

NYS Spanish BETAC @ NYU

Monthly Bulletin

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NEW YORK STATE SPANISH BILINGUAL EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

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The NYS Spanish BETAC at the NYU Metro Center works with administrators and teachers in programs for Spanish-speaking LEP/ELL students. This monthly bulletin provides a sample of instructional resources, research news and updates concerning Spanish bilingual education, Spanish language programs and ESL programs. Please share your professional development needs by visiting our website and taking our survey. This month's theme is *Plazas Comunitarias*. *Plazas Comunitarias* is a program in Spanish for older youth and adults.

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Parent Education

Among the areas of work addressed by the NYS SBETAC at New York University, parent involvement and the education of parents of Spanish-speaking English Language Learners is fundamental. The staff of SBETAC at NYU designs and conducts professional development for teachers, parents, and administrators to share information about regulations governing the education of English language learners, and to provide parents with knowledge and accessible information about program options and school requirements.

SBETAC works closely with schools, libraries and local community-based organizations that provide educational services to adult immigrant parents of ELLs. As a “first point of contact” with many immigrant parents, these community groups are a valuable source of information on ELLs for the immigrant communities that they serve.

In the spirit of sharing information with parents of ELLs, Marguerite Lukes, Resource Specialist, Spanish BETAC, attended the annual California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE) conference to provide a workshop for parents in the “Parent Involvement Strand”. This year’s conference, with the theme *Educating Every Student: Investing in Tomorrow Today*, was attended by 6,000 individuals and featured 320 workshops and 150 exhibitors. The conference was dedicated to Marco Antonio Firebaugh, a California Assemblyman who passed away this past year. Firebaugh represented a district in southeast Los Angeles County and served as majority floor leader during the last two years of his term. He also led the California Latino Legislative Caucus.

Firebaugh said, “If you don’t pay attention to the specific linguistic needs of a young person,

you are putting them on a course to fail. I came to the public school system not speaking a word of English and I watched and learned, and through that I saw that without resources and without attention and support, kids will fail. Better said, our schools will fail our kids.”

Featured speakers at the conference included Diane August, Sonia Nieto, Ronald Takaki, Alma Flor Ada, F. Isabel Campoy, Ruben Martínez, Michael Apple, Mary Cappellini, Concha Delgado and Laurie Olsen.

Ms. Lukes’ workshop, “*Criando niños bilingües: desarrollando ideas y estrategias*” (Raising Bilingual Children: Developing Ideas and Strategies), addressed some of the misinformation that abounds about bilingualism and bi-literacy in order to arm parents of ELLs with research-based information to correct common misconceptions. Parents explored common “myths and facts” about bilingualism, i.e., learning two languages simultaneously results in semi-proficiency in both, or the more English you are immersed in, the faster you will learn. After exploring resources to help maintain the home language and promote English learning, parents discussed some of the effective strategies they themselves have implemented to maintain the home language while their children are learning English. A significant number of parents discussed how to respond to teachers, administrators and other staff who told them that their children’s English language development was being hampered by the use of the Spanish in the home. Others raised questions about how to encourage children to thrive in the U.S. without compromising family unity and culture. It was a rich discussion, attended by 85 parents, who were all eager to gather as much information as possible to share with their friends and go back and inform others.

2007 Spanish Spelling Bee

While the national spelling bee was taking place in Washington, D.C., the New York City Certamen de Deletreo (Spanish Spelling Bee) took place in the Scholastic Auditorium on Friday, June 1st. Sixty Spanish-speaking students, from 4th, 5th and 6th grades, competed by spelling Spanish words that were increasingly more difficult. At the end of the day there were three happy winners from each grade. The winners received trophies, certificates, books, dictionaries, and passes to baseball games and museums.

Author, Mariela Dabbah, who writes about family and education, spoke to the children about leadership and the importance of being bilingual. Dr. Maria V. Diaz, retired school principal and NYC DOE Consultant, acted as Mistress of Ceremonies. Edith Soto-Koenig explained the spelling rules and read the words and sentences to the students.

The judges for the Spanish Spelling Bee were Lluís Agustín Ruíz, from the Instituto Cervantes, Doris González, from IBM, and Oscar Mejía, from AeroMéxico. The three judges are native speakers of Spanish, well versed in the Spanish spelling rules.

To prepare for the citywide Spanish Spelling Bee, regional and school personnel organized school and regional spelling competitions in April and May. First and second place winners of the regional competitions attended the citywide contest.

Congratulations to the winners and to all the children and adults who worked hard to be make this year's *Certamen* a success.

The winners were:

Grade 4
1st Place: Richard Torrenegra, PS 88
2nd Place: Netzy Martínez, PS 108
3rd Place: Jan Víctor Pagán, CS 211

Grade 5
1st Place: Jhonny Heredia Mármol, PS 108
2nd Place: Tiffany Amaro, PS/MS/189
3rd Place: Luis Feliciano, IS 392

Grade 6
1st Place: Ana Teo López, IS 218
2nd Place: Eduardo Martínez Castillo, PS 210
3rd Place: Yanneris Suárez, IS 71

For *New York 1* "Noticias" News Story about the NY Spanish Spelling Bee:

<http://www.ny1.com/ny1/content/index.jsp?stid=4&aid=70307>

Help for Undocumented Students Seeking to Attend Post-secondary Institutions

A widespread misconception among students and educators is that students who are undocumented or have unresolved immigration are not eligible to attend college. On the contrary, a 2002 NYS law expands who can qualify for in-state tuition at CUNY and SUNY. Thirteen other states have similar provisions. These laws allow prospective students, regardless of their immigration status, to matriculate in the public university systems and qualify for in-state rates. Prospective students must have a GED from New York State or have graduated from a NYS high school and attended for two years and be willing to file an affidavit promising to initiate procedures to remedy their immigration status as soon as possible. For more information on this topic, go to: <http://www.nysylc.org-a.googlepages.com>

Here is another useful link featuring some resources on scholarships that are not restricted by immigration status:

<http://www.nysylc.org-a.googlepages.com/financialassistanceforundocumentedstudent>

Hispanic Students in the U.S.:

A recent study by Eugene E. Garcia and Bryant Jensen, published in the March 2007 issue of *Educational Leadership*, sheds light on the importance of maintaining strong communication between educators and the growing Hispanic population in our schools.

The article, entitled **Responding to Changing Demographics: Helping Young Hispanic Learners**, indicates that in 2005, one in five children 8 years old or younger in the United States was Hispanic. Moreover, Hispanic children make up approximately 80 percent of the U.S. English language learner population. Born inside and outside the United States, children of Hispanic (or Latino) heritage come from diverse social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. A majority of young Hispanic children are of Mexican origin (65 percent), but substantial proportions have origins in Puerto Rico (9 percent), Central America (7 percent), South America (6 percent), Cuba (2 percent), and the Dominican Republic (3 percent).

It is important to note that the vast majority of young Hispanic children in the United States are U.S.-born citizens. Eighty-five percent of children with at least one South American-born parent, 88 percent of those with a Mexican-born parent, and approximately 92 percent of those with a parent born in the Dominican Republic or Central America were born in the United States and therefore are U.S. citizens.

Rich Language Environments

Pre-K–3 education environments of young Hispanic children should be rich in language. We define richness as a function of frequency and quality. In terms of frequency, research on cognitive development, language, and early experiences shows that the number of conversational exchanges between adults and young children is strongly associated with school readiness and academic success in formal schooling (Risley & Hart, 2006).

Teachers, aides, and other school personnel should engage young Hispanic students in casual talk as much as possible and, where feasible, encourage parents to do the same. In terms of quality, young Hispanics should hear English and Spanish spoken in the classroom and have many opportunities to express themselves in both languages, allowing for linguistic exploration.

Meta-analyses and best-evidence syntheses suggest that bilingual or English-plus approaches to curriculum and instruction are preferable to English-only or English immersion programs (Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). For young children managing more than one language, academic skills are much more likely to develop and transfer between languages when environments provide access to knowledge through both languages in culturally relevant ways. Rich language environments that integrate Spanish and English also facilitate important parent-school associations. Spanish-speaking parents are more likely to involve themselves in schools and classrooms in which Spanish is regularly spoken.

Dual-Language Programs

Young Hispanic children should have access to high-quality dual-language programs that teach English and Spanish language skills through content. Integrating native English and Spanish speakers in the same classroom fosters ethnic and linguistic equity among students. Dual language programs also promote Hispanic students' literacy development in English without compromising their Spanish skills (August, Calderón, Carlo, & Nuttall, 2006). Moreover, research shows that when young Spanish-speaking Hispanics and their native English-speaking peers are enrolled in dual-language programs, the academic achievement levels of both groups are equivalent to, or in many cases superior to, outcomes of students in mainstream classrooms (August, Calderón, & Carlo, 2002).

Bilingual classes 'raise results'

Bilingual children who learn in their family's language as well as English do better at school, research suggests.

Even second and third generation immigrant children with English as their stronger language could benefit. A team from Goldsmiths, University of London, analyzed some primary school children in England using two languages in math and English lessons. They found that, far from confusing them, having two languages deepened their understanding of key concepts.

Lead researcher Dr Charmian Kenner said that children who led bilingual lives could access their lessons through both languages. "Learning a mathematical concept in Bengali and English, for example, deepens understanding as ideas are transferred between languages."

Or children can compare how metaphors are constructed in a Bengali poem and its English equivalent. "The children in our project expressed a strong desire to use their community language in school and teachers were able to tap into their pupils' full range of cultural knowledge."

According to Dr. Kenner, "It is very important that parents continue to talk to their children in their first language and then they can transfer the key ideas they learn to their new language."

Dr Kenner worked with four small groups of children aged between six and ten at two primary schools in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. She watched them learning their mother tongue in community language classes, after school or on weekends, and observed them in bilingual activities in mainstream classes. When the children were allowed to use their native language as well as English they seemed to grasp mathematical concepts such as division and multiplication more easily, she said. A separate research

project carried out by Tower Hamlets community language unit found children who attended native language classes did better on national tests.

Distortion

The argument that classes should be only in English is based on assumptions that run contrary to all the research findings, Dr Kenner said. "The other thing is that people think that, in order to be British, children of immigrants have to distort parts of their identity ... but we found it was the other way round. The children wanted to be able to use Bengali at school as it was part of them. For them, being British included being Bangladeshi. They are British Bangladeshi."

'Missed opportunity'

Dr Kenner said, "The advice has changed quite a lot. When the first wave of people arrived in the 1960s and 1970s people were told only to speak English to their children. But we can see that it is very important that parents continue to talk to their children in their first language and then they can transfer the key ideas they learn to their new language which would be English at school."

Sir Trevor McDonald said: "In our haste to ensure they acquire good English, we frequently miss the opportunity to ensure they maintain and develop skills in their other languages too." Rather than thinking in terms of an 'English-only' culture, we should be promoting 'English plus'."

This story is adapted from the BBC NEWS:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/education/6447427.stm

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NYSED Happenings

Stay abreast of what is happening at the New York State Education Department's Office of Curriculum and Instruction. You can access this information by going to the website below.

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/>

Plazas Comunitarias

Plazas Comunitarias is a program designed to improve educational outcomes for Spanish-speakers in New York through native language and English as a second language multimedia resources.

In the first university alliance of its kind, New York University and the Steinhardt School inaugurated Plazas Comunitarias (“Community Town Squares”) with a bi-national agreement signed by the Mexican government and NYU.

Plazas Comunitarias is an adult and youth education, work-force development, and lifelong learning initiative developed by Mexico’s National Institute for Adult Education.

The Plazas Comunitarias initiative will make available Spanish language multimedia, technology-enhanced instructional materials, and computer training, free of charge, to Spanish-speakers throughout New York City.

What do research and practice tell us about native language instruction?

- Skills in the first language “transfer” to a second language, giving adults with academic skills in their first language an edge.
- Better academic “school skills” and content knowledge make adults more successful and efficient in learning a second language.
- Learning in the native language results in increased progress in English.
- Parents with higher levels of formal education are better prepared to support their children academically.

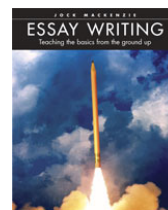
What does *Plazas Comunitarias* offer?

- Instruction and self-paced learning in Spanish, ESL, math, science, social

studies, and GED, using print, multimedia and computers.

- Accreditation and certification of adult basic education, secondary and postsecondary education in Spanish.

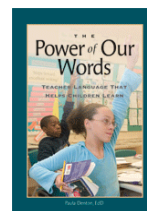
Teaching “The Essay”



A new book, *Essay Writing: Teaching the Basics from the Ground Up* by Joel Mackenzie (2007 ISBN: 978-155138-210-4 Pembroke), is filled with innovative ideas for teaching students to write essays. From color coding to picturing the essay to using cloze sentences, this book is bound to help teachers teach this important aspect of student writing.

A Focus on Teacher Language

The book, *The Power of Our Words: Teacher Language That Helps Children* emphasizes the value of open-ended questions to stimulate thinking. It also describes the “3R’s” of teacher language: reinforcing, reminding, and redirecting.



By Paula Denton, Ed.D, 2007, K-8. Published by The Northeast Foundation for Children

Mexican Authors Symposium

On April 27th, 2007, the NYS Spanish BETAC hosted more than a hundred teachers, administrators, students and faculty for the first “Mexican and Mexican-American Authors Symposium” at the Faculty House, Columbia University. The Symposium, a collaboration of the New York State Spanish Bilingual ESL Technical Assistance Center at the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at NYU, the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at NYU (CLACS), and the Institute for Latin American Studies (ILAS) at Columbia University, showcased the experience of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. through a range of literature in Spanish and English by Mexican and Mexican-American authors Reyna Grande (*Across a Hundred Mountains*), Rigoberto González (*So Often the Pitcher Goes to Water Until it Breaks, Antonio’s Card, Butterfly Boy*), and Silvia Dubovoy (*Ecos del Desierto, Murmullos de la Selva, El Olor de la Esperanza*). Scholar/author Alma Flor Ada opened the authors’ panel with an inspired call to incorporate students’ culture, language and life experiences into the classroom through literature. With a growing population of Mexican students in the public schools in New York City and State, the symposium aimed to address the background issues related to the migration of this population, as well as special concerns for educational outcomes for this group, which is often characterized by high drop-out rates, low achievement, and the challenges of post-secondary access for undocumented students. Dr. Ofelia Garcia of Columbia Teacher’s College, Dr. Christopher Mitchell of NYU and Dr. Robert Smith of Baruch College, CUNY, addressed these salient issues. In an interactive afternoon session, participants worked with authors F. Isabel Campoy and Alma Flor Ada to practice strategies that foster student authorship. Participants felt that the symposium clarified how to incorporate children’s culture and experiences into the classroom.

Honoring an Adult Educator

The Literacy Assistance Center held its 22nd Annual Literacy Recognition Award Ceremony on Thursday, June 7, from 9:30 am–12:30 pm, at Scholastic Inc. The keynote speaker was Tom Sticht, an internationally recognized authority in the field of adult literacy. Awardees’ programs received a library development grant from the Bookbinders’ Guild of New York. The Literacy Recognition Ceremony is sponsored by the Bookbinders’ Guild of New York and Scholastic. John Lyons, Adult Education Director for the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, was one of the recipients of this prestigious award. John has been in the forefront in adopting the Plazas Comunitarias literacy and GED Program for Spanish-speaking older youth and adults.

New York State Testing Program

The NYS Education Department would like to have people with questions about New York State Testing Program submit their questions to emscasseinfo@mail.nysed.gov. A response will be sent within 24-48 hours. Suggestions and feedback from teachers provide an important contribution to the test development process. NYSED provides an online evaluation form for State assessments. Teachers can respond to several specific questions and make suggestions. To take the NYSESLAT survey, go to <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/eval07.htm>

Teach at Pan American International High School

The new Pan American International High School in Queens anticipates vacancies in the following areas: English/ESL, Science, Social Studies, Spanish Language Arts, Art, and Guidance Counselor.

Interested parties may contact Marcella Barros, Project Director at panamericanihs@gmail.com

CUNY y el Consulado General de México en Nueva York

Lanzan guía para estudiantes mexicanos

City University of New York (CUNY) y el Consulado General de México en Nueva York informan el lanzamiento de la guía para estudiantes mexicanos, esfuerzo conjunto que busca acercar a la comunidad mexicana a opciones de educación superior de alto nivel.

La guía, titulada *“Oportunidades para la Comunidad Mexicana y Mexico-Americana en*

CUNY”, ilustra, de una manera clara y sencilla, los procedimientos básicos de admisión que todo estudiante debe conocer para ingresar en uno de los numerosos colegios del sistema CUNY. Asimismo, la guía provee información y orientación sobre el estudio del inglés como segunda lengua, programas de educación continua, así como datos sobre el costo de los programas y servicios de asesoría migratoria para los estudiantes.

CUNY y el Consulado General de México firmaron en septiembre de 2005 un Memorándum de Entendimiento que cifró en varios puntos de trabajo la colaboración conjunta. La publicación de la presente guía es un paso adelante en la estrecha relación de cooperación establecida entre la institución educativa y la representación consular mexicana.

La guía está disponible en internet en la siguiente dirección electrónica: www.cuny.edu/sisepuede . De igual forma, la publicación puede conseguirse en forma gratuita en la sede del Consulado General, así como en el Departamento de Admisiones de CUNY. El folleto se distribuirá también a través de las organizaciones comunitarias mexicanas de la ciudad.

“Esta guía informativa especial tiene la intención de ayudar a los integrantes de la

comunidad mexicana y mexico-americana a lograr un mayor acceso a la gran variedad de programas y servicios que ofrece CUNY a través de nuestras 23 instituciones de enseñanza superior y escuelas profesionales. El mensaje es claro: les damos la bienvenida y los exhortamos a que ingresen a la universidad para emprender la realización de sus sueños” afirmó el Canciller Matthew Goldstein

“La publicación de la presente guía marca un hito en la exitosa historia de cooperación entre CUNY y el Consulado General de México en Nueva York en beneficio de los estudiantes mexicanos de esta gran ciudad. La meta es lograr que cada vez un mayor número ingrese a la universidad. Con este logro, esta sociedad y la ciudad de Nueva York recibirán una mayor y más profunda aportación de los mexicanos emigrados y, al mismo tiempo, representará un avance más firme y más sólido de nuestra comunidad”, señaló el Cónsul General Ramón Xilotl.

“Oportunidades para la Comunidad Mexicana y Mexico-Americana en CUNY” refrenda el interés social de CUNY y el compromiso del Consulado General de México en Nueva York para con el bienestar de los mexicanos que viven y trabajan en Nueva York.

Looking forward to next year

We were happy to be part of the family of educators who joined their efforts to work for the success of English Language Learners.

We look forward to working with you next year, sharing educational articles and success stories.

Visit our webpage for information about our work, pictures from past events and the many educational articles published in our bulletin in the course of the academic year 2006-2007.

We wish you a restful and enjoyable summer 2007.