

**Book: E. Murphy & C.A. Gellar (Eds.). (2003). *International Schools Journal Compendium on Bilingual and ESL Education*.
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Foreword

by Virginia P. Collier, Ph.D.

When facing the needs of students of the 21st century, school administrators and teachers everywhere are asking new questions and, through collaborative problem-solving, inventing increasingly creative responses to the questions posed. Certainly one of the dominant concerns centers around how to best serve the needs of diverse student populations. International schools provide a natural demographic context to address this concern. The voices of teachers, administrators, special resource teachers, and teacher educators working in international schools speak out in this book with clarity and vision. This thought-provoking and insightful book is an invaluable reference for every educator working in international schools. It also can serve as a guide to educators throughout the world who work with multilingual school populations, an increasingly common demographic context for schools everywhere.

Many of the authors of the articles published in this book confirm the enormous value of schooling through two languages. They point out that the international schools provide a natural context for the academic development of more than one language. Yet not all international schools have embraced the concept of dual language curricula. Historically, these schools were developed to serve the children of English-speaking families living abroad, and the all-English curriculum reflected the original preferences of parents. Over the years, however, international schools have increasingly served the needs of multilingual families working abroad, as well as host country families who have chosen schooling in English for their children.

But as the demographics of the student population of international schools have changed, new needs have emerged, as eloquently presented in many articles in this book. Extensive research on the relationship between mother tongue and cognitive development indicates that children must receive continuing cognitive development (including literacy) in their language of birth through at least young adulthood. Losing their primary language as they acquire their second language can have negative cognitive effects, with students doing less well in school as the cognitive complexity of the curriculum increases. Conversely, children who have reached full cognitive development in two languages enjoy cognitive advantages over monolinguals.

The solution is obvious and very do-able. There are many schools that have created dual language curricula with great success, one example concisely presented by Horsley in Section Four of this book. For international schools that enroll many host country children, the languages of instruction should be English and the host country language, following a two-way dual language program model. In dual language classes, students' mother tongue and the second language are acquired through curricular content classes, not taught as a foreign language. Classes are integrated using cooperative learning, with students serving as peer teachers when the language of instruction is their mother tongue. When the demographics of a school population includes a multilingual student group with small numbers of each language represented, then mother tongue literacy development for each language group, combined with ESL taught through academic content, may be the best choice for support of non-English-speakers' needs.

During 18 years of research with my co-researcher Wayne Thomas, we have now analyzed over 2 million student records for students in the United States learning English as a new language, from 23 school districts in 15 states. Our findings are consistent across all regions of the U.S., with many different language groups, and in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

When quality, enriched (not remedial) dual language schooling is provided for non-English-speaking students, they excel in their schooling. After 5-8 years of schooling through English and the students' mother tongue, we have found that bilingually schooled students consistently outperform monolingually schooled students in English, even though English is the bilingual students' second language (Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002).

International schools have the bilingual teacher resources, the multilingual student population, and the access to multilingual curricular materials to create innovative schools. When experienced ESL and bilingual teachers partner with English-speaking content teachers, to create an enriched bilingual/bicultural curriculum, the whole school community benefits. International schools can showcase the power of schooling through two languages, becoming the model for schools of the 21st century.

References

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