The primary objective of the NYC RBE-RN at Fordham University Graduate School of Education and the Center for Educational Partnerships is to assist schools, networks, and school districts across all five boroughs in creating professional learning communities centered on the education of English Language Learners (ELLs). To that purpose, the NYC RBE-RN team has been supporting and collaborating with many schools towards this common endeavor. We are proud to share some of our work in this current issue.

This 2014 Spring issue includes articles written by members of the NYC RBE-RN team who reflect on the impact of their work in schools, as well as the voices of educators and administrators who support and promote best practices in teaching and learning for ELLs in the classroom. We invite you to read the article written by Ms. Wiggins, Assistant Principal at PS 132 in the Bronx, about teachers’ progress towards creating and sustaining data-driven inquiry teams, and the article by Ms. Castro, Assistant Principal at Parkside Prep Academy @ MS 002 in Brooklyn, describing three specific practices geared at nurturing students’ confidence in writing and developing writing fluency in English.

The impact of the Fordham RBE-RN team is also illustrated by teacher leaders who have taken the initiative to write about their journey towards improving outcomes for ELL students: Ms. Annese of PS 42 Bronx, Ms. Dellate, Ms. Rodriguez-Lugo and Ms. Alvarado of PS 6 Bronx, and Ms. Osorio of MS 22 Bronx have written articles on specific vocabulary building techniques and literacy strategies that enable ELLs to further their literacy skills and English language development.

The New York State Education Department recently posted the Bilingual Common Core Initiative (BCCI) on the Engage New York website, and in this issue, we offer an overview based on the session delivered by Dr. Velasco, at the 2014 NYSABE Conference last March in Astoria, Queens.

For additional resources and upcoming events, please go to the Fordham NYC RBE-RN website, or contact the office. Enjoy this issue!
MESSAGE FROM DR. ANITA VAZQUEZ-BATISTI
ASSOCIATE DEAN & DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Dear Colleagues:

As the school year comes to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the NYC-RBE-RN staff headed by Eva Garcia, Director Fordham University, for the outstanding work they have done. As I read the articles written by teachers and administrators in our schools, I see the impact of the work the Fordham RBE-RN team has done. Always in the forefront, they have worked with you one on one in your schools; have conducted clinics, workshops, and institutes; and have presented renowned researchers in the field.

I also would like to highlight that the NYS Bilingual Common Core Initiative (BCCI) has been posted on the Engage NY website. The BCCI is a guide for Bilingual, ESL, and teachers of Languages Other Than English and outlines how teachers can provide instruction that makes the Common Core Learning Standards accessible to students at various language proficiency and literacy levels. The NYS Bilingual Common Core Initiative (BCCI) includes two sets of resources: The New Language Arts Progressions (formally known as English as a Second Language Standards), and the Home Language Arts Progressions (formally known as Native Language Arts Standards). I encourage you to explore and learn about this important initiative.

In preparing for the new school year, the NYC RBE-RN@Fordham will sponsor a Summer Institute throughout June and July which is listed at the end of this newsletter under Upcoming Events. So much work remains to be done. We will continue working with you during the 2014-15 school year by providing much needed quality professional development and focused technical assistance.

Enjoy the summer months,

Dr. Anita Vazquez Batisti
Associate Dean
Fordham University
Graduate School of Education
Reflective Practice for Teachers of English Language Learners
by Aileen Colon, Fordham University, with Jasmin Osorio, Teacher, MS 22, Bronx

Reflective practice is the process of the educator studying his or her own teaching methods and determining what works best for the students. According to Paterson and Chapman (2013), reflection and learning from experience is the key to staying accountable, and maintaining and developing aptitude throughout your practice.

As a teacher engages in this reflective process, he/she looks objectively at their actions, taking into account the emotions, experience, or responses from their actions, to improve practice. Through reflective practice, they are committing themselves to students and to student learning; reflecting on how they have supported students being sensitive to their individual needs. They are questioning themselves, “Have I, to the best of my ability, supported student learning, and provided all of my students with an entry point into learning?” More over, are the students retaining the information and able to transfer the forms of learning to other learning situations?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have led to a shift in instructional practice, and more importantly, they are demanding a shift in the mindset of educators as to how students learn best. As we know, teachers of ELLs face the double challenge of ensuring that their students, who are acquiring a new language, have access to and engage with these new concepts, as well. It is an overwhelming challenge for all of us. Teachers need to be guided, supported and encouraged, as they master these new skills.

At M.S. 22, teachers are reflecting on the professional knowledge gained during the ELL team’s monthly all day retreat sessions. Some have also created an action plan, as suggested by their Principal, Edgar Lin, to show how they’re embedding those new strategies into their professional practice. In addition, in their inquiry groups, these teachers are taking a critical look at whether or not they are having an impact on student learning by analyzing student work.

As an instructional coach, I support the capacity building within the team to enact the changes (shifts) that can best improve their craft and meet their professional development goals. To that purpose, we identify “small learnings” -which are the focus of PD, and build new learnings weekly. By observing and helping individual teachers gather enough student performance data, so they can analyze and reflect on the effectiveness of
these new teaching strategies on a targeted group of students, we are able to move students from one language level to the next, while improving their literacy skills.

Using protocols to engage teachers around the analysis of student work, helps to build motivation and gain the confidence needed to keep learning. As reflective practitioners, individual teachers have gained much from focusing on the student outcomes to adjust their instructional practice.

**What is the value of this approach?** Facing the challenges within the context of coaching towards meeting the demands of the CCSS in this climate of change can be daunting. We have high expectations for moving our schools forward, and coaches have a responsibility to invite inquiry into the classroom and to actively engage in reflection with the teachers. By slowing down, narrowing our focus, asking questions and offering observational feedback, coaches can lead teachers towards self-discovery. This coaching model and its use of the reflective process, enhances teacher practices towards increased student outcomes.


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**JASMIN OSORIO’S REFLECTION**

During our PD session today, I was able to co-plan with Ms. Duggins and create graphic organizers and data plans to support our 7th grade ELLs in Social Studies and ELA. I identified each ELL for my co-teacher (Ms. Duggins) in order to create a specific plan to support each student to show progress. I did this by using the data from the NYSESLAT and matching it to the student’s growth according to the results on their ELA. I also worked with Ms. Colon to find ways to address the issues that have been standing in the way of student learning in Social Studies. I have already started to increase my use of visuals in the classroom by including small video clips in my lessons.

Some effective teaching strategies with my partner include: 1.) Use role plays to make abstract concepts concrete. For example, I can reinforce oral language through readers’ theatre in the classroom or I can have students do small skits to reinforce what they just learned throughout the mini lesson. 2.) Use jigsaws to provide reading and study support in the form of collaborative learning. This means I can break up a tough text into sections, making each student/group responsible for learning because they will then have to teach it to another student or another group, after they have read it and highlighted the essential information. (3) Insert dictations into lessons in order to promote the listening piece into my everyday lessons. (4) Create “Do nows” that require students to make use of their notes to promote the value of good class note-taking. (5) Plan cloze passage exit tickets to monitor comprehension.

In general, what I got from this meeting was how to make content more accessible for my students. In the past, I focused more on grammar and language objectives, but now I see a need for making content more accessible. These meetings are definitely helping me grow as an ESL teacher AND as a content teacher.

For additional information, please contact Aileen Colon, acolon21@fordham.edu
Dr. Patricia Velasco is a professor at Queen’s College of the City University of New York, and has collaborated with the New York State Education Department in the development of the Bilingual Common Core Initiative. English Language Learners are expected to achieve the goals of the Common Core and this poses a dual challenge: learning a new language and learning the content knowledge. Therefore, the purpose of the Bilingual Common Core Initiative is to support English Language Learners as they negotiate the interrelationships between their home language, the new language and the acquisition of content knowledge. At the NYSABE conference, Dr. Velasco discussed multiple strategies and approaches for instruction as she explained the New Language and Home Language Arts progressions, and their alignment to the CCLS. She also noted that the Bilingual Common Core is a central initiative that will strengthen bilingual education at the state level. To that end, the NYS BCCI embraces a dynamic view of bilingualism. This view argues that using the home language as a springboard to understand and produce the new language, will support and further accelerate the acquisition of the new language. Furthermore, the NYS BCCI provides teachers with the tools they need to enact the vision of bilingualism defined in the Common Core aligned classrooms.

**BCCI Progressions: Key Concepts**

⇒ Define five levels of language development in the new and home languages and supports for language and content are clearly defined throughout these five stages.

⇒ Provide multiple points of entry and scaffold complex standards in each of the four communicative skills.

⇒ Exemplify language markers that integrate content and language within a standard, and

⇒ Play up the value of background knowledge, a key element in developing both content and language.

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Source: engageny NYS Bilingual Common Core
Developing Writing Fluency  The first of these programs focuses on improving the writing fluency of English Language Learners. Our school has a population of 476 students of which 35 (7.5%) are ELLs. These students come from varied backgrounds including Spanish, Haitian-Creole, French and Arabic and run the gamut from beginners to intermediate to advanced learners. One common denominator amongst these students is their reluctance to write without a prompt. Students struggle when they are given the opportunity to “free write”. The cry is, “I don’t know what to write.”

Working with a group of ELLs and their ESL teacher Ms. Annie Benn, Dr. Salavert, the coach from the NYC RBE-RN at Fordham University, suggests that they write exactly that, she says to them: “Write that!, Write, “I don’t know what to write!” She sits with students and proceeds to write. They follow her. She looks around the classroom and starts to copy from the charts and encourage students to do likewise. She asks students about their breakfast or lunch and whether they enjoyed it or not and encourages students to write about that experience. At the same time, Ms. Benn moves about the room stopping next to the students, encouraging and motivating them to be creative and to continue writing. Before long, students are writing about topics important to them, writing becomes easier as they complete page after page in their writer’s notebook.

This combination of modeling and free writing allows students to access personal experiences and to write at length about topics that interest them. Students are encouraged to write everyday and observations show that they write more confidently and their writing pieces get longer and better everyday.
**Writing for Pleasure, Stamina and Rigor, cont.**

**Free Write Friday**  Ms. Moustapha a first year English Language Arts teacher, encourages her students to write following the fluency writing approach. Every Friday, she provides a block of time for all students, including English Language Learners, to engage in free writing using their writers’ notebooks. Ms. Moustapha does not mandate sharing, but will read students’ writings if they ask her to. Most students do share their writings. Free Write Friday encourages students to write freely and at length as they improve their writing craft and build stamina required for the State Common Core test.

**The Writing Center**  The mission of the Writing Center created by Allyssa Ingrilli, an English Language Arts teacher is to offer one-on-one consultations with student writers of all levels, at all stages of the writing process and from all content areas. The center is staffed with responsible, enthusiastic and hardworking student/consultants who actually interview for the positions. Students who need assistance schedule a time for conference and at that time explain to their consultant the nature of the assistance they need. Consultants complete a reflection sheet after each session and tutees do the same.

The Writing Center is instrumental in developing academic success and building community. Student mentors gain confidence in their abilities as they assist their peers in gaining confidence with their writing. **Students drive the learning!**

These writing initiatives enable students to overcome the “writer’s block” and to practice a variety of writing strategies while nurturing their love for writing. Furthermore, these writing processes prepare students for a world in which writing is still one of the major forms of communication. At Parkside Preparatory Academy, Principal Adrienne Spencer is committed to supporting and expanding these initiatives to encompass the entire school population so that all students become successful authors.

For additional information, please contact  
**Roser Salavert, EdD.**, rsalavert@fordham.edu
When inquiry based learning approaches are correctly implemented, they improve teacher practice and help develop students’ higher order and critical thinking skills. In addition, students develop problem solving abilities and skills that they can employ throughout their lifetime as learners.

After careful examination of the data (NYSESLAT, NYS ELA and Math scores), the PS 6 Primary Inquiry Team in collaboration with the Satellite Inquiry Teams determined that there was a profound need for vocabulary development school-wide. As a result, we developed five measurable learning targets with emphasis on synonyms, homonyms, suffixes, base words, and prefixes. These selected learning targets were geared for ALL students, with a focus on the ELL population and those at the bottom third.

It was quite amazing to witness the great impact of the inquiry process. As we taught selected strategies to the children, they were able to take ownership of their own learning, and growth became evident in their reading levels and in their writing pieces. Furthermore, as ELL students reflected on their learning, it was rewarding to listen to them explain how applying the word study skills and strategies helped them to develop language and become more confident as learners. Students agreed that learning identified targets and specific strategies such as using illustrations, paraphrasing, and sorting words into categories and parts helped them to tackle domain specific vocabulary and texts across all curricular areas.

The inquiry process is an educational approach to collecting and analyzing student achievement data to improve the outcomes for specific groups of students. It begins with exploration and questioning and leads to the investigation of a worthy question, issue, problem or idea. Once the skill gap is identified, teachers gather and analyze information, generate solutions, make decisions, justify conclusions, and take action. From this experience, teachers “make system-level change so that the school as a system continues to improve” (NYC DOE Inquiry Team Handbook, p. 9).

Vocabulary Development Strategies for ELL students
- Apply graphic organizers including the Frayer model
- Keep a Journal and categorize vocabulary (Tiers 1,2,3)
- Analyze words and word-parts in context including cognates
- Use computers and other media to build language & literacy

The Primary and Satellite Inquiry Teams learned that this collaborative approach results in professional growth and increased student outcomes. However, in order to see the fruits of this labor, teacher teams must dedicate sufficient time to the work. It also requires a cohesive primary inquiry team to facilitate and support satellite inquiry teams as they navigate their way through the inquiry process.

We at PS 6 are very fortunate to have an experienced Primary Inquiry Team who receives support and guidance from our administration as well as from an amazing ESL Resource Specialist Ms. Elsie Cardona.

For additional information, please contact
Elsie Cardona Berardinelli, ecardona3@fordham.edu
Two years ago when we began our discussions on how to improve student outcomes for English Language Learners, I never imagined that we could meet our Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) targets in the first year, during the 2013 administration of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT).

After several conversations with NYC RBE-RN staff and ELL Network support specialists (CFN 534), we began to look at the results of the NYSESLAT closely. In so doing, we realized that understanding the AMAO targets would allow us to use these data to better target instruction. At the same time, we began to look at research-based best practices for teachers of ELLs, guided by some critical questions:

- What does the NYSESLAT data show about students’ English language development in the four modalities?
- How close/far are we to meeting the AMAO targets?
- Based on the ELL data, how successful is our current instructional program?
- What structures do we have in place to support English Language Learners?
- In my role as Assistant Principal, how well do I support teachers to ensure the progress of ELLs?
- How can we create a professional community centered on ELL issues, to provide systemic change?

Reflecting upon the above, I engaged in conversations with my teachers to identify the strategies and scaffolds that could best address the needs of our students. I continuously evaluated their effectiveness to ensure students’ progress towards English language proficiency. During our monthly Professional Development sessions, we always included a discussion of ESL strategies. I also prompted teachers to refer to data when discussing the strategies they used in their daily lessons. For instance, instead of saying, “I think”, we said “Based on the data from an analysis of student work, or my classroom observations, or the students’ self-assessment, today, I plan to…”.

Our inquiry teams targeted the needs of ELL students in differentiated and flexible focused groups (K-5). These groups changed after 4-6 weeks, based on the evidence we collected about their progress towards specific performance benchmarks. For example, we identified a group of 3rd graders who needed to increase their language proficiency. To that purpose, inquiry teams identified visual representations as a strategy to improve performance in the four language modalities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Based on this process, students on a daily basis worked on paragraphs containing typical errors to address common mistakes.

Our approach is NOT “one size fits all”. Rather, it is to look at data to target individual language needs of a selected group of students with specific skills/strategies, and to continuously revise our action plan based on their progress. We have met AMAO 1, 2, and 3 targets for the first time. To sustain our success, we continue the monthly focused teacher meetings that lead to actions. We have truly made great strides with our English Language Learners!
Data analysis and planning with student outcomes in mind are key to a successful school year.

At PS 42 we know how important it is, particularly when it comes to English Language Learners. This year, we targeted Advanced English Language Learners (ELLs) with the goal of helping these students meet Proficiency on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). To that purpose and with the support of Sara Martinez, the Resource Specialist from NYC RBE-RN at Fordham University, we analyzed student data from the 2013 NYSESLAT, classroom assessments and periodic assessments. We agreed to focus on descriptive writing and built a plan over the four domains that targeted specific skills around this focus.

**Descriptive Writing & The Picture Word Inductive Model** Students focused on descriptive writing by looking at an illustration and pulling the vocabulary to create a story about what they see. The Picture Word Inductive Model used in this context proved successful because it enabled students to narrow their scope, look closely at the picture and think about what is happening, what happened before, and what could happened next in the illustration. In order to use the word inductive model, students first looked at the title of the illustration, “A Busy Street Scene” and discussed what this title means to them making connections to busy streets that they have seen or been a part of. Then students looked at the illustration in its entirety to get a sense of what they would be writing about. With this information and a view finder to focus on smaller sections, students proceeded to label objects with vocabulary that they knew. In small groups, students shared what they noticed and labeled, and added details based on their peers’ feedback. We regrouped as a class, divided the illustration into quadrants, and looked even further at the smaller details that they may not have noticed at first. I used this teaching moment to help students notice the direction of people’s faces, small objects, and the overall mood presented in the illustration. Finally, and right before students began their descriptive writing, I prompted students to think about what might have happened to cause the events depicted on the illustration, as well as what could happen next, using sentence stems. For example:

“Look in section _____ (1, 2, 3, or 4). I think ______ will happen because______.” Other students listened and responded by saying “I agree with _____ because_______. Or I disagree with _____ because ______.”
This article illustrates one of several strategies that my students learned to use to advance their English skills and literacy skills. They have also learned how to apply these strategies in other content areas and to develop their independence as learners.

For additional information, please contact Sara Martinez, smartinez37@fordham.edu

Research on PWIM: The Picture –Word Inductive Model (PWIM), credited to Emily Calhoun (1999) uses pictures containing familiar objects, actions and scenes to draw out words from children’s listening and speaking vocabularies (L1,L2). The ultimate purpose of PWIM is to support the transition between oral language and the written word, and to develop language acquisition while fostering the mastery of the conventions of language. This model helps students add words to their sight reading vocabulary, as well as their writing vocabulary, and also discover phonetic and structural principles present in those words.


Language Learning or Disability?
by Bernice Moro. Ph.D, NYC RBE-RN@Fordham

What should an educator do to determine whether or not an English Language Learner (ELL) may be suspected of having a disability?

There are no easy answers, but should you need to address such a question, please consider the following:

1. Rule out possible reasons why the student may be struggling, and to that purpose review your own understanding of the process of second language acquisition, particularly as it relates to oral language, written language, and literacy. Be aware of characteristics associated with a possible disability.

2. Assess the quality of his/her classroom instruction and the opportunities that have been provided to the student to learn in the second language environment. If necessary, provide consistent and specific interventions to address language as well as academic content.

3. In conjunction with the above, observe the student interacting in the native language (L1) and using non-biased, valid assessments in the native language determine whether or not the difficulties present in the second language (L2) are also occurring in the student’s home or native language (L1). (continues on page 12)
4. Interview family members in their native language.

5. Obtain all available records from a previous school or school system. If the focus is an older student, determine if the student has had significant gaps in schooling, keeping in mind that deficits attributed to inconsistent schooling do not establish the existence of a disability.

Finally, determine if the student has had sufficient opportunities to learn, such as being provided with a consistent second language program (bilingual or ESL) that addresses second language needs and proficient language abilities.

Every student is a unique individual and multiple circumstances can exist that may contribute to his/her struggles in the classroom. Therefore, it is important to gather as much information as possible to distinguish language acquisition from true learning disabilities. For more guidance, you may want to visit:


For additional information, please contact Bernice Moro, bmoro@fordham.edu

### UPCOMING EVENTS

The NYC RBE-RN @ Fordham University

The New York City Regional Bilingual & Education Resource Network

For information and registration, please contact Sarai Salazar at (718) 817-0606, or email us at nycrbern@fordham.edu

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