

Me & My Bilingual Community

Unit of Study



Created by Dr. Sarah Hesson

Overview¹

In this two-week unit, students explore the theme of bilingualism for themselves, and in their families and communities. This unit offers multiple opportunities for students to use all their language practices to understand their bilingual identities and communities. Students will create language self-portraits, community language maps, and cultural wisdom displays. They will have the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of bilingualism in their own lives and identify their own motivations for being in a bilingual school and learning in two languages, and will have the opportunity to create both personal and collective language pledges to return to throughout the school year. The work of the unit will then be displayed on bulletin boards and in a Bilingual Classroom Quilt.

GUIDING QUESTIONS	• What makes a bilingual school special/ different? • What do you like about being in a bilingual school? • If it was up to you, would you choose to go to a bilingual school? Why? • What are the benefits of learning in two languages? • How does language shape your everyday life? • What does bilingualism look like in your life and community? • What languages do you hope you will speak when you're older? Who will you speak those languages with?
BIG IDEAS	• Being bilingual shapes who I am in the world –my experiences, thoughts, ideas, relationships, and more. • Being bilingual has many benefits. • Learning in two languages is both challenging and rewarding. • Language connects to who I am. • I can choose how I develop my bilingualism based on my goals and relationships.
CULMINATING PROJECT	Bilingual Classroom Quilt Students complete several activities based on grade level and teacher choice, including a language self-portrait, community language map, language timeline, and individual language pledge. Then as a class, the students and teachers collectively write a language pledge for their classroom. The collective language pledge is placed in the center of the quilt, with student work framing the pledge based on teacher choice. The finished product represents the fabric of the classroom, backgrounds, languages, and experiences of students.

¹ Unit structure adapted from Translanguaging in Curriculum and Instruction: A CUNY-NYSIEB Guide for Educators, by S. Hesson, K. Seltzer, and H. H. Woodley

UNIT CALENDAR

APPROX. TIME	ACTIVITIES	INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS	GRADE LEVEL ADAPTATIONS	LANGUAGE-CENTERED SOCIAL JUSTICE STANDARDS
2-3 class periods (Assuming about 45-minute class period)	Exploration of multilingualism <i>Focus questions: What do you love about being bilingual? Why is being bilingual important?*</i> <i>For you? For your family? For our school? For our larger communities?</i> Students explore the questions above with partners, in small groups, and as a whole class. 1. Brainstorm: Brainstorm with a partner before sharing with the whole class (younger grades) or a small group (older grades) in any language. 2. Record: Teacher (younger grades) or students (older grades) record ideas on a chart paper organized by group (you, your family, our school, our larger communities) 3. Select: For younger grades, students choose one aspect of being bilingual to focus on and illustrate for the collective book they will make. For older grades, students find multimedia that illustrates various aspects of being bilingual, then choose one aspect to illustrate for themselves through a meme, tweet, or other form of expression. Work may be completed in any language. 4. Read and discuss: During reading time, the questions above can be posed of the characters in the book, e.g. Why is being bilingual important to this family? How did being bilingual help her? *Activity adapted from cuny-nysieb.org	• Being bilingual is important for different people for many reasons. • There are individual, family, and community reasons to use two languages.	Younger Grades: Read stories about bilingual families and communities. Create a book as a class that includes illustrated pages answering the focus questions. Older Grades: Identify multimedia (Meme, Tweet, GIF, etc.) that captures something interesting, funny, or powerful about being bilingual. Invite students to create multimedia that captures something important about their bilingual relationships, school, family, or other community and post them in the school or on the school's social media.	Standard 1: Students will express pride and confidence in how they, their families, and their communities use language. Standard 2: Students will examine their bi/multilingualism and find their own motivation for learning bilingually. Standard 3: Students will develop their academic abilities using all their language assets, explicitly connecting what they learn in each language. Standard 4: Students will engage in rigorous, standards-aligned academic content that aligns with the goals of bilingualism, biliteracy, and social justice. Standard 5: Students will recognize that everyone has multifaceted identities that shape the way they move through the world. Standard 6: Students will critically examine the inclusion and/or marginalization of diverse language practices across sociocultural and historical contexts.

1-2 class periods	Language Self-Portraits Outline of a person: Students draw or are provided a graphic organizer with the outline of a person, such as this one from edhelper.com. Create a self-portrait: Students use colors, words, and/or drawings to represent their languages on their body. They may connect different body parts to different languages, or create a more abstract representation that shows how their languages live in their bodies. Students may also connect different languages and uses to different emotions. Write about your portrait: Depending on the grade level, students may write words, one sentence, a paragraph, or a page describing their language self-portrait in any language. Reflect: After the activity, the class reflects as a group: What did I learn about myself and my languages by creating a language self-portrait? Display: Language self-portraits may be displayed on their own or incorporated into the Bilingual Classroom Quilt described below.	- Language is not just a tool for communication, it is also emotional and tied to our identities. - The language we use connects us to our families and communities. - By better understanding how we use language, we can better understand the importance of developing and maintaining our bilingualism.	Options for all grade levels: Small groups of students can create human-sized outlines by outlining their bodies on butcher paper, then create a group self-portrait, which each student contributing as they see fit. Students may bring in a photo of themselves to add to their self-portraits. For younger students, they may practice cutting and gluing by cutting out the outline then gluing it to a larger paper for the community quilt.	Standard 1: Students will express pride and confidence in how they, their families, and their communities use language. Standard 3: Students will develop their academic abilities using all their language assets, explicitly connecting what they learn in each language. Standard 5: Students will recognize that everyone has multifaceted identities that shape the way they move through the world.
2 class periods	Community Language Maps Brainstorm: Students brainstorm places they go in their everyday lives: park, school, home, homes of friends and family, place of worship, grocery store, etc. Explore: The class takes a neighborhood walk around the area of the school and take notes or photos of the languages they see and hear. Create: Using this information, students create community language maps to physically map out where they hear and use their different languages. The maps may be hand-drawn individual maps that show actual places in relation to one	- The language we use depends on the people we see, the places we go, and the purpose of communication. - Language use is contextual. - Being bilingual allows us to navigate more spaces and	For older students, Google Maps has a function that allows a user to create their own map with points of interest, and space to describe each point of interest. Students may opt to make a virtual map rather than a physical one to present to classmates. Younger students may draw people and places, then use colors to	Standard 2: Students will examine their bi/multilingualism and find their own motivation for learning bilingually. Standard 5: Students will recognize that everyone has multifaceted identities that shape the way they move through the world. Standard 6: Students will critically examine the inclusion and/or marginalization of diverse language practices across

	another or may be more conceptual, with pictures to symbolize places such as home, family, and church. 4. Display: Students may display their maps within the community quilt described below, OR separately as its own bulletin board. A third option could be to make a collective class map that shows the similarities and differences in students' experiences.	communicate with more people.	differentiate between places they use one language or both. Note: The community language maps may contain languages that students speak beyond just the target languages of the program!	sociocultural and historical contexts.
1 class period	Cultural wisdom display Students consider the cultural wisdom that is passed on in their families through sayings. E.g. Camarón que se duerme, se lo lleva la corriente. The early bird gets the worm (but the early worm gets eaten!) 1. Collect sayings: For homework, students ask their families to write down sayings they live by in their homes. 2. Share: Students share these sayings with the class and add any more they can think of. 3. Create: Students choose one saying to write on a sentence strip. 4. Display: The teacher lines the bulletin board with the sentence strips instead of using a typical border, places them in another classroom/ school space, such as a hallway bulletin board or the main office, or uses them as the border of the Bilingual Classroom Quilt described below.	• Language connects to cultural wisdom. • Our languages hold wisdom about who we are and who we want to be in the world.	This activity can be differentiated based on students' writing ability and language proficiency. Sayings can be written only in the language they were learned, or in both languages. Some students may illustrate the saying, while others can just write it. Curriculum connection: Teachers can identify texts that connect to the lessons of each saying.	Standard 1: Students will express pride and confidence in how they, their families, and their communities use language. Standard 3: Students will develop their academic abilities using all their language assets, explicitly connecting what they learn in each language. Standard 5: Students will recognize that everyone has multifaceted identities that shape the way they move through the world. Standard 6: Students will critically examine the inclusion and/or marginalization of diverse language practices across sociocultural and historical contexts.
2 class periods	Class Language Pledge 1. Explain the class pledge: Why are we making a class pledge together? What is the purpose? How can it help us throughout the year as we try our best to learn in two languages?	• As a class it is important to collectively commit to bilingualism.	Prompts may be modified to be age-appropriate and respond to the maturity of students. The class pledge should include both English and	Standard 1: Students will express pride and confidence in how they, their families, and their communities use language. Standard 2:

	2. Find your why: Students answer the question, “Why is it important <u>to you</u> to learn in two languages this year?” [And depending on age and maturity of students] “What is your long-term dream (i.e. goal, vision, hope) for being bilingual?” 3. Discuss: Share and discuss students’ responses. Record responses on the board. 4. Make a commitment: “What commitments are important for you to make in order to achieve your dream?” “What can we commit to doing as a class to help each other learn in two languages?” Wording for younger students: “How can we help each other learn two languages?” “What are some rules that could be important when we’re learning two languages?” 5. Draft and revise: Write down students’ responses and with their help (or independently) create one unified pledge. Read it as a class and modify as needed until everyone can agree to it. 6. Sign on the dotted line: Everyone signs the pledge, and the document can then be displayed in the classroom.	• We each have our own “why” but together we help each other achieve our goals and dreams. • Being bilingual is an action! It takes work, but it is worth it.	Spanish (whether written using translanguaging or by having a translation). Teachers may consider adding their own goals and dreams to the pledge, since we are all lifelong language learners!	Students will examine their bi/ multilingualism and find their own motivation for learning bilingually. Standard 3: Students will develop their academic abilities using all their language assets, explicitly connecting what they learn in each language. Standard 5: Students will recognize that everyone has multifaceted identities that shape the way they move through the world. Standard 6: Students will critically examine the inclusion and/or marginalization of diverse language practices across sociocultural and historical contexts.
1 class period	Bilingual Classroom Quilt Students have worked individually to create squares for a classroom community quilt by creating language self-portraits and community language maps. As a class, students use one or both of these squares to create a classroom community quilt, placing the class Language Pledge in the center of the quilt. The Cultural Wisdom sentence strips may be placed around the quilt as a border as well. This collective work serves as a reminder and affirmation of students’ commitment to	• Visually represent both individual and collective multilingualism in the classroom. • Demonstrate pride and commitment to bilingualism and the diversity within the classroom.	This activity can be modified based on students’ developmental levels, with a focus on fine motor skills for younger students (cutting, gluing, drawing) and on writing and illustrations for older students.	Standard 1: Students will express pride and confidence in how they, their families, and their communities use language. Standard 2: Students will examine their bi/ multilingualism and find their own motivation for learning bilingually. Standard 5: Students will recognize that everyone has multifaceted

	bilingualism and celebration of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Logistical note: Paper squares can be mounted on construction paper and laminated if possible. Using a hole-punch on all 4 corners of each square, they can then be connected using yarn or twine, then hung in long rows side by side to create a large square, or connected by binder rings or paper clips.	Facilitate community building in the classroom by comparing, contrasting, and celebrating students' similarities and differences.		identities that shape the way they move through the world.
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RESOURCES AND LINKS

- CCBC (Cooperative Children's Book Center), <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/>
- Teaching Tolerance, www.tolerance.org
- Nuestras Raíces: The Latino oral history project of RI, <http://www.nuestrasraicesri.org/>
- Central Falls website, <https://www.centralfallsri.gov/>
- Adams Public Library, Central Falls, RI, <https://adamspubliclibrary.org/>
- Culturally Relevant Books & Literature, CUNY-NYSIEB, All Grades, <https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/translanguaging-resources/culturally-relevant-books-and-resources/>

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

Grades PK-2

- Welcome to my neighborhood: A barrio ABC, by Quiara Alegrai Hudes
- Playing lotería, by René Colato Laínez
- Papá and me, by Arthur Dorros
- Abuela, by Arthur Dorros
- Isla, by Arthur Dorros
- Dear primo: A letter to my cousin, by Duncan Tonatiuh
- Call Me Tree/ Llámame árbol, by Maya Christina Gonzalez
- Cerca/ Close, by Juan Felipe Herrera
- Hairs / Pelitos, by Sandra Cisneros
- I love Saturdays y domingos, by Alma Flor Ada
- In my family/ En mi familia, by Carmen Lomas Garza
- Little Roja Riding Hood, by Susan Middleton Elya
- Margaret and Margarita / Margarita y Margaret, by Lynn Reiser
- Maya's Blanket/ La manta de Maya, by Monica Brown
- Quinito's Neighborhood/ El Vecindario de Quinito, by Ina Cumpiano
- ¡Vamos! Let's Go Eat, by Raúl the Third
- Pepita talks twice, By Ofelia Lachtman

Grades 3-5

- My name is María Isabel, by Alma Flor Ada
- Salsa stories/ Cuentos con sazón, by Lulu Delacre
- Soñadores, by Yuyi Morales
- How tía Lola came to stay, by Julia Alvarez
- Abuelita full of life, by Amy Costales
- Carmen learns English, by Judy Cox
- Amigos del otro lado/ Friends from the other side, by Gloria Anzaldúa
- Welcome to my neighborhood: A barrio ABC, by Quiara Alegrai Hudes
- The CUNY-NYSIEB Guide to Translanguaging in Latino/a Literature, ALL GRADES,
<https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CUNY-NYSIEB-Latino-Literature-Guide-Final-January-2015.pdf>
- Relevant Literature on Latino/a Culture and Language, CUNY-NYSIEB, Elementary Grades,
<https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/wp-content/PDFs/CUNY-NYSIEB-Culturally-Relevant-Literature-Elementary-Latinos-Updated-Nov-2019.pdf>

Grades 6-8

- Video “Reacting to bilingual memes,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sMHFNQdhIE>
- Image search of bilingual memes,
https://www.google.com/search?q=bilingual+memes&client=firefox-b-1-d&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj55rnPv_T5AhUrIkEHUCPCDMO_AUoAXoECAEQAw&biw=1244&bih=686&dpr=1#imgrc=bZ73KzDeP-qUgM
- The color of my words/ El color de mis palabras, by Lynn Joseph
- When I was Puerto Rican/ Cuando era puertorriqueña, by Esmeralda Santiago
- Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States, Edited by Lori Marie Carlson
- Cool Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Growing Up Latino in the United States, Edited by Lori Marie Carlson
- Relevant Literature on Latino/a Culture and Language, CUNY-NYSIEB, Middle & High School Grades,
<https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/wp-content/PDFs/CUNY-NYSIEB-Culturally-Relevant-Literature-Secondary-Latinos-Updated-Oct-2019.pdf>

Language-Centered Social Justice Standards

By Dr. Sarah Hesson

Purpose

Dual language bilingual programs have grown in popularity across the United States, but typically more emphasis is placed on language learning in these spaces than critical analysis of the continued marginalization and discrimination of the bilingual communities that form the foundation of these programs. These standards are intended to foreground critical questions related to language practices, race, ethnicity, immigration status, and more. They are intended as a guide to ensure that all dual language bilingual spaces foster critical awareness, particularly in increasingly heterogeneous programs that include both dominant and marginalized groups. Just as linguistic transfer is not automatic, but rather must be explicitly addressed, nor will a dual language bilingual program move towards being a successfully integrated space for liberatory pedagogy and practice unless it consciously chooses to take that up as a central tenet of its mission and purpose. These standards will hopefully serve as a starting point for programs to embark on this work.

Essential Questions

What ideas would we like students to develop around their language use, being bilingual, having the ability to speak multiple languages, and language diversity? What messages do we want to send students and families around their language practices and the value of bilingualism in our community? How can we situate the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy, high academic achievement, sociocultural competence, and critical consciousness in the broader US and global context?

Standard	Pillar Alignment	School/ Educator Action Item	Example
1. Students will express pride and confidence in how they, their families, and their communities use language.	Bilingualism and biliteracy	Educators will create space throughout the day and during special events and assemblies for students and families to engage in all their language practices.	The teacher dedicates a bulletin board or space in the room for rotating personal displays, such as family photos, important artifacts, or All About Me books. While schoolwide gatherings are mostly in English, all events have Spanish woven into them to emphasize the importance of bilingualism at the school.
2. Students will examine their bi/multilingualism and find their own motivation for learning bilingually.	Bilingualism and biliteracy	Students will be given opportunities to reflect on the meaning of being bi/multilingual, and articulate their own motivation for learning bilingually.	In a beginning-of-the-year unit of study, elementary students draw pictures of how they use language in different spaces and with different people. Then they make a class quilt with words and drawings showing what each student loves about being in a bilingual school and being bilingual.
3. Students will develop their academic abilities using all their language assets, explicitly connecting what	High academic achievement	Educators will collaborate to ensure that students are supported across language classrooms and given opportunities to connect what they learn in each	A unit on natural disasters is introduced in an upper elementary class. Regardless of whether students are with the English or Spanish teacher that week, students are given books in book baskets in both languages to read and take notes on the subject.

they learn in each language.		classroom and language. Students will be given opportunities to process new content and develop new abilities using their entire linguistic repertoire.	
4. Students will engage in rigorous, standards-aligned academic content that aligns with the goals of bilingualism, biliteracy, and critical social awareness.	High academic achievement	Educators will seek ways to maintain rigorous standards and opportunities for critical thinking alongside language development. Educators will tie learning to values of bilingualism, biliteracy, and critical social awareness.	In a high school English class, students read a text that uses translanguaging. For the writing assignment that follows, language goals are differentiated for groups of students as they create their own translanguaged texts with varying emphasis on each language, yet all students engage in the same grade level literacy skills.
5. Students will recognize that everyone has multifaceted identities that shape the way they move through the world.	Sociocultural competence	Educators use texts, examples, methods, and genres that represent and critically examine the diversity of students' local and global communities and experiences.	In a middle school math lesson on division, the teacher invites students who learned math in a different country to show the class the method they learned for division, or for families to show them the method they learned and then present to the class. In a high school history class, students complete a unit of research on countries around the world that were impacted by colonization at the same time as the US. Research is conducted in multiple languages to gain multiple perspectives.
6. Students will critically examine the inclusion and/or marginalization of diverse language practices across sociocultural and historical contexts.	Critical consciousness	Educators will make space in the curriculum for authentic and meaningful exploration of linguistic diversity in its many forms.	Students read a text that includes the use of translanguaging, then analyze the author's purpose for doing so. Students take photos of the linguistic landscape of the school neighborhood, then analyze the ways that signage may include or exclude certain community members. Students analyze language use and patterns in their own schools, and make recommendations based on their findings.