

**Book by Maurice Carder, with Patricia Mertin and Sarah Porter
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Foreword

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International schools provide a unique and important context for schooling diverse students whose parents serve in occupations that require multiple locations around the world. As global citizenship and multilingualism become more common, these schools are multiplying rapidly throughout the world, predicted to be at least 10,000 international schools serving over 5 million students within the next two years (see the Introduction). This book is a timely and much needed resource for the administrators and teachers who serve these schools. As experienced teachers in international school settings, the authors of this book provide challenging perspectives as they examine in depth the research and writings that inform international school educators' decisions.

The unique process that students experience in international schools provides a powerful context for transforming schooling that might be applied to other multilingual settings in education, but these schools have not yet reached their transformational potential. Most of these international schools follow western curricula and western ways of learning and the curriculum is taught mostly in English. As stated by Dr. Carder in Chapter 3, the student population of these schools typically consists of “about 25% native speakers of English, 25% speakers of the host country language, and the remaining 50% comprising various percentages of other languages.” Since the language of the curriculum in these schools is usually English, this means that around 75% of the students attending these schools receive their curricular subjects through their second

language, not the language(s) spoken to them by their family as young children. This raises the interesting possibility, as proposed by the authors of this book, of transforming the way that second language schooling is carried out in international schools, thus becoming a model for global schooling designed to meet the needs of the 21st century. These schools have enormous potential when the multilingual communities who participate in this school context are viewed as an immense resource.

Now what does this mean? What does the research tell us? The authors of this book go in depth into the research informing the field of education regarding the schooling of second language learners. Most important is first to understand the crucial importance of the mother tongue in the student's cognitive development. From hundreds of research studies regarding the relationship between students' mother tongue and cognition, we know that children must develop cognitively in their mother tongue until at least age 12 in order for them to be successful in curricular mastery in their second language. For example, our longitudinal research findings from analyzing over 7.5 million student records from 36 school districts in 16 U.S. states (summarized in Collier & Thomas, 2017; Thomas & Collier, 2017) show that English learners who do not continue to study school subjects in their mother tongue are typically two to four grades behind students who attend dual language classes. In the U.S., dual language schooling typically integrates both language groups together, acquiring the curriculum through their two languages, and leads to above grade level achievement for all groups, in both English and the partner language (the home language of the English learners).

In a multilingual context such as that of international schools, parents are important partners with the school in continuing mother tongue development. In Chapter 4, Dr. Carder states that often international school parents “focus principally on their children becoming fluent

in English, while not considering what might happen to their children’s own language and identity.” International school parents must assume the responsibility for continuing nonstop cognitive development of their children’s mother tongue(s), including literacy skills, but in addition this book illustrates that international schools also need to provide mother tongue curricular support when possible. The goal of all international schools should be to graduate bilingual/multilingual students, deeply academically proficient in their mother tongue and English, with the possibility of adding the host country language as a third language of instruction, as well as other languages.

A major new research finding with implications for international schools comes from one of our latest research studies analyzing statewide data from North Carolina on dual language schools—innovations from second language teaching strategies help **all** students do better in school, not only second language learners. We found that students who in the U.S. are considered most “at risk” benefit greatly from second language teaching strategies—specifically, students of low-income background including African Americans and Caucasian Americans, and students with special education needs, as well as English language learners. Our analyses of 3.3 million student records over a six-year period (Grades 3-8) show that after several years of instruction in both English and the partner language, “at-risk” dual language students’ gains were two to four years greater than peers of the same background not in dual language classes (Thomas & Collier, 2014, 2017). From interviews with administrators of these schools, we found they were convinced that the coursework in second language teacher preparation to learn how to teach the curriculum through students’ second language leads to strategies for teaching that benefit all students, especially in diverse contexts. These school principals insist that all their school staff must use the innovative teaching strategies of second language teachers, and they

provide ongoing staff development by those trained in these strategies to support all staff.

Second language teaching strategies include many scaffolding supports, collaborative learning, real-world problem-solving across the curriculum, varied student work groupings, sensitivity to cross-cultural issues, emotional support for all, intentional and explicit non-verbal and verbal clues to meaning for both content and language, and many other innovative strategies.

This means that in international schools, ESL teachers certified to teach academic content (not just language) are the best prepared to bring about academic success with very diverse classes, and these staff should provide ongoing staff development for the whole school. Dual certification should be required of all teachers, to get thorough training in second language teaching techniques plus the standard coursework for the age group and curricular subject(s) to be taught. In dual language schools in the U.S., typically two teachers team together, one teaching the curriculum through English and the other teaching the curriculum through the English learners' home language, working with two classes and trading the classes back and forth. The authors of this book illustrate many ways that mother tongue and ESL teaching methodologies can be effectively used in international school settings. ESL teaching has been formerly viewed as an additional support for students, provided separately from the mainstream. Now it is clear from the research that second language teaching strategies benefit all students.

References

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