 educators gathered to examine research on language and learning disorders in dual language educational settings and discuss implications for teaching and learning. Most of the participants were experienced immersion teachers. All were interested in learning about instructional adaptations known to be effective with learners who may be language or learning disabled and are learning content through a language they are still acquiring. The goal was to consider ways to create as inclusive an immersion learning environment as possible.

One of the invited presenters, Katy Arnett, focused on strategies that teachers could feasibly incorporate into their planning and pedagogies to make the learning experience more accessible to those students who were not performing to the best of their abilities. Here she shares some of the techniques that she focused on at the institute in an effort to help us further our understanding of effective teaching for under-performing learners. This BRIDGE Insert will now therefore shift from the theoretical to the practical, as Katy describes practices that can make the language immersion experience more reward-

ing for every student.

## ***Inclusive Instruction in the Language Immersion Classroom***

In any classroom, teachers face a student population that represents a spectrum of interests, motivations, ability, potential, and success. The immersion setting is no different, but because of the pivotal role of the L2 in the learning process, teachers must ensure that the techniques that comprise their pedagogies must simultaneously facilitate the perception, comprehension, and expression of the L2 and of the content under study.

The strategies presented on the next pages are those that I have found in my own teaching to be useful when addressing diverse learner needs in a language learning setting where the foreign language is used as a medium for instruction. To facilitate a better understanding of when these strategies would be of most use, I've organized this discussion according to the three stages of learning—perception (input), processing (deciphering/organizing), and expression (output). Each of the four language skills or modalities—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—is activated in two different learning stages. For example, listening skills are necessary to facilitate perception (stage 1) as well as the processing of information (stage 2). Thus, the strategies you choose to help a particular learner or group of learners better negotiate one of the skill areas must address both stages of the learning process that are engaged during the skill's use in order to fully surmount any challenges.

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## 1. Strategies to Facilitate Perception (Listening, Reading)

### *Provide additional time*

This is probably the easiest of all of the strategies. If a student has a lower proficiency in the target language, it will take him/her longer to figure out what is happening. Wait nine seconds before restating/rephrasing a question. If you immediately call on the first student who puts his/her hand up, you are not assessing how well the student understands, but instead, how fast it takes a student to perceive, process, and express an answer. When working with texts, give students with lower proficiency a few more minutes to completely get through the material. If you ask a student who did not have enough time to finish reading a question about the end of the passage, what exactly does that prove?

### *Regularly use visual or graphic representations of concepts*

This strategy works particularly well for vocabulary acquisition. Books geared to young learners are typically full of pictures. The pictures not only help capture the children's attention, but they help to focus their decoding attention. Learners can begin to figure out the messages being conveyed in text by looking at what is happening in the picture. In addition, using the images helps learners later to organize their knowledge because they have established a connection between a word/concept and its visual representation. However, any time you use such representations, you must make explicit the association you are conveying between the concept and representation (e.g., if you use a picture showing Rodin's *The Thinker* to represent the verb "to think," not necessarily the noun "the thinker," you must articulate this to the students.)

### *Present the same information using different modalities*

Not every student learns best by listening or reading; some may need to touch or move something in order to fully grasp the significance of the concept. When you are presenting information to students, never rely on only one modality or skill to convey your message. If you do so, you are automatically putting those students who do not learn best in that

modality at a disadvantage.

## 2. Strategies to Facilitate Processing (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing)

☑ **Teach and regularly use mnemonic devices (e.g., *My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas* is used to help remember the order of the planets in the solar system.)**

Mnemonic devices organize information for learners; they can immediately begin focusing on how they are going to use this information to express their understanding of the concept. Mnemonic devices can be created using any group of related words or concepts—and it makes a great party game if you are having trouble doing it alone!

☑ **Chunk the task/concept into smaller steps/ideas (e.g., listing all of the steps a student should follow when doing long division)**

By breaking down tasks or concepts into smaller steps, students do not become too overwhelmed by all of the material; it is much easier to order a body of knowledge that is limited in scope. However, while chunking does help focus student attention on the here and now, it also builds anticipation for the resolution, because students become invested in how each stage will be contributing to the end product.

☑ **Use graphic organizers regularly throughout a unit**

Graphic organizers allow students to immediately see the relationship between groups of ideas, the significance of certain concepts, and, as the name implies, orders the information the students need. For example, since I introduced the *Phraseburger* (a 4-foot-plus foam hamburger I made in which all of the parts of speech are represented by a component of the burger) and showed my students how a whole olive (a preposition) cannot balance the bottom of the hamburger (the end of the sentence), my students no longer write sentences that end with prepositions.

Telling them this until I was blue in the face probably would not have had the same result.

### **3. Strategies to Facilitate Expression (Speaking, Writing)**

#### **☑ Ask students more questions that assess their knowledge at a global level**

Granted, knowledge of discrete points of information is necessary in life (i.e., in what year did Columbus discover the New World?), but discrete-point questions can really discourage student participation in class. If there is more than one right answer (or no one right answer), students are more willing to take a risk and participate in class, particularly if you are asking them to respond orally.

#### **☑ Accept multiple forms of expressing information (through art, music, movement, speaking, writing)**

If a student has a tendency to flip words and letters when writing, a written response could give you the impression that the student has absolutely no grasp of the concept. Why not ask the student to tape-record his/her response instead if you don't have access to a computer with spell-check? Also, if you vary how a student needs to use a productive skill (e.g., writing answers on a small white board as opposed to paper), you can really diminish student anxiety and increase motivation and production.

#### **☑ Provide students with starter expressions**

Sometimes, half of the battle of formulating an acceptable response is knowing how to begin the answer. If you are concerned about learners becoming too dependent on the expressions, you may want to provide

them with an outline of which question structures require which answer structures (e.g., in French, *Est-ce que* questions require a yes/no response.)

## Conclusion

By no means do I consider any of the strategies presented here to be rocket science. In fact, many of them are often identified as indicators of



good teaching. If you are unsure of how or where to integrate these strategies into your teaching, identify the technique that is most compatible with your existing pedagogy. Make an effort to use this strategy at least once a day in your lessons. Once you feel that you are doing this strategy automatically and feel satisfied with the results it is producing, try another technique. It does not have to be one of the strategies suggested here; it could be a technique that you have generated yourself based on your students' needs. In addition, do not be afraid to ask the students for feedback. Even very young learners can articulate how they

feel about something you are doing in your classroom, and older ones might be able to tell you what would work better for them instead of what of you are doing.

Over the years, I have come to view teaching classrooms full of diverse

## NOTES

## Some Useful Websites for Working LD Students: Instructional Teaching Tips for Students with Learning Disabilities

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### The Learning Tool Box [www.ldonline.org/teaching/tool\\_box.html](http://www.ldonline.org/teaching/tool_box.html)

#### *What is the Learning Tool Box?*

The Learning Toolbox is an instructional resource website for secondary students with LD and ADHD, teachers, and parents. The major objective of the project is to field test the website which is designed to help secondary students with LD and ADHD become more effective learners using research-based strategies. It is designed for independent use by students; use by special education teachers following a systematic, direct teaching approach, and use by parents who want to help their children learn.

The Learning Toolbox is not an informational website; rather, it is an instructional website. The criteria of navigability, accessibility, and usability are being used as the basis for the field testing. The Learning Toolbox is unique in two respects: 1) it uses research-based special educational instructional approaches as the basis for the content of the website, and 2) its development took into consideration the unique characteristics of students with LD and ADHD.

The Learning Toolbox uses a combined strategy instruction and direct instruction approach, which has been found to be the most effective model for improved treatment outcomes for students with LD. We are examining the issue of whether research-supported methodology that has proven effective in traditional face-to-face instructional settings can be effective using the electronic medium of the internet. In addition, we are exploring the challenges presented by students with cognitive disabilities so that they can benefit from electronic instruction.

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### The Instant Access Treasure Chest The Foreign Language Teacher's Guide to Learning Disabilities [www.fln.vcu.edu/ld/conf.html](http://www.fln.vcu.edu/ld/conf.html)

The handouts listed below were provided to attendees of sessions by Sonja Moore (Virginia Commonwealth University) and Frank Moore (Longwood College) at the Foreign Language Association of Virginia (FLAVA) Conference at the Hyatt Richmond, VA, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Conference at the Anaheim Hilton, CA, and the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) Conference in Mobile, AL.

- What are the disabilities that affect learning?
- What is dyslexia?
- What is dysgraphia?
- What is dyscalculia?
- What are language deficits?
- What are visual deficits?
- What are auditory deficits?
- Characteristics of students with phonological processing deficits
- What is ADHD?
- What is ADD?
- Students with disabilities and the law
- General classroom strategies for all students
- Strategies for visual learners
- Strategies for auditory learners
- How to deal with listening activities?
- Reading strategies
- Writing strategies