



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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The NYC RBE-RN @ Fordham University The New York City Regional Bilingual & Education Resource Network

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.

Our feature article was written by Chun Zhang, Ph.D. who is a Professor of Education at the Graduate School of Education at Fordham University. In Spring 2013 she was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Macau. She has been widely published nationally and internationally in the areas of culturally and linguistically appropriate practices in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education. She directs several major federally funded personnel training grants. Due to her expertise in the field of culturally and linguistically diverse learners, Dr. Zhang was invited to speak to the participants of the Bilingual Special Education Roundtable. The topic of her presentation was on how to support young English Language Learners with language, communication, and literacy needs.

This issue illustrates the varied but focused work on English Language Learners that the Fordham NYC RBE-RN team is providing to the schools. We invite you to read the interview with Principal Jones of IS 117 about the value and benefits of establishing professional learning communities (p.3), and the article written by Elsie Bernardelli on thematic instruction (p. 8). The impact of our work is also evident by the enthusiastic participation of teachers and administrators to the professional development sessions opened to all schools and how teachers, in turn, apply their new knowledge in the classrooms. Some of the sessions and teachers' work are featured on pages 10 and 11. They include the Bilingual Special Education Roundtable at Teachers College, the training by Dr. Latoni on ELL strategies aligned to the new Mathematics Learning Standards, the ELL Shadowing Protocol led by Dr. Ivannia Soto, and one of the sessions on the SIOP model. Most of our work professional development, however, is onsite and thus tailored to the specific needs of the school, such as the session led by Eva Garcia at PS 92 on second language acquisition.

For additional resources and upcoming events, please go to the Fordham NYC RBE-RN website, or contact the office. **Enjoy this issue!!**

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MESSAGE FROM DR. ANITA VAZQUEZ-BATISTI
ASSOCIATE DEAN & DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Dear Colleagues:

I hope this New Year is one filled with happiness and good health for all of you.

As we are at the mid-point of the 2013-14 school year, now more than ever it is important to focus on our common endeavor to create professional learning communities centered on the education of English Language Learners (ELLs).

The Fordham NYC-RBERN team has scheduled numerous events for this spring including Social Studies Institute in collaboration with the NY Historical Society; SIFE institute with Dr. Nancy Cloud; training on building background Dr. Nancy Frey, a unique program on “Every Teacher is an Artist” by Dr. William Baker from Fordham University, and the continuation of the very successful Bilingual Special Education THINK TANK. I urge all of you to take advantage of these professional development offerings.

Our new Chancellor Carmen Fariña has chosen the book “**I Will Make Miracles,**” by Susie Morgenstern as the book of the month. The message is powerful – “by dreaming big and acting now, we have the opportunity and ability to make change.”

I think this says it all.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anita Vazquez Batisti".

Dr. Anita Vazquez Batisti





Professional Learning Communities: Improving the Practice, Improving the Learning

by

Roser Salavert, Ed.D.

NYC RBE-RN@Fordham University

The Joseph H. Wade school –IS 117 in the Bronx is buzzing with action; it is a school on the move to bigger and better things. The reorganization of teachers into Professional Learning Communities is giving this experienced staff multiple opportunities to share their knowledge with a clear focus on improving student learning. Their work and the collective energy makes the school a vibrant community for all. During our conversation, Ms. Jones outlined the what, the how and the why of PLCs and the evidence that she is gathering daily to demonstrate the impact of this collective action in the classroom and on student work.

What prompted you to organize your faculty into Professional Learning Communities or PLCs? Our priority is to help the children, but I realized that to support students, teachers had to communicate otherwise they were undoing each other's work. Two years ago we began re-organizing the school into teams that come together with a focus, use a set protocol and have collegial conversations about student work, their own practices, and conversations on how to plan and the execute these plans.

How do you organize these teams? What structures do they require? To organize the school into PLCs is not easy and it is expensive. You begin by creating meeting times around teachers' prep schedules but this is not always possible and you have to be ready with appropriate cover. In my school, we aim at forming teams based on purpose and not necessarily based on grade or subject. The formation of teams based on purpose enables teachers who otherwise would never see each other to become strong partners toward the improvement of their craft. If a school has young and motivated teachers perhaps these teachers are inclined to meet on their

own but this is not the case in my school. We have an experienced staff who used to work on their own and the only way we can break the isolation cycle is by facilitating their active participation in regular PLCs. It is definitely a worthy investment.

What do you expect from these teams? I expect that these teams will work with a focus and in a collegial environment. And I like when teams use protocols to guide their conversations. One of the protocols, for example, helps teachers analyze written student work and identify strategies and scaffolds to improve their craft and thus advance student performance. I also expect that teachers will review tasks and units towards developing effective lessons and formative assessments.

Conversations in a structured setting are a new practice for many of our members and some may sit quietly, particularly in the beginning. On the other hand, they are all exposed to the ideas and the conversation of others to their benefit, and most importantly to the benefit of their students.

Continues on page 4

How does the work of these teams align to this year's school wide goals? We have four overarching goals and one of them is about professional growth and teacher effectiveness. The organization of our teachers into PLCs offers a unique opportunity to deliver professional development aligned to teachers' interest, and thus realize this goal. In addition, the particular focus of each team effectively contributes towards achieving our



school wide achievement goals.

How do you collect evidence about the impact of the work of these teams in the classroom?

I have evidence of the impact of the work in the classroom and outside the classroom. I see teachers re-writing tasks, re-



writing rubrics, trying to make these rubrics student friendly. I also see teachers who before writing a rubric meet with students and seek their input. I have seen some teachers who are in the PLC meetings working together on their own outside PLC time. I have seen an increase in their willingness to participate and submit their work for discussion at PLC meetings. Teachers now volunteer to present and seek advice from the group. I have also seen teachers who are taking the extra step to adapt student and classroom rubrics to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

What are some of the challenges? Time is the biggest challenge. Changing teachers' beliefs on how students work and beliefs about student expectations takes time. It also takes time to establish consistency and transpar-

ency. For example, I'm leading class inter-visitations to acknowledge and celebrate teacher practices. We have started with grade 6, and by the end of the year, I expect that all the teachers will have been part of at least two class inter-visitations.



If a colleague was to ask you for advice, how would you suggest that he/she approach this major task?

I would say to this colleague that it would be a disservice not to do it. I'd advice him or her to find a way to get teachers to talk and work together. Even if the school only has one team, it is worth doing it. At IS 117, we are in the process of videotaping classrooms (of teachers who have volunteered) with the purpose of having constructive conversations around teacher practices and student learning. I think this could be an alternative if I could only have one team; observing your own colleagues will bring great benefits. And as I indicated earlier, the benefits are worth the effort.

Thank you very much, Ms. Jones.



Supporting Young English Language Learners with Language and Communication Needs: LOST LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

By
Chun Zhang, Ph.D.
Fordham University

Foundational Skills that Need to Be Developed in Young English Language Learners

When children are supported in the area of language and literacy, they are more likely to do well when they start school. **The strongest and most consistent predictors** of later literacy development are alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness and memory, rapid automatized naming of letters and objects, and writing letters. There are other early foundational skills that also can make a difference in getting children ready for the next step...for learning how to read (the National Early Literacy Panel, 2009).

Language and literacy development, and ultimately school readiness, is not contingent on the use of the English language. In fact, all children developing language and literacy skills, regardless of native language should be exposed to rich language environments, both at home and in early educational settings. There is a strong correlation between vocabulary development and effective literacy instruction: **vocabulary knowledge is a significant determinant of reading comprehension ability.**

Lessons and activities that promote vocabulary knowledge and other reading skills are critical. Early interventions that include phonological awareness training such as rhyming and sounding out letters to

identify the different sounds that make words can simultaneously achieve English reading skills and language proficiency, but investments from the school district, including monitoring student progress and providing additional support for children identified with reading difficulties as early as preschool and kindergarten, is necessary to promote early literacy (the National Early Literacy Panel, 2009).

English Language Learners at Risk

Young ELLs represent a very diverse population. They are from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Some of them are born in the U.S. in families where their caregivers speak a language other than English or speak multiple languages; some are newcomers who could come as refugees, relatives of U.S. citizens, or immigrants who study and work in U.S. institutions (Tabors, 2008). Knowing two languages, being able to communicate in two languages, and being fluent in two languages is of tremendous benefit. Many young ELLs who are in high-quality language environments will naturally acquire two languages in early childhood, childhood years and beyond. However, **many young ELLs are at risk for falling through the cracks and are at risk for early learning difficulties and school failure.** For example, many young ELLs came to school with a strong 1st language, and their teachers misunderstand them as not having the English skills and fail to use their 1st language to support 2nd language development (Tabors, 2008), gradually their 1st



FEATURE ARTICLE: **Supporting Young English Language Learners with Language and**

language is lost (Fillmore, 1991). After a few years of school, these young ELLs could be **monolingual with mainly the social language and limited academic language, or alingual (illiterate or severely delayed in their native language and/or the English language) because of poor 1st language support and lack of quality second language instruction.** Early identification, intervention, and support for these children at-risk for delayed language development or reading failure is essential to building the child's language and literacy skills. Intervention includes, but is not limited to, explicit phonological awareness instruction, both in English and in the native language.

Educators and family members need to know that bilingualism is not an impediment to the acquisition of literacy skills. On the contrary, parents, who may speak only Spanish or another language such as Korean, Chinese, etc. should be encouraged to speak, read, and have conversations with their children in their native language. Once children develop a first language, it is easier for them to learn a second language. In fact, when English language learners enter school, they can easily transfer the skills learned in the native language and apply these skills when learning a second language.

Lost Language Enrichment Opportunities for Many Young ELLs: Causes and Solutions

Many young ELLs enter school without the benefits of rich language learning and enrichment opportunities due:

- Uneven quality of early childhood programs (birth to prekindergarten), most of which are

influenced by the social economic status (SES) of families. As a result, these children may have little early literacy and communication skills in both 1st and 2nd languages.

- A lack of certified bilingual education or English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and professionals in Early Childhood programs.
- Misperceptions on the part of parents about their native language as a hindrance of their children's English language acquisition.

Therefore, many of these young ELLs are not ready for school, and their achievement gaps may quickly widen to include learning disabilities signs — caused by lack of language, communication, and literacy development and support in the early years.

Overlapping Issues between Second Language Acquisition and Learning Disabilities

ELLs have twice the cognitive load — they have to learn a new language AND learn new content simultaneously. If neither language is strong, the child will struggle and fail. *What would make a teacher suspect that a child might have learning disabilities?*

A teacher could notice a student not making progress in the areas of: reading, writing, spelling, comprehension, math, reasoning, and/or problem solving. There are similar patterns for learning disabilities across languages. In both Spanish and English for example, children with dyslexia might have trouble: processing sounds, hearing sounds in order, distinguishing between two similar sounds, playing with sounds, e.g. rhyming.

Continues on page 7

However, it is important to note that even when an English learner may exhibit characteristics of learning disabilities (LD), or delayed language and second language development, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between a language difference and a learning disability. These children need the support of those closest to them both at school and at home. These supports should include regular assessment of language and literacy progress, consistency across languages of instruction, opportunities to develop social and academic language skills, and an intensive focus on the development of academic vocabulary and comprehension skills. Furthermore, it is critical that the home language and the culture of the child be valued and respected.

Critical Questions to Consider when Serving Young ELLs with Learning Difficulties

In summary, serving ELLs early and well is critical for these children to build a solid early development and a strong language foundation and thus prevent early learning difficulties, problems, and school readiness gaps. Locally, statewide, and nationally, this issue needs more attention, discussion, and support. Teachers, administrators, and policy-makers need to ask these critical questions in order to come together to develop and provide a comprehensive support system for professionals, families, and young ELLs.

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- The National Early Literacy Panel (2009). *Early beginnings, early literacy knowledge and instruction: A guide for early childhood administrators and professional development providers*. Washington, DC.
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SUPPORT TO ALL ENGLISH LEARNERS

A solid first language, whether English, Chinese, or Spanish, enables and enriches the acquisition of literacy in the second language. To that purpose, it is suggested that schools:

- Stimulate learning through thematic literature, such as dual-language storybooks or bilingual editions of familiar books, e.g. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.
- Preview and pre-read a story and discuss key words or concepts, using a variety of research-based strategies, including children's native language using bilingual staff or volunteers. Encourage students to share related experiences.
- Read aloud, slowly and with expression followed by literacy skill development (rhyming or repeating).
- Provide opportunities to talk and share, problem solve, ask questions. Reinforce oral discussions with visual clues.
- Encourage parents to use the native language at home and allow the use of the native language in the classroom, if needed.
- Interact equally with all students; be conscious of the time spent with each child.
- Limit the amount of new material introduced at one time.
- Reinforce language and literacy skill-building in other activities, lessons, and experiences during daily routines and across home and school settings.

From Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) at: www.cal.org/resources



Motivating English Learners Interest in Learning via Thematic Instruction

by
Elsie Cardona-Berardinelli
NYC RBE-RN@Fordham University

How can teachers instill in their students a love of learning via cross-curricular thematic based instruction? What strategies can teachers use to build English language learners' background knowledge to facilitate the process of learning? This article focuses on the advantages of cross-curricular thematic instruction as a way to increase student motivation, and how build background knowledge to plan meaningful instruction.

Why consider cross-curricular thematic based instruction? One of the major reasons for teachers to learn how to plan and deliver thematic based instruction is that it effectively addresses the intent of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The CCLSs insists that “instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening and language be a shared responsibility within the school”. In short, the expectation that all teachers take responsibility for literacy instruction requires an interdisciplinary approach. Effective thematic instruction involves the use of a broad based topic or theme that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. The selected theme serves as the “conceptual glue” and requires that teachers know the grade level standards and curriculum they are teaching. The goal is to choose themes that relate to ELLs lives to ensure interest and engagement in the content.

Selected themes or topics are age and grade-level appropriate, offer rich links to other content areas and often are framed as a question. (Developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory)

There are two integrated curriculum models presented in generic format. The first –See Figure 1, is a problem-based model designed to place technology

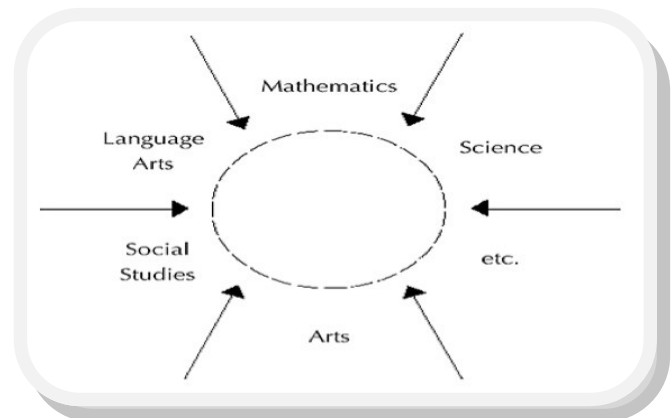
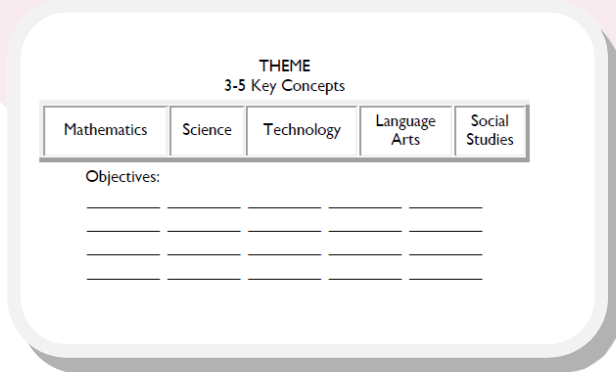


Figure 1: Problem Solving Model

education at the core of the template, often used by junior and high school teachers.

The second illustrated in Figure 2 (page 9) is a theme based model designed to integrate all content areas connecting the curriculum with national standards. It is most often used by teachers in elementary schools. This model helps students to make connections among objectives from various disciplines. (“Models of Curriculum Integration” Franzie L. Loepf)

Figure 2: Theme-Based Model



Teachers can pique English learners interest and develop entry points to a thematic unit of study by connecting and building their background knowledge.

Here are some ideas to get started:

1. Learn about your students' backgrounds and find culturally relevant resources using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol model (SIOP). You can do this by researching your students' native countries, cultures and educational systems. You may want to learn about their musical traditions, and geography, and find ways for your students to contribute their own cultural experiences in the classroom. For example, ask your students how a topic connects to their lives or to give an example of a particular idea as they would experience it in their native country. Students can bring music or art from their culture and describe its significance and meaning to their classmates. Students can interview their parents in order to learn more about their memories and experiences.

2. Look for resources that go beyond the textbook . For example, you may want to bring educational content to life through art, or schedule a trip to a museum to build background knowledge about different artistic

representations of historical events to offer multiple perspectives, and ask whether/which specific perspective resonates with their experiences. You may also want to access cultural kits from the local library with reading materials and questions that can be asked of a person who has experience in that area.

3. Use literature, stories, and folktales from other cultures as a way encouraging students to connect what they are reading to their own experiences. Also, a good idea is to use storytelling in the classroom. Children enjoy telling and acting out stories, and some students may also have a relative who is a great storyteller and would be willing to visit the class to tell a story. (Robertson, 2007).

Making meaning by connecting ELLs' life experiences and building their background knowledge when beginning a theme based unit of study ignites their interest, motivates and excites them about the theme to be studied. You have set the stage for active engagement and meaningful learning. Below are resources you may want to refer to for more information on this topic.

References

Loepp L. Franzie, "Models of Curriculum Integration" The Journal of Technology, Volume 25 No. 2, Pages 1-6, Summer/Fall 1999

Robertson, Kristina, "Connect Students' Background Knowledge to Content in the ELL Classroom", colorin-colorado.org website.

Vogt, Mary Ellen, "Cross-Curricular Thematic Instruction", eduplace.com website

For additional information, please contact
Elsie Cardona Berardinelli, ecardona3@fordham.edu

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: LEARNING SNAPSHOTS

“When educators come together as community of learners to discuss instructional practices, this ultimately transforms student outcomes”

**Eva Garcia, Director
NYC RBE-RN**



Listening to Dr. Latoni's strategies to deepen our Math practice (10/3/13)



Bilingual Special Education Roundtable meeting at Teachers College (12/6/13)

Training for administrators on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) research-based model (11/8/13)



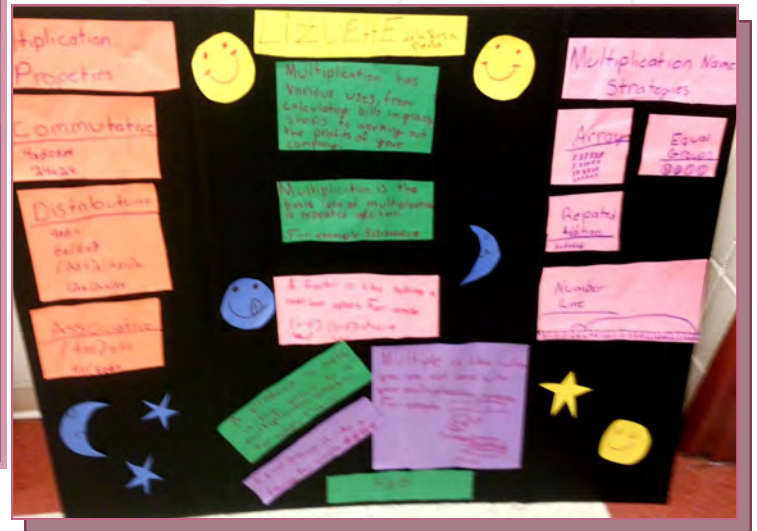
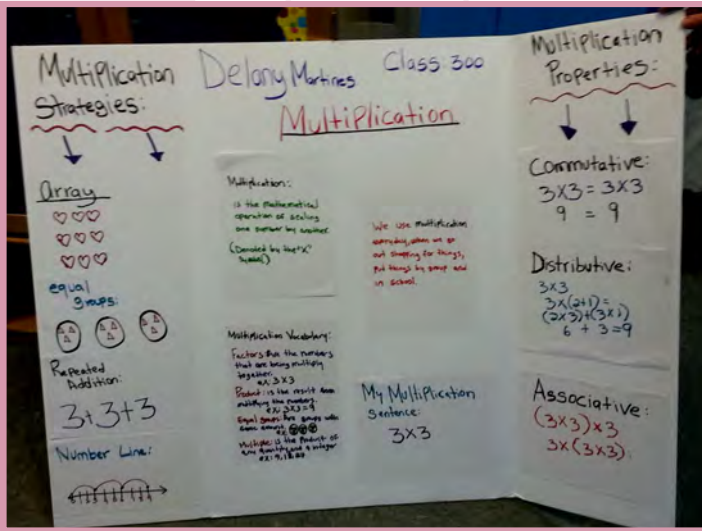
Dr. Ivannia Soto discusses the ELL Shadowing Protocol (11/5/13)



Professional development at PS 94 on "Second Language Acquisition"

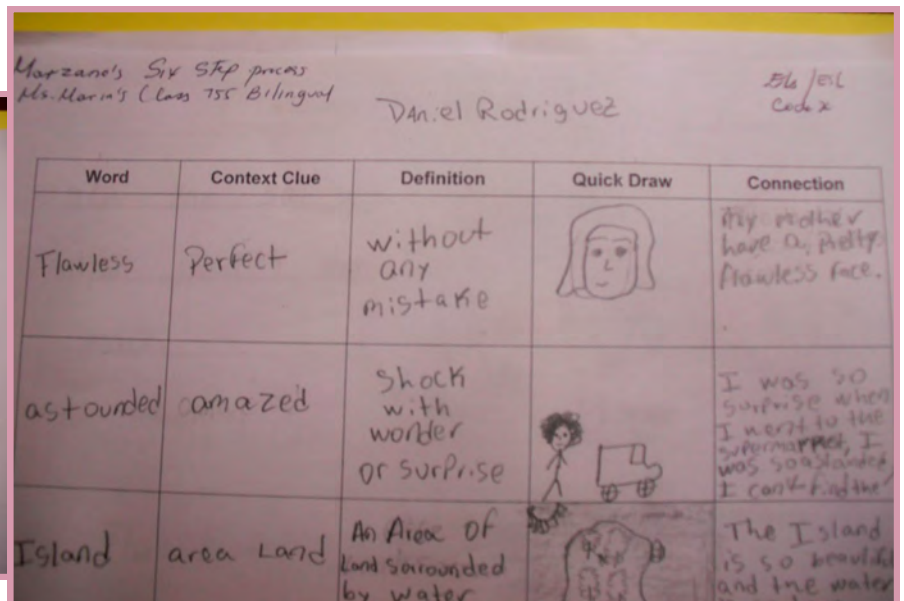
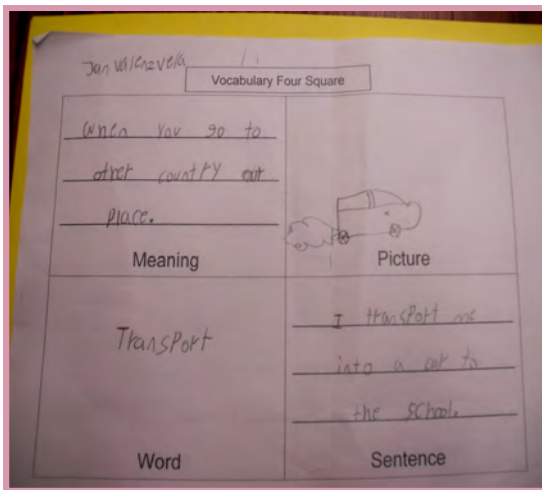
The Fordham NYC RBE-RN team offers professional development for teachers, administrators and all other staff members who come into contact with English Language Learners. While these sessions involve all stakeholders, our purpose is one: **To support schools in their proactive efforts to improve the achievement of English Language Learners through quality programs and instruction that is aligned to the CCLS.**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION



Ms. Lyness of PS 163 attended the training led by Dr. Latoni on effective Math practices that support ELL students. As illustrated in these pictures, Ms. Lyness' 3rd graders have learned to apply some of these strategies to better comprehend the academic vocabulary within a multiplication unit".

By: Aileen Colon



At C.S. 211, teachers focus on vocabulary and language development techniques to increase reading comprehension in English Language Learners. In these pictures Ms. Violeta Marin and Ms. Jennee Coleman, shared their techniques with their colleagues who then tried them in their classroom. Kudos to the 211 professional learning community!

By: Elsie Cardona—Berardinelli

NYC RBE-RN WEBSITE NEWS

Selected Sites for Differentiated Instruction by Abby Baruch, Resource Specialist

[BrainNook \(www.brainnook.com\)](http://www.brainnook.com) - A wonderful site/apps for Math and Language Arts that generates detailed common-core aligned reports allowing educators to set assignments targeting students weak areas or areas for improvement. **(Free)**

[Clever Island \(www.cleverisland.com\)](http://www.cleverisland.com) - A fantastic site that covers a wide range of subjects: Math, Reading, Science, etc. Also, CI is geared for students to learn at their own pace as well adapt to children's different learning styles. **(Access fee)**

[Infuse Learning \(www.infuselearning.com\)](http://www.infuselearning.com) - A terrific site/app that enables educators to create an educational environment tailored to meet the different needs of their students. Also, IL has seamless integration with BYOD and mobile learning. **(Free App; w/formative assessments included)**

[IXL](http://IXL.com) - One of the most popular sites around for Math that allows for student tracking w/ detailed reporting. Also, w/ the ability to track student "trouble" areas a teacher can adjust their teaching (differentiation) to help meet the needs of their students. **(Access Fee)**

[Power My Learning \(http://powermylearning.org/\)](http://powermylearning.org/) - A great way for educators to differentiate instruction by customizing the learning experience for students using Power My Learning. **(Free, aligned to the CCLS, differentiated and in Spanish)**

[TenMarks \(www.tenmarks.com\)](http://www.tenmarks.com) - A common core aligned program for Math (grades 1st-10th) that uses differentiated instruction to help students learn. **(Free for teachers, aligned to the CCLS, differentiated and in Spanish)**



UPCOMING EVENTS
The NYC RBE-RN @ Fordham University
The New York City Regional Bilingual & Education Resource Network
 For information and registration,
 please contact Sarai Salazarat (718) 817-0606, or
 email us at nycrbern@fordham.edu

Sarai Salazar, Administrative Assistant

Date	Topic	RBERN Staff/Consultant	Location
January 27, 2014	Demystifying NYSESLAT: Results-Listening, Speaking	Eva Garcia , Yazmin Torres	Bronx UFT Office
January –May 2014	National Board Certification	UFT Teacher Center	TBD
January 13, 2014	Social Studies Institute- NY Historical Society Audience: k-2 teachers	NY Historical Society staff	Fordham-Rose Hill Other sessions on-site
January 24, 2014	Nonfiction Text & ELLs	Dr. Nancy Frey Sponsor: National Geographic	Fordham Rose Hill
March 6, 2013 NYSABE Conference	Bilingual Special Education Focus Group	Dr. Diane Rodriguez, Dr. Bernice Moro, Eva Garcia	La Guardia Marriott
March 7, 2014 NYSABE Conference	NYS/NYC Teacher Institute	Dr. Diane August, Dr. Patricia Velasco, Dr. Ivania Soto	La Guardia Marriott
March 6, TBD 2014 NYSABE Conference	Parent Information Session on CCLS	Aileen Colon, Sara Martinez	La Guardia Marriott
April 2014	SIFE Institute	Dr. Nancy Cloud	Fordham University Rose Hill
April 2014	Every Leader is an Artist	Dr. William Baker Fordham University	Fordham University
May 2, 2014	Bilingual Special Education THINK TANK	Dr. Diane Rodriguez, Dr. Bernice Moro, Eva Garcia	Fordham University LC Campus