LEVERAGING LATIN AMERICAN CULTURAL & LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A Professional Development Guide for US Teachers

WRITTEN BY

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PRODUCED BY

The K-12 Outreach Program,
Institute of Latin American Studies,
Columbia University

ABOUT US

The Institute of Latin American Studies (ILAS) at Columbia University has commissioned the production of this curriculum guide to serve as a resource for the K-12 teaching community in New York City. This work aims to strengthen background knowledge and instructional strategies so that teachers and educators can both meet the demands and make use of the great cultural and linguistic diversity of students coming from or whose relatives are from Latin America and the Caribbean.

The ILAS K-12 Outreach Program strives to enhance the professional capacity of teachers in a multicultural New York City environment and promote the inclusion of Latin American and Caribbean history and culture in their classrooms and students' daily lives. The program draws on the expertise and support of faculty and students across Columbia University to offer the K-12 teaching community resources and opportunities to learn about creative ways of incorporating Latin American and Caribbean topics into their educational activities.

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PART 1 THIS GUIDE

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE [1]

The cultural and linguistic diversity of United States (US) schools, not to mention of schools across the globe, requires educators, school administrators, and youth development professionals alike to be knowledgeable about and be able to relate to the various personal backgrounds and languages of their students in order to foster their school achievement and college readiness. This guide aims to provide such educators, particularly those working in schools but who do not have training in pedagogy relevant to students from Latin America, with some essential context and cognitively and socio-emotionally beneficial teaching strategies that recognize and leverage Latin American and Caribbean culture and language.

In 2017, there were nearly 45 million foreign-born individuals in the US, representing 13.7% of the population. In urban centers such as New York City, the pluricultural nature of our US communities is even more marked, with over one-third of residents born outside the US.[2] The composition of US schools reflects this growing diversity, with immigrants and their children arriving to schools and increasing their cultural and linguistic richness.

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[2] US Census Bureau, "American Community Survey", 2017, https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk

In fall 2016, nearly 5 million, or 10%, of the total K-12 school population were classified as English Language Learners (ELLs).[3] At the same time, in New York City, 40.6% of the public-school population was identified as Hispanic. More than 42% of the student population of the city's Department of Education spoke a language other than English at home, with 24% speaking Spanish.

NYC DOE Enrollment by Top 5 Home Languages

- English — 57.18%
- Spanish — 23.77%
- Chinese — 6.61%
- Bengali — 2.31%
- Arabic — 1.70%
- Other (174) — 8.44%
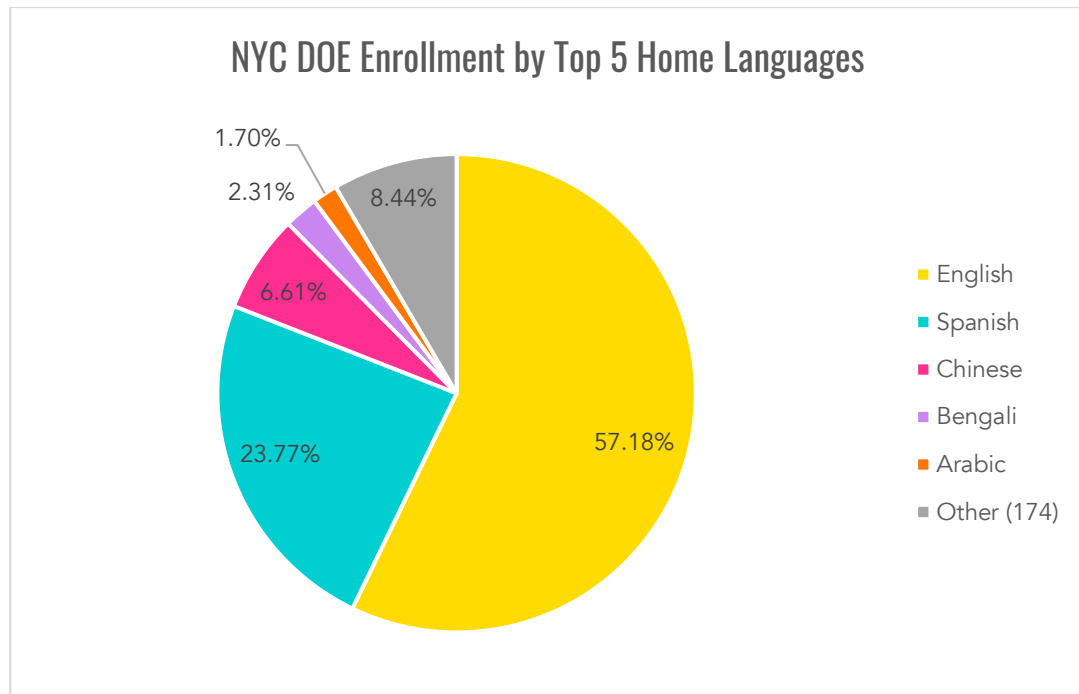
Fig. 1. New York's Enrollment by Top 5 Home Languages. Created by NYC DOE's Division of English Language Learners and Student Support, English Language Learner Demographics Report for the 2016-17 School Year, *2018, p. 68.*

Also in the 2016-2017 school year, 13.02% of the student population of the NYCDOE were classified as English Learners (ELs), and 60.6% of them spoke Spanish at home.[4]

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[3] National Center for Education Statistics, 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp. While the Department of Education uses the term "English Language Learners (ELLs)" to identify those students whose language is not English and who have scored below a certain cut score on a state exam to identify their English proficiency, this guide will hereafter use the more strengths-based term "English Learner (EL)", as this term does not assume that EL students are lacking a language – indeed they already have a language – but indicates, more accurately, that they are simply in the process of learning English.

[4] Division of English Language Learners and Student Support, New York City Department of Education, "English Language Learner Demographics Report for the 2016-17 School Year", 2018, https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2016-17-demographic-report-v10_remediated.pdf

But it is not only large urban centers that are hubs of cultural and linguistic heterogeneity; changing migration flows and demographics in the last decades have resulted in the increasing presence of Latin American and Latinx students, as well as children, youth, and families of diverse backgrounds in rural areas of the Midwestern and Southern United States. This demographic process is described by some as the "New Latino Diaspora."[5]

Overall, these trends mean an increasing richness in our social and educative fabrics, as well as unique opportunities for educators seeking to coach students to academic success in increasingly heterogeneous classrooms. And yet, schools and programs serving students from Latin America often lack the financial and human resources to develop and implement the linguistically and culturally relevant pedagogical supports whose cognitive, socio-emotional, and academic benefits have been proven.

Low-income immigrant and EL students, many of whom are Spanish speakers, have fewer education opportunities and resources, worse educational trajectories, and lower achievement scores than other groups in the US. They are often students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) and thus demonstrate low literacy skills in their home languages, making adaptation to school and a college-going environment extremely challenging. In the midst of high and increasing rates of poverty and segregation, immigrant youth – many of whom in the US are Latin American and Latinx students – are both "overlooked and underserved" in high-needs schools.[6] High-stakes standardized testing has aggravated the capacity of schools to support English learning, placing tremendous pressure on schools with high numbers of immigrant students.[7]

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[5] Edmund Hamann, Stanton Wortham, S. and Enrique G. Murillo Jr. (editors), *Revisiting education in the new Latino diaspora* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2015).

[6] Jorge Ruiz-de-Velasco, Michael Fix and Beatriz C. Clewell, *Overlooked and Underserved: Immigrant Students in US Secondary Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2000).

[7] Jamal Abedi and Ron Dietel, "Challenges in the No Child Left Behind act for English-language learners", *Phi Delta Kappan* 85, no. 10 (2004): 782-785.

In NYC, the lower graduation rates of ELs highlights how the accountability measures introduced by the New York State Board of Regents have increased their dropout rates.

For all of these reasons, teachers, administrators, and non-formal educators without formal backgrounds in ESL or culturally relevant teaching often find themselves having to come up with techniques on the spot to fully accommodate the various learning styles and needs of the students in their classrooms. What is more, accountability pressures, lack of time, and human and financial resources mean that the complex, individual linguistic and cultural backgrounds of our nation's students all too often continue to be seen as obstacles to be overcome instead of as sources of motivation and knowledge that can fuel academic achievement. Thus, this guide seeks to help those working with students of Latin American background engage in pedagogical techniques that utilize and leverage the foundational skills children are bringing from their home countries. In turn, this will enable schools to progress in educating a heterogeneously diverse classroom of students in a culturally relevant manner while still meeting high academic standards.

Given the above, the following guide contains background theoretical context and both activities for educators/teachers to complete themselves as professional development, as well as accompanying activities for them to implement with students of various grade levels. Each activity will suggest the K-12 level(s) and subject(s) where it may be applied, but feel free to use your imagination to adapt the activities to your classroom and subject. Sometimes, you may find additional tips or resources for your class under "Teacher Takeaway". In addition to suggested activities, at the end of each theoretical section you will find a "From Latin America to your classroom" section, which provides resources – including information, photos, links, and my own experiences in the region – that will help you brainstorm ways to incorporate the cultures and languages of Latin America and the Caribbean into your activities.

1.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amanda Earl is an Ed.D. candidate in the International Educational Development Program of the International and Transcultural Studies Department at Teachers College, Columbia University. She was a doctoral recipient of the Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship through Columbia's Institute of Latin American Studies, thanks to which she became a student of Náhuatl, one of the 68 Indigenous languages spoken today in Mexico. Her research interests converge around educational policies and teaching practices that affect culturally and linguistically diverse students, particularly Indigenous students in Latin America and Latin American, Latinx, and recent immigrant students in the US. She has worked as an educator for over ten years, both as a language teacher (grades 6-12) in Philadelphia, and in college access for recent immigrant high school students in New York City. Among her time in Latin America, her experience working in community development in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and her current doctoral field work among Indigenous university students in rural Veracruz, Mexico, has afforded her wide exposure to the many different ways that school systems and classrooms are organized – in public and private, as well as formal and informal settings – to serve students in the Latin American context. Amanda holds an M.A. in International Educational Development from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a B.A. in Classics from Brown University.

PART 2 DESIGN & CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

Fig. 2. A Bienvenidos or "Welcome" sign.

This guide aims to provide educators teaching in classrooms where students speak more than one language and come from various cultural backgrounds with practical teaching tips and strategies whose cognitive and socio-emotional benefits are firmly rooted in and supported by theoretical and empirical research and observation. The theories and strategies presented are focused on teaching students of Latin American backgrounds but can be applicable for students of other backgrounds as well. More specifically, implementing the activities in this guide will help you to:

- Connect current research and theories of language & culture with your educational practice;
- Explore ways to address diversity within diversity in the classroom; and
- Understand benefits and strategies for promoting multilingualism and multiple cultural perspectives in the classroom.

2.1 FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE
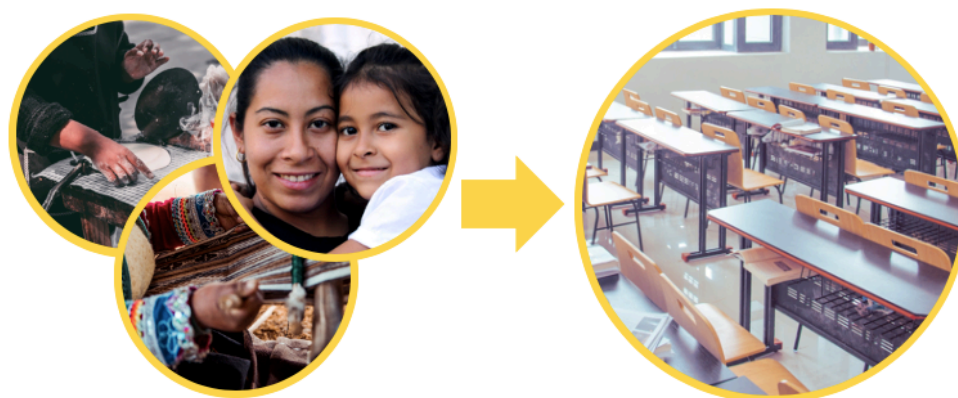
Fig. 3. Funds of knowledge.

This guide is rooted in the concept of "funds of knowledge"[8], which refers not to the knowledge schools assume students should have, but posits that the "historically accumulated" and culturally-informed practices – or the knowledge and skills – that students are engaged in with their families in their homes, through migration processes, and with neighbors and mentors in their communities, are valuable culturally and cognitively, and should be incorporated into classroom learning and practices in order to improve educational quality. For instance, although a student might come from an immigrant or working-class background and their parents did not complete high school, or although a student might struggle with interrupted formal education and be behind in acquiring formal numeracy skills, that student might also possess knowledge gleaned from household management practices and accounting skills they engage in with their mother or father (e.g. making a grocery or shopping list according to a household budget) that can be used as a jumping-off point to discuss more formal math or economics problems in the classroom.

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[8] Norma González, Luis C. Moll and Cathy Amanti (editors), *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

How knowledge and skills from students' home environments can be connected to and leveraged in traditional classrooms can vary depending on the particular students' ages, skill sets and experiences, teaching methods, or administrative, teacher, and student needs. In the context of a student who has recently migrated with their parents, their background knowledge and skill sets will be different from those who were born in the US, for example. In other words, educators' strategies to leverage students' varied funds of knowledge do not have to be (nor is it possible for them to be) rigid or predetermined, but rather should be dependent on with whom and where they are working, and based on co-constructing meaning, identity, and skills in the classroom.

TEACHER TAKEAWAY

As educators of students of Latin American backgrounds, we must act not only as transmitters of knowledge, but as conduits between home and school practices. We must be proactive about getting to know the social, economic, political, and historical contexts of the regions our students come from and those of their households. This is by no means easy, but it is doable, and this guide will provide a few culturally relevant and cognitively supportive practical exercises which you can implement in your own classrooms, adjusting for age and ability level.

ACTIVITY #1: STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

Reframing Family/Community Resources as Academic Resources: Using Artifacts in the Classroom[9]

Suggested Grade Level: K-6, although it can be adapted to older students
Suggested Subject(s): English Language Arts, Social Studies

Fig. 4. Students presenting "Show and Tell".

It is no wonder "Show and Tell" is so popular in elementary school: "artifacts" – or objects – that have value to students can be used to cross the traditional boundary between home/community/country of origin and school.[10] By allowing students to express the significance of an object either orally or through writing, literacy practices are linked across the domains of home, school, and community and made more accessible, at the same time as parents, family, and the objects that mediate their everyday life can be valued in the classroom.

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[9] This activity is based on the "Opening the Box" activity described in Mary Scanlan, "Opening the box: literacy, artefacts and identity", *Literacy* 44, no. 1 (2010): 28-36. According to Scanlan, some of the benefits of this activity include incorporating student autonomy and choice within a literacy project, and allowing classmates to dialogue and learn each about others' lives at home.

[10] Kate Pahl and Jennifer Rowsell, *Artifactual Literacies: Every Object Tells a Story* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2010).

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Ask students (or if the students are younger, ask students and parents through a letter to home) to collect in a shoebox meaningful objects from home that they might be interested in writing about. These could be items that are important to them or to one or several of their family or community members.

2 Students can share in small groups the importance of these object(s) to their peers before making an oral presentation defending or justifying their choice of object(s).

3 Students must then write a narrative describing the importance of their chosen objects to them or within their home, community, and/or country of origin.

4 (Optional): Student narratives can be illustrated, bound, and sent home to be shared with parents and/or family. For older students, they could also be asked to engage in research around the history and use(s) of the artifact(s) collected.

FROM LATIN AMERICA TO YOUR CLASSROOM:
ARTIFACTS FROM LATIN AMERICA THAT DEMONSTRATE FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

In many regions of Latin America, as in the world, migration to cities is increasing not only due to economic, but also to sociopolitical and climatic reasons. For example, in Mexico, only 22% of the population lived in rural areas in 2010, compared to 57% in 1950 (INEGI, 2010).[11] This means that many Mexican and Central American migrants are moving to urban areas within Mexico and also to the US from rural – and more economically disadvantaged – regions that are home to large concentrations of Indigenous language speakers, agricultural workers, and "*campesinos*" or peasant farmers. Therefore, it is likely that some of the students of Mexican and Central American background that you have in your classroom – and their parents, families, and co-ethnic communities – might possess unique traditions and household skills related to farming, food production, and rural life that form an important part of their identity and knowledge, but that they do not normally get to demonstrate in the classroom. Inviting them to share objects, texts, or stories (artifacts) related to that knowledge can be a powerful teaching tool. Below are a few examples:

[11] Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), "Cuéntame: Población", 2010, http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/poblacion/rur_urb.aspx?tema=P.

THE *METATE, MANO,* AND *MAIZE*

Fig. 5. Imelda Gutiérrez Hernández uses a mano to roll out tortilla dough on a metate in her kitchen at the municipality of Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz, Mexico.

The *metate*, a stone tool dating back to pre-Columbian times, along with the *mano*, the rolling pin-like object pictured here, are used in the traditional process of grinding corn, or *maize*, to make the corn dough for tortillas and other foods that have been a central part of the diet in the US Southwest, Mexico, and Central America. Before the corn is ground, it is boiled together with *cal* or lime from limestone (calcium hydroxide) to make *nixtamal* – from the Náhuatl[12] words "nextli" or "ashes", and "tamal" or "corn dough" – in a process which we know from archaeological evidence existed on the southern coast of Guatemala nearly 4,000 years ago, and which spread throughout Mesoamerica.[13] The process of "nixtamalization" is essential for the health, not only improving the flavor of the corn and making it easier to work into dough, but also releasing niacin (Vitamin B3) and other proteins that humans need to absorb in order to avoid deficiency diseases.[14]

While electric grinders have displaced the use of the traditional *metate* especially in cities and higher-income homes, in some homes like the one pictured here in rural Mexico, family members – particularly women and girls – still use them often to produce the dough for the many delicious hand-made tortillas consumed daily, thus occupying an important role in the local culinary and cultural imaginary.

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[12] Náhuatl was the language of the Aztec Empire. It is currently spoken by over 1.7 million people in Mexico (see Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), *Cuéntame de México*, 2015, http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/default.aspx), and increasingly among Indigenous immigrants in NYC (see Endangered Language Alliance, *Nahuatl*: *ELA's work*, 2016, http://elalliance.org/languages/meso-america/nahuatl/).

[13] Sophie D. Coe, *America's First Cuisines* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

[14] See Tanya M. Peres, Malnourished: cultural ignorance paved the way for pellagra (*Gravy*), https://www.southernfoodways.org/malnourished-cultural-ignorance-paved-the-way-for-pellagra/

THE *MORRAL*

Fig. 6. A university student carries his lunch and books in a morral huasteco in the municipality of Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz, Mexico.

A *morral* is a messenger-style shoulder bag, traditionally used by hunters, soldiers, or travelers to carry food or provisions.[15] While nowadays they are used more widely and can be found in many different styles, fabrics, and designs in various countries, in certain parts of rural Mexico and Central America the *morral* continues to have local instrumental and cultural or symbolic significance.

The *morral huasteco* comes from the Tantoyuca region of Veracruz, Mexico and was traditionally woven by hand with *ixtle* fibers derived from *maguey* or agave plants. While years ago schoolchildren might have used them to carry books, *campesinos*, or peasant farmers, still use the *morral huasteco* as a tool to carry their machete, lunch, and other items they might need for the day as they head into the *milpa*, the cornfields or other crops that they tend.[16] The bag can also often be seen hanging on ceremonial altars or being used in traditional ceremonies linked to the cultivation of corn, or other petitions or religious celebrations. Thus, the bag serves an instrumental purpose in the daily labor of the *campesino huasteco*, while also being linked symbolically to the agro-ecological knowledge and cosmovisions of the region.

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[15] "Morral", *Wordreference*, accessed January 20, 2020, https://www.wordreference.com/definicion/morral.

[16] *Zunoticia: Comunicación de Las Huastecas, Huasteca Sur*, "Morral de Ixtle Sigue en uso por las personas de campo", May 14, 2016, https://www.zunoticia.com/morral-de-ixtle-sigue-en-uso-por-las-personas-de-campo/

Fig. 7. Carlos Alberto Cruz sews a tablecloth embroidered with birds of the Huasteca region of Veracruz, Mexico.

According to Carlos Alberto Cruz González,[17] For many Indigenous communities in Latin America, *bordado* or embroidery is a pastime that also forms part of the local cultural patrimony and identity. The act of sewing among family and friends entails a process of intergenerational teaching and learning outside of the classroom; at the same time, viewers of finished embroidered textiles can learn about local history and experience through the symbols and narratives inscribed upon them.

Embroidered objects exemplify not only technical knowledge of how to manipulate cloth, needle, and thread, but their creation also transmits knowledge of the cycles of cultivation of cotton, of its treatment with dyes made from local flora and fauna, the interwoven threads coming together to depict individual and collective life experiences.

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[17] A professor at the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural located in Veracruz, Mexico, who is a native of the La Huasteca region; information and the quote in this section come from an interview conducted with him by this guide's author in Fall 2019.

Fig. 8. Carlos Alberto Cruz sews a tablecloth embroidered with birds of the Huasteca region of Veracruz, Mexico.

Indeed, embroidered objects often allude to the cosmogony of a particular community, depicting images from nature such as animals, birds, and plants that are part of everyday life. Thus, these representations also acquire a spiritual value for those who make and use them, because they allow individuals to represent their respect for the natural and divine that surrounds them.

In the words of Cruz González, pictured here sewing local birds of his region:

" In this sense, a garment is a unique representation that cannot be reproduced in any other way because the artisan, grandfather, or grandmother [who makes it] is expressing part of their life, of their understanding of nature and expressing their gratitude with the spiritual. "

MATE

Mate, which in Spanish refers both to the tea-like beverage and the gourd used to drink it (pictured right along with a thermos of hot water), is a popular caffeinated drink across South America, particularly in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil. It is made from the dried leaves of an evergreen shrub whose scientific name is *Ilex paraguariensis*. *Mate* was consumed by the Guaraní and Tupi peoples of South America before being harvested on a larger scale by Europeans who colonized the area.[18] While it is referred to and prepared differently in different languages (in Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, and Guaraní, for instance) and regions where it is consumed, it is often drunk communally, with the gourd and *bombilla*, or metal straw, being passed around from person to person. Because these objects form an important part of the social and cultural life of the countries mentioned above, you often find them accompanying people in their daily lives, from the kitchen to work, to school, to picnics in the park with friends.

Fig. 9. The traditional mate pot.

[18] Melissa Petruzzello, "Mate", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 30, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/topic/mate-beverage

2.2   A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH TO TEACHING IN CONTEXTS OF DIVERSITY

Fig. 10. Students with hands covered in clay learning together.

Teaching students who come from diverse backgrounds in one classroom – even if they all have in common that they are of Latin American descent – presents various challenges, including recognizing and understanding diversity within diversity, addressing linguistic and academic challenges of students, and often dealing with student trauma and associated risk factors. Adopting a "strengths-based approach," which sees the diverse languages, knowledges, experiences and cultures of students as cognitive and socio-emotional strengths, as assets rather than obstacles, is fundamental for helping students use the unique skills and worldviews – or funds of knowledge – they possess to achieve academic success.

It can be useful to try re-framing the challenges you experience in your classroom every day into strengths, both in your own mindset and in the language and framing you use with your students, starting with the below activity:

ACTIVITY #2: TEACHER REFLECTION

Exercising a Strengths-Based Approach

Suggested grade level & subject(s): This activity is meant to be carried out at a teacher/educator professional development or training by teachers of any grade level and/or subject(s). However, it can also be adapted for teachers to complete individually to reflect on their own mindset, or for a group of students to complete in the classroom to reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement.

MATERIALS NEEDED

White board, chalk board or chart paper
Post-its in 2 different colors (ex. blue and yellow)
Pens or markers

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Distribute 3-5 Post-its of each color to all participants.

2 On the blue Post-its, each participant should take 5 minutes to jot down the main challenges that come to mind when it comes to teaching in a context of linguistic and/or cultural diversity (write only one challenge per Post-it).

Note: Challenges can include those of teaching English Learners, or challenges in teaching in linguistically or racially diverse contexts, and could be encountered at the student, teacher, or school level, but should be specific to the participants' particular context and experience.

3 As they finish writing, have participants come up and stick their challenges to a whiteboard/chart paper so that all can see. Once all are posted, select the most salient ones to read aloud.

4 Participants should now take 5 more minutes to turn each challenge they wrote into a strength by writing on each pink Post-it an associated asset or skill that might coincide with the challenge they have posted on the board.

5 Reflection: What were the most common and most unique challenges? Were you able to come up with a strength for every challenge (why or why not)? If you were not able to come up with a strength for a particular challenge, discuss with a colleague some other ways of looking at it or additional resources you might consult around this issue.

FROM LATIN AMERICA TO YOUR CLASSROOM:
COMMON CHALLENGES, STRENGTHS-BASED SOLUTIONS

RESOURCE FOR WORKING WITH LATINX SIFE

Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE), sometimes referred to as Students with Limited or Inconsistent Formal Education (SLIFE), are identified by the New York State Department of Education as those English Language Learners (ELLs) "'who have attended schools in the U.S. for less than 12 months and who, upon initial enrollment…, are two or more years below grade level in [home language] literacy … or math due to inconsistent or interrupted schooling' upon arrival in the U.S." (NYSED, 2015 as quoted in Digby, 2019[19], p. 13).

Many students labeled as SIFE come from Latin America (in 2016, 64% of SIFE students spoke Spanish as their home language). Many of these students, particularly those from Mexico, Central and South America, arrive as adolescents to the US during middle or high school and experience staggeringly higher dropout rates than the general population and their younger counterparts who arrive at younger ages to the US, as they struggle to acquire unfamiliar high-level academic content in a few short years of formal schooling (Digby, 2019). It is therefore imperative that educators and researchers become familiar with the pre- during- and post-migration experiences of SIFE students and also the best practices for working with them in school settings.

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[19] See Sarah Digby, *Supporting Latino Students with Interrupted Formal Education: A Guide for Teachers* (NY: Institute of Latin America Studies, Columbia University, 2019), accessed January, 2020, http://ilas.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Volume-VI-5.pdf
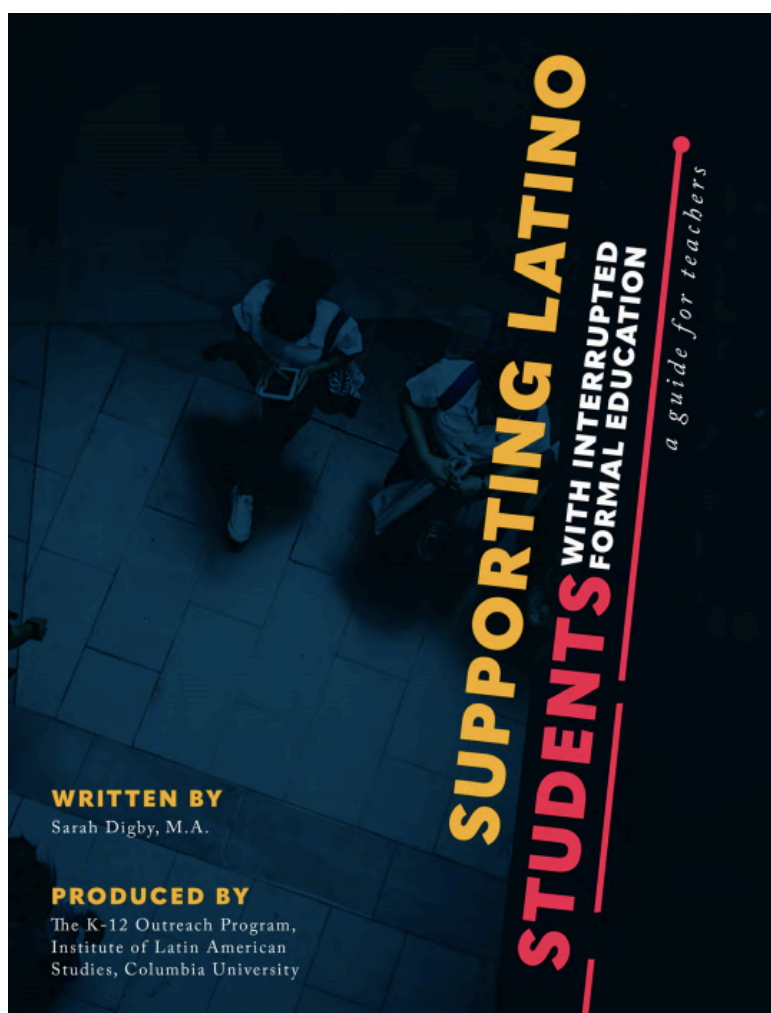
Fig. 11. The 2019 K-12 Outreach Program resource guide. Taken from http://ilas.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Volume-VI-5.pdf

A fantastic resource for teachers of SIFE students - *Supporting Latino Students with Interrupted Formal Education: A Guide for Teachers* - written by Sarah Digby and also produced by Columbia University's Institute of Latin American Studies K-12 Outreach Program, can be downloaded for free. This guide and Sarah Digby's work are based on her firsthand experience in Honduras and in working with immigrant students from Central America in a high school in New York City.

PART 3 CONTEXTUALIZING CHALLENGES OF AND CHALLENGING MYTHS ABOUT STUDENTS OF LATIN AMERICAN BACKGROUNDS

Our US classrooms have in the past and in the future will continue to serve students who represent a diversity of home languages, cultures, and racial or ethnic identities. Nevertheless, those languages and identities are often not represented in the dominant curriculum. As many K-12 educators are already aware, this dearth of representation does not just stem from lack of knowledge around the cognitive and academic needs of students, for it is well-documented in educational research, and teachers can see through their own experience, that culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy enhances students' self-esteem, cognitive abilities, their cultural and social capital in school and, therefore, their academic achievement.[20]

Rather, teachers are often hindered by structural impediments to implement culturally relevant curriculum. The same goes for political and popular ideologies (which in turn lead to public and school policies) which allege that being a "successful American" means to assimilate and learn English as quickly as possible.

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[20] See Norma González, Luis C. Moll and Cathy Amanti (editors), *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005). See also Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy", *American Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 3 (1995): 465-491; see also Django Paris and Samy Alim, "What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward", *Harvard Educational Review* 84, no.1 (2014): 85-100.

The mindsets of some teachers, parents and students themselves also tell them that using their home language in the classroom or in their academic studies will hinder them from achieving English proficiency[21] and passing high-stakes standardized tests and college-entrance exams.[22] Further, depending on political and social contexts, many students from Latin America might be dealing with past or ongoing traumatic experiences of the migratory process[23], fears of deportation, and uncertainty about the future[24], which can affect their academic behavior in the classroom.

It is essential that educators that seek to dispel myths about how best to support students from Latin America promote cognitively and culturally supportive relevant pedagogy in their classrooms, be familiar with the research, and can argue for such pedagogy when confronted with resistance from skeptical policymakers, administrators, colleagues, parents or students. The below information and activities aim to foment this familiarity and teachers' capabilities to support and defend culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy.[25]

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[21] See Ofelia García, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); see also Lila D. Monzó, L. D. and Robert Rueda, R., "Passing for English Fluent: Latino Immigrant Children Masking Language Proficiency", *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2009): 20–40.

[22] See Kate Menken, K. and Cristian Solorza, "No Child Left Bilingual Accountability and the Elimination of Bilingual Education Programs in New York City Schools", *Educational Policy* 28, no. 1 (2014): 96-125.

[23] See Elizabeth Kennedy, *No Childhood Here: Why Central American Children Are Fleeing Their Homes* (Washington, D.C.: The American Immigration Council, 2014), http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/perspectives/no-childhood-here-why-central-american-children-are-fleeing-their-homes; see also William P. Simmons and Michelle Téllez, "Sexual violence against migrant women and children", in *Human Rights: The U.S.-Mexico Experience* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 44-67.

[24] See American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, *Crossroads: The Psychology of Immigration in the New Century* (Washington, DC: APA, 2012), http://www.apa.org/topics/immigration/report.aspx; see also Lisa Martinez, (2014) "Dreams Deferred: The Impact of Legal Reforms on Undocumented Latino Youth", *The American Behavioral Scientist* 57, no. 4 (2014): 1873–1873, and see Lorraine Salas, Cecilia Ayón and Maria Gurrola, "Estamos traumados: The effect of anti-immigrant sentiment and policies on the mental health of Mexican immigrant families", *Journal of Community Psychology* 41, no. 8 (2013): 1005–1020.

[25] For more on culturally sustaining pedagogy, see Django Paris, "Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice", *Educational Researcher* 41, no. 3 (2012): 93-97.

3.1 RECOGNIZING AND ENGAGING DIVERSITY WITHIN DIVERSITY: CHALLENGING THE MYTH THAT "HISPANIC STUDENTS" IS A HOMOGENEOUS CATEGORY

While Latin American and Latinx students are often grouped into the category "Hispanic" by media, censuses, and social service institutions and assumed to share a common linguistic and cultural background, such **ethnic and linguistic categorization by schools can also** mask the diversity of these students' identities and experiences **and, ultimately,** academic and socio-emotional needs. For instance, while the large majority (76.6% in fall 2016)[26] of English Learner students (ELs) in the US school system speak Spanish at home and are often considered "Hispanic," of course not all Hispanic, Latinx, or even Latin American students are ELs. A middle or upper-class student who has migrated from Latin America with parents might have attended a private, bilingual school in their home country and demonstrate a proficient level of English upon entering a US school. Conversely, a US citizen whose working-class or low-income parents speak only Spanish – or any other language of the Americas – at home might be classified as an EL upon entering elementary school if they have not yet been exposed to the kind of English expected by US school systems. **Consider the difference in these students' academic needs based on their** socioeconomic, linguistic, and educational history backgrounds.

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[26] US Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics ED*Facts* file 141, Data Group 678 (2017), as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, "English Language Learners in Public Schools." *The Condition of Education 2019*, 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

US Student Population
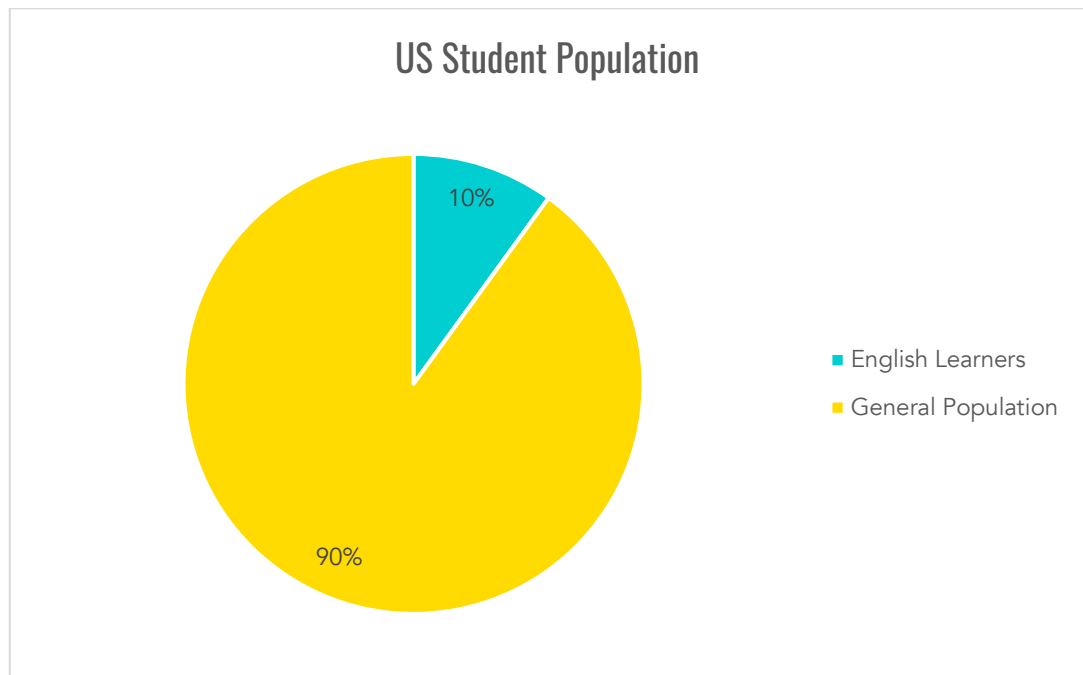
- English Learners — 10%
- General Population — 90%

Fig. 12. A majority of ELs – and half of ELs in New York – are born in the US.
National Center for Education Statistics, "English Language Learners in Public Schools", The Condition of Education 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

Share of EL Students by Grade and Nativity, 2015

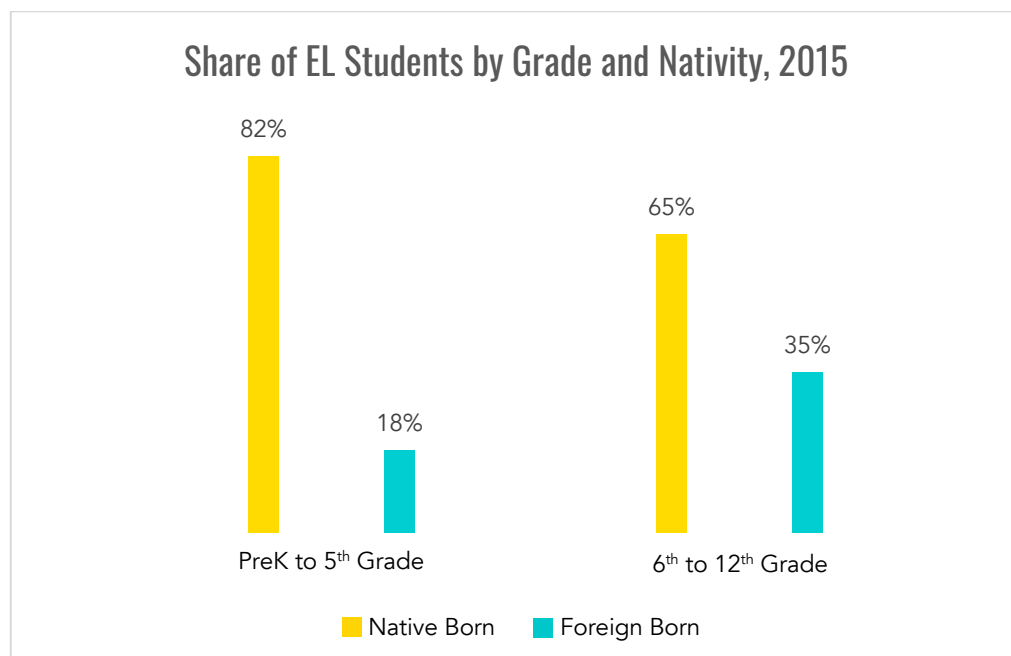|	Native Born	Foreign Born
PreK to 5th Grade	82%	18%
6th to 12th Grade	65%	35%

Fig. 13. Share of EL Students by Grade and Nativity in 2015. Taken from the Migration Policy Institute as cited in Corey Mitchell, "Majority of English-Learner Students Are Born in the United States, Analysis Finds", Learning the Language (blog), December 7, 2016, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2016/12/majority_of_english-leaner_students_are_born_in_the_united_states.html

Hispanic students represented about 25% of the US student population and Hispanic ELs constituted 77.2% of all US English Learners in fall 2016. Yet, the number of Hispanic ELs is greater than the number of ELs who speak Spanish at home,[27] and even within particular language categories such as "Spanish," there is much racial, ethnic, national, and other diversity. Thus, while the New York City Department of Education reports that the majority (61%) of ELs in NYC come from Spanish-speaking homes, with the next most widely spoken home language being Chinese (13%), we must also ask: What do such tables and statistics obscure?
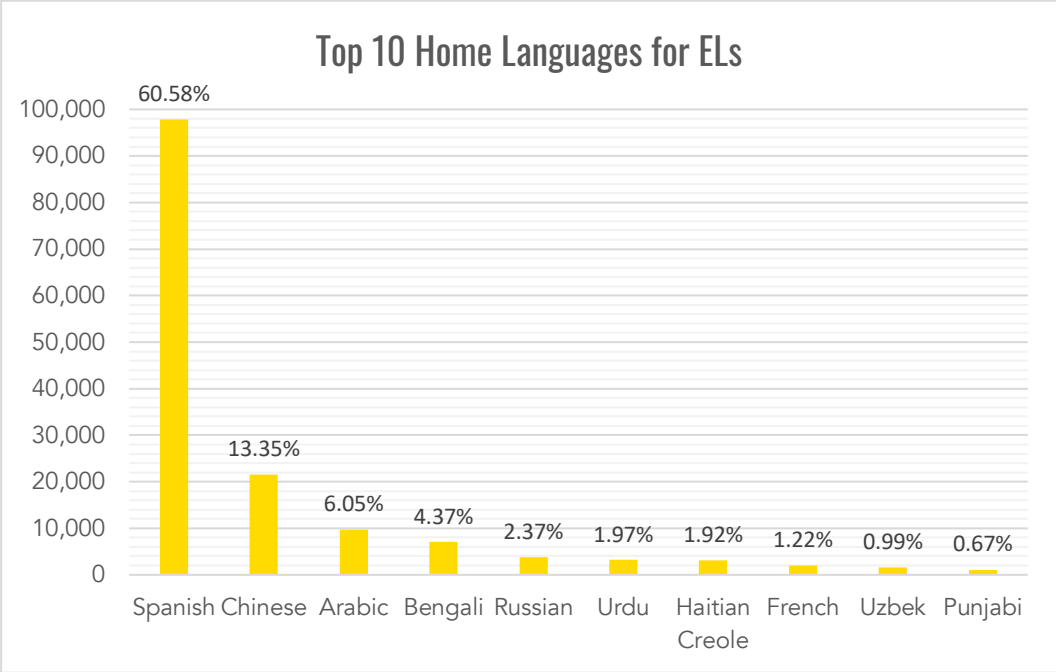
Fig. 14. Top 10 home languages for ELs in New York City. Taken from the NYC DOE's Division of English Language Learners and Student Support, English Language Learner Demographics Report for the 2016-17 School Year, *2018, p. 19*

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[27] National Center for Education Statistics, 2019.

Consider the following map, recently published by the Endangered Language Alliance[28], which provides more detail on the number and type of languages spoken in different regions of New York City in 2019, including the languages that are primarily oral and which have smaller populations of speakers:

Fig. 15. Zoomed-in view of the Endangered Language Alliance map from Queens, New York City, 2019. The full, zoomable map is available at: https://elalliance.org/programs/maps/

WHAT LANGUAGES ARE SPOKEN IN THE AREAS OF JACKSON HEIGHTS AND CORONA, QUEENS?

As you can see, it is not only "Spanish" that is common in this area but, more specifically, varieties of Mexican, Ecuadorian, and Colombian Spanish which, while mutually intelligible, are particular in terms of culture and vocabulary. Also notable is the large number of Indigenous languages represented from across North and South America, such as, among others, Ñuu Savi (Mixtec), HñäHñu (Otomí), Tepehua, and Náhuatl from Mexico, Aymar aru (Aymara) and Runasimi (Quechua) from Bolivia. In other words, not all Hispanic or Latinx English Learners are speakers of the same kind of Spanish at home and, further still, they might be speakers of languages other than Spanish, such as an Indigenous language(s) or a Creole.

TEACHER TAKEAWAY

Students with Latin American backgrounds, as well as the English Learners represented among them, are not a homogeneous group. They come from varying national, linguistic, cultural, economic, racial, and educational backgrounds; Afro-Latinx or Indigenous youth and their families might not identify with or have the same experiences as their Latinx peers. In turn, the varying socioeconomic, cultural, and educational backgrounds of these different groups might result in students who identify as Hispanic or Latinx, but who have very different literacy skills. It is important to reflect on the specific nature of the "diversity" we see in our students, and what exactly we are referring to when we use such a term, as well as to unpack with our students the multiplicity of ways diversity is reflected in our classrooms.

ACTIVITY #3: STUDENT REFLECTION & RESEARCH

Reflecting on Identity Labels

Suggested Grade Level: Grades 6-12
Suggested Subject(s): Social Studies

Many young people in the US might prefer "Latinx" as a more inclusive term than "Hispanic," while others might identify with both or neither; some might not have a strong opinion at all.

INTSRUCTIONS

1 Ask your students to reflect on which terms if any they identify with and why, especially in connection with Latin America.

2 Then, ask them to do some research: **What are the historical, social, political and/or economic origins of the pan-ethnic labels "Hispanic", "Latinx" and "Latin American"? Why do the origins of identity labels matter?** Does knowing the history of these terms change students' opinions on which they prefer to identify with? How does the sense of belonging to a specific country/background in Latin America affect you in school/home, with family, with friends?

FROM LATIN AMERICA TO YOUR CLASSROOM:
AFRO-DESCENDANTS OF LATIN AMERICA

GET TO KNOW THE HISTORY AND CULTURES OF AFRO-DESCENDANTS IN THE AMERICAS

One identity group that has tended to be overlooked by official statistics and censuses[29], but that has made important contributions to both Latin American and US history and culture is that of Afro-descendants.

According to data from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database of the *Slave Voyages* project, from the years 1501-1875, over 12 million Africans were forcibly removed from their homelands to fuel the American slave trade. Out of these, over 7.1 million disembarked in Spanish or Portuguese colonies, about 15 times as many as the nearly 473,000 that disembarked in mainland North America.[30] This dark colonial history is reflected in the racial and ethnic complexity that comprises contemporary identity and citizenship in the Americas. It is estimated that there are 133 million Afro-descendants currently living in Latin America, with one of every four Latin Americans identifying as Afro-descendant.[31] While perhaps Afro-descendants living in the Caribbean and Brazil are more widely recognized, given that they make up a third (Cuba) or half (in Brazil) of the population,[32] countries throughout the region of Latin America are home to Afro-descendant communities.[33]

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[29] Gustavo López and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, "Afro-Latino: A deeply rooted identity among U.S. Hispanics", *Fact Tank: Pew Research Center*, March 1, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/01/afro-latino-a-deeply-rooted-identity-among-u-s-hispanics/

[30] Voyages Database, "Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database", accessed January 20, 2020, https://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates#; see also López, G. & Gonzalez-Barrera, A., March 1, 2016.

[31] Germán N. Freire, Carolina Diaz-Bonilla *et al.*, *Afro-descendants in Latin America: toward a framework of inclusion* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2018), http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/896461533724334115/Afro-descendants-in-Latin-America-toward-a-framework-of-inclusion

[32] Gustavo López and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, March 1, 2016.

[33] Julienne Gage, "It's Black History Month. Here are Five Ideas for Teaching About Afro-Latino Identity", *Progress Report, Unidos US*, February 15, 2019, https://progressreport.co/its-black-history-month-here-are-five-ideas-for-teaching-about-afro-latino-identity/

See, for example, their sizable presence in the South American countries of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Uruguay in the map (Table 1) of "Afro-descendants in Latin America" put together by the Pew Research Center[34] (2016).

Many of these communities have suffered extreme exclusion and discrimination, dropping out or being pushed out of school at higher rates and earning less than their non-Afro-descendant peers with the same education level in all countries of the region.[35] However, these communities have also fought for recognition throughout history and are rich with varied experiences, cultures, religions, and languages. For instance, the Garifuna who inhabit the Atlantic Coast of Central America originate from the Antilles, where slaves mixed with the native Carib population to give rise to a unique Garifuna language, music, and culture.[36]

LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY	NUMBER OF AFRO-DESCENDANTS (IN THOUSANDS)
Argentina	150
Brazil	97,083
Bolivia	24
Chile	97
Colombia	4,274
Costa Rica	334
Cuba	3,885
Dominican Republic	8,046
Ecuador	1,043
El Salvador	7
Guatemala	5
Honduras	59
Mexico	1,382
Nicaragua	23
Panama	313
Paraguay	234
Peru	411
Uruguay	255
Venezuela	14,534

Table 1. Afro-descendants in Latin America. Based on Gustavo López and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, "Afro-Latino: A deeply rooted identity among U.S. Hispanics", Fact Tank: Pew Research Center, March 1, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/01/afro-latino-a-deeply-rooted-identity-among-u-s-hispanics/

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[34] Gustavo López and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, March 1, 2016.
[35] Germán N. Freire, Carolina Diaz-Bonilla *et al.*, 2018.
[36] Julienne Gage, February 15, 2019.

Of course, there is also a sizeable representation of Afro-Latinx identity among Latinxs in the US, with nearly a quarter of those identified as "Latino" in the US also identifying as Afro-Latinx, as shown by a 2014 survey of Latino adults conducted by the Pew Research Center.[37] It is important to recognize that, in many Latin American countries and contexts, racial identity categories differ from those commonly referred to in the US, perhaps explaining in part the diversity of racial identifications among Afro-Latinxs in the US. Indeed, in 2014, a higher percentage of Afro-Latinxs identified as white or white mixed with another race (39%) than as black (18%) or Hispanic (24%).[38]

TEACHER TAKEAWAY

The trans-Atlantic slave trade database of the *Slave Voyages* project is an excellent resource for social studies, history, and other teachers. They have designed lesson plans based on their data that can be accessed at
https://www.slavevoyages.org/resources/lessons#lesson-plans/0/en/.

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[37] Gustavo López and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, March 1, 2016.
[38] Julienne Gage, February 15, 2019.

ACTIVITY #4: TEACHER & STUDENT REFLECTION

What Do We Mean by "Diversity"?

Suggested Audience: Teachers and students (grades 7-12)
Suggested Subject(s): English Language, Arts, Social Studies, History, Geography, Foreign Language

"Super-diversity" is a term used by British sociologist Steven Vertovec[39] to describe the intensification and "diversification of diversity" of migrants in the UK, which he explains as not just the diversity of ethnicities in a place, but the "dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants."

While some find the concept of **"super-diversity"** helpful in describing the changing nature of the social and linguistic landscape globally in the 21st century, others take issue with the term. Some argue that it is vague or imprecise, or that it is Euro/Western-centric, focusing only on immigration trends in Western Europe and the US rather than from the perspectives and experiences of Asia, Africa, the Pacific, and the rest of the Global South. Others argue that it is a-historic and perhaps alarmist in that it fails to recognize that changes or intensifications of existing diversity are nothing new, exaggerating the current state of migration and cultural change, and possibly fueling anti-immigration rhetoric.[40] In fact, educational sociolinguist Aneta Pavlenko[41] points out that, due to new migration from Southern and Eastern Europe, in 1910 the US was home to a foreign-born population of nearly 15% – higher than the 13.7% of 2017 mentioned in the introduction to this guide – and, in 1910, 58% of school-age children in urban areas (and 72% in New York!) were foreign-born.

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[39] Steven Vertovec, "Super-diversity and its implications", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 6 (2007): 1024–1054, p. 1024.
[40] Aneta Pavlenko, "Superdiversity and why it isn't: Reflections on terminological innovation and academic branding", in Barbara Schmenk, Stephan Breidbach and Lutz Küster (editors), *Sloganization in language education discourse: Conceptual thinking in the age of academic marketization*, (Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2018), 142-168.
[41] Aneta Pavlenko, "Superdiversity and why it isn't: Reflections on terminological innovation and academic branding", 142-168.

For others, the word "diversity" in general can act as a euphemism, referring to the inclusion of those considered out of the "norm," such as immigrants and people of color, while tacitly reifying difference and confirming the white male as the non-diverse "norm" against which diversity is measured, without explicitly addressing systemic racism and other forms of oppression or exclusion.[42]

Whether you agree that its degree and scope is intensifying or not, as "diversity" is a word that frequently appears in education policy and planning, it is important as a classroom educator to **take some time to interrogate how you use the term and what it means to you and your students.**[43] By doing this we can help students unpack and question these categories to better understand their complex identities and capabilities as well as those of other students, in turn helping them to build up their confidence, self-esteem, and toolkits to succeed academically.

QUESTIONS

What makes us diverse as a classroom? Take some time to reflect on the nature of the "diversity" you see in your own classroom. Aside from language or ethnicity, what other variables constitute diversity of your students, your school, or your region? Pay special attention to your students of Latin American backgrounds.

[42] Noah Berlatsky, "Op-Ed: 'Diversity' is a euphemism. We should be careful how we use it", *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-berlatsky-diversity-20170710-story.html
[43] This reflection could take many different forms. You could have your students brainstorm orally in a class discussion, assign a short essay or, particularly for younger students or for English Learners who do not yet have an advanced level of English proficiency, engage them in a project such as a "body biography" that helps them express their identities multi-modally (see "Multi-Modality" for example).

1

(continued)

Answer Key: Some possible characteristics that might constitute student diversity in the 21st century could include, but are certainly not limited to:

> Access to Services   Physical Capabilities
>
> Spatial Positioning   Age
>
> Culture   SES
>
> Language
>
> Legal Status   Migratory Background
>
> Labor Experience   Religion

2

Would you agree that we are living in an age of "super-diversity" that is qualitatively different from that of the 20th century or before? Why or why not? What could be some of the advantages and disadvantages (even dangers?) of focusing on the increasing diversity brought about by migration, and what could be harmful about labeling a student or a group of students as "diverse"?

For a more informed discussion, see the articles by Blommaert and De Bock.[44]

3

Now elicit the voices of your students directly to understand what they think makes them "diverse" (or not): have them reflect on their own backgrounds and identities as well as those of their peers. What characteristics of their identities are most important to them?

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[44] Jan Blommaert, *Ethnography, superdiversity, and linguistic landscapes: Chronicles of complexity* (Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2013); Jozefien De Bock, "Not all the same after all? Superdiversity as a lens for the study of past migrations", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 583-595.

TEACHER TAKEAWAY
Multi-Modality as a Way to Scaffold Writing Assignments for English Learners

In formal schooling activities, all too often we restrict our students to expressing themselves and what they know through reading and writing, or "verbocentric" / print-centric practices, but encouraging students to use multiple modes of expression, such as audio, video, dance, or textural elements combined with words can "provide additional avenues of meaning making to help learners [of all ages and literacy levels] explore diversity, culture, and literacy in complex ways."[45]

One multi-modal activity that Gavelek and Roof and other educators recommend as a way to re-present or interpret a text is a "body biography," which requires students to portray visually a character from a story using words, images, fabrics or other materials. Typically, the body biography is used as an alternative to a traditional "book report."[46]

However, a **body autobiography** can also serve as a great activity to assign to students to explore their own identities and diversity within the narrative of their own lives, neighborhoods, and school environment.

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[45] James R. Gavelek, J.R. and Lisa Roof, "More than just talk: multimodal composing and embodiment in explorations of culture and identity", in Mary B. McVee and Fenice B. Boyd (editors), *Exploring diversity through multimodality, narrative, and dialogue: A framework for teacher reflection* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 35-46.
[46] James R. Gavelek and Lisa Roof, "More than just talk: multimodal composing and embodiment in explorations of culture and identity", 35-46.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Students should be creative and analytical in portraying themselves.

2 Students can use whatever materials (and multiple languages, if they are not being evaluated on English language use) they want to portray the characteristics that they consider shape their diversity or uniqueness as an individual and/or student.
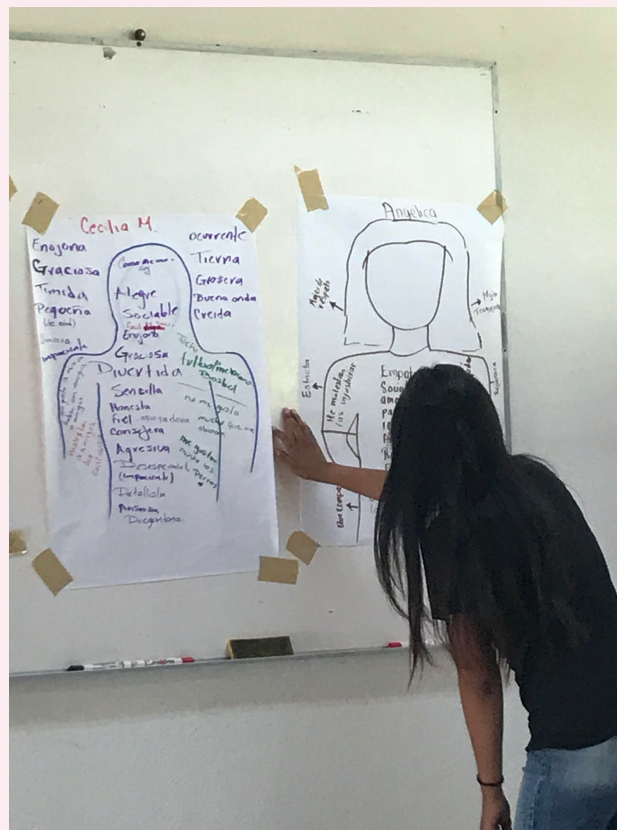

Fig. 16. An example of a body-autobiography activity in the classroom.

3 Teachers can require an accompanying essay that explains the autobiography, including explanations for how students chose to portray themselves.

FROM LATIN AMERICA TO YOUR CLASSROOM:
UNPACKING DIVERSITY IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

Though much attention is focused on the Spanish and Portuguese colonial history of Latin America, those areas that were colonized by other European powers experienced different national, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural trajectories that helped give rise to the diversity of the region as it exists today.

For instance, aside from Brazil, which was colonized by Portugal and thus maintains Portuguese as its official language, other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, including four in Central and South America – Belize, Suriname, Guyana, and French Guiana – are *not* primarily Spanish-speaking countries, and two of these countries' official language is English.

BELIZE

Located in Central America and bordered on its east by the Caribbean Sea and on its west by Mexico and Guatemala, Belize and its native Mayans were invaded by the Spanish in the 16th and 17th centuries before the British gained power, and the territory officially became the colony of British Honduras in 1862. Belize did not gain independence until 1981, so its official language (English) and institutions reflect its British heritage. Yet, due to the importation of African slaves as well as later migration to the area by Mayans from Mexico and Guatemala, Garifuna from the eastern Caribbean, and Chinese and South Asian laborers, Belize is an ethnically and religiously diverse country. Many languages besides the official English – primarily Belize Kriol but also Spanish, variations of Maya, the Garifuna language, and even a Germanic language spoken by Mennonites – are spoken today in Belize.[47]

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[47] William J. Griffith, Alfred E. Alford and O. Nigel Bolland, "Belize" *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed January 2, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/place/Belize.

GUYANA

Partially on the Atlantic coast and bordered on the northwest by Venezuela, on the west and south by Brazil, and on the east by Suriname, today's Guyana is one of the poorest countries in South America.

It was originally inhabited by Arawak, Carib, and Warao peoples before the Dutch settled the coast and began importing African slaves for sugarcane production. In 1796, British rule took hold and, after slaves were emancipated in 1838, plantation owners began to import indentured laborers from India. In addition, ethnic disputes between Afro-descendants and South Asians have occurred throughout Guyana's history. Guyana became independent in 1966, but English remains its official language. However, due to its ethnic diversity, you might also hear Hindi, Urdu, or Guyanese Creole being spoken in present-day Guyana. Guyana also demonstrates much religious diversity, with a quarter being Hindu, nearly a quarter Pentecostal, 7% Catholic, and another 7% Muslim, in addition to others who practice Indigenous religions.[48] Additionally, Guyana has a very high rate of emigration, with most emigrants living in the US (280,000 as of 2015). Indeed, **more than half of these Guyanese live in New York City (many in Queens), making them the fifth-largest immigrant population in the City.**[49]

In addition to these two examples, there exists much linguistic diversity across national contexts in Latin America, with Indigenous and other languages being spoken in many nations. Bolivia's 2009 constitution, for example, recognizes Spanish along with 36 Indigenous languages as official and, in Paraguay, both Spanish and Guarani are official[50] languages, with Guarani used as a language of instruction in schools since 1996.[51]

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[48] Jack K. Menke and Bonham C. Richardson, "Guyana", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed October 21, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/place/Guyana.

[49] Vivian Wangaug, "In Little Guyana, Proposed Cuts to Family Immigration Weigh Heavily", *The New York Times,* August 11, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/11/nyregion/in-little-guyana-proposed-cuts-to-family-immigration-weigh-heavily.html

[50] Peter J. McFarren and Charles W. Arnade, "Bolivia", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed November 14, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/place/Bolivia

[51] Gilbert J. Butland, Elman R. Service *et al.*, "Paraguay", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed August 29, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/place/Paraguay

3.2 RE-THINKING OUR MONOLINGUAL MINDSETS: CHALLENGING THE MYTH THAT ENGLISH ONLY WILL LEAD TO BETTER ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Though students of Latin American background represent a heterogeneous group with wide-ranging linguistic, cultural, national, racial and socio-economic backgrounds and different academic strengths and needs, they do face some important common experiences and challenges, particularly when it comes to language. In fact, such students are frequently multilingual, possessing multiple and varied literacies and/or cultural knowledge that can add to the contextual knowledge of the classroom; however, they are often encouraged to overlook that prior knowledge in order to fit into the US classroom. Namely, in formal schooling, students are often instructed (explicitly or implicitly) to:

- separate their languages (e.g. Spanish/other Latin American language and English) when speaking;
- use standard registers of languages when speaking and certainly when writing;
- disregard their experiences or meaningful interactions – including speaking or reading in languages other than English – that they engage in with mentors in their home communities, such as family or church members, or elders who have not attended formal schooling in the US.

Another **challenge that teachers of such students face** is **resistance or skepticism toward** the quality and value of multi-/bilingual curricula or programs, which can be common among students, their parents, and some administrators alike who, due to popular (and politicized) beliefs about English language learning combined with accountability pressures of standardized testing, often believe that investing time in using their home languages in school will hold them back socially and professionally.[52]

However, research on language learning shows that students' home languages are important resources for classroom learning. Rather than a hindrance, a student's literacy in their first or home language (often referred to as the L1 or mother tongue) acts as a bridge or boat to help them "swim to" or access and develop a second (or third, or fourth) language, in this case English. Language learners can apply their knowledge about how their home language works to better understand and develop additional languages, a process researchers refer to as "metalinguistic awareness."

TRANSLANGUAGING

One way to encourage the growth of students' metalinguistic awareness, as well as to promote their linguistic rights, is through translanguaging.

> **" Translanguaging is rooted in the belief that bilinguals select language features from one linguistic repertoire and soft assemble their language practices in ways that fit their particular sociolinguistic situation...By positioning the discourse 'between' two languages that are no longer static or linked to one national identity, translanguaging then generates alternative representations and enunciations. "**[53]

[52] See Ofelia García, Commentary: en/countering Indigenous bi/multilingualism, in *Indigenous youth and multilingualism: language identity, ideology, and practice in dynamic cultural worlds,* edited by Leisy T. Wyman, Teresa L. McCarty, and Sheila E. Nicholas (NY and Oxon, UK: Routeledge, 2014), 207–214; see also in the same book Jacqueline Messing, "'I didn't know you knew Mexicano!': shifting ideologies, identities, and ambivalence among former youth in Tlaxcala, Mexico", 137–155.

[53] Ofelia García, Nelson Flores and Heather H. Woodley, "Constructing in-between spaces to 'do' bilingualism: A tale of two high schools in one city", in *Multilingual Education: Between language learning and translanguaging,* edited by Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 199-224, p. 208.

In their book *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*[54], García and Wei go beyond Jim Cummins' model of linguistic interdependence and Common Underlying Proficiency[55] to emphasize translanguaging as both a description of how people use and produce language, and a strategy for teachers to use to support students' emerging and dynamic bi- or multi-lingualism.

Arguing that named languages (such as English and Spanish) are not separate entities cognitively but are rather political and social constructs, they suggest a model of **total common proficiency** in which speakers are constantly selecting from the whole set of linguistic features of the L1 and L2 and whatever other languages they might possess; in other words, the linguistic features or resources language speakers have at their disposal are not separated into buckets of languages in the mind, but rather form part of the student's unitary linguistic repertoire.

Indeed, research supports the fact that individuals highly proficient in more than one language – multilinguals – are more cognitively flexible. It might come as no surprise, then, that after **extended development**[56] of both the home language/L1 and L2, students in bilingual programs have been shown to outperform their monolingual peers on academic tests.[57]

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[54] Ofelia García and Li Wei, *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[55] According to which he posits that the underlying skills and knowledge or proficiency acquired in one language will transfer or be applied by the student to learning and becoming proficient in a second language. See James Cummins, "Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question, and some other matters", *Working Papers on Bilingualism* 19 (1979): 121-129.

[56] Key to the concept of extended development is giving students the time they need to develop language proficiency. There are different types of language skills and literacies, and it takes students more time to learn some than others. Once a student is speaking English fluently in the classroom, it does not mean that they are ready for all academic tasks in English. See Cummins (2008), listed in "additional resources" below, for the difference between Basic Interpersonal and Communication Skills (BICS), or conversational fluency, and Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

[57] Wayne P. Thomas and Virginia P. Collier, (2002). A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement. Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE). Santa Cruz, CA: University of California.

In studies of Latinx elementary school students bilingual in Spanish and English, successful bilingual readers explicitly transferred knowledge from one language to another and viewed their Spanish knowledge as helpful for understanding English, whereas unsuccessful readers viewed their bilingualism as more of a hindrance.[58]

Canagarajah defines codemeshing as translanguaging in writing:

> " **Unlike translanguaging, codemeshing also accommodates the possibility of mixing communicative modes and diverse symbol systems (other than language).** "[59]

TEACHER TAKEAWAY

Educators should encourage their students to read, write, think, and express in as many languages and using as many linguistic resources as they have at their disposal, including being able to mix languages together in speech or text whenever possible. Relatedly, parents should be encouraged to communicate with or read to their children in their home language to extend their L1 proficiency. **We must allow students to use all of the languages they know in the classroom to access content and build their literacy skills.**

Nevertheless, the theory of translanguaging can sound abstract and idealistic, since sometimes it is difficult to imagine how to implement it in the classroom. See the following chart for some simple tips on implementation of translanguaging practices:

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[58] Robert Jiménez, George García, and David Pearson, "The reading strategies of bilingual Latina/o students who are successful English readers: Opportunities and obstacles" *Reading Research Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (1996): 90-112.

[59] A. Suresh Canagarajah, "Codemeshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of translanguaging" *The Modern Language Journal* 95, no. 3 (2011): 401-417, p. 403.

SOME TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION[60]

Recognizing and using students' home languages as academic assets is cognitively and academically beneficial, but how can this be done, especially when you do not speak the same languages as your students?

AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	AT THE CLASSROOM LEVEL
Help students make their Common Underlying Proficiencies (CUP) explicit by building on connections between home and new languages. For example, use cognates or encourage students to think of them on their own	Do not assume what languages students speak at home, ask them to show/tell/demonstrate to you!
Assign students (and encourage parents) to read in their home languages	Seat or group students by home language so that they can help each other using the languages they know best
Recognize student progress in both basic and advanced proficiencies (BICs and CALPs), or across disciplines	Destigmatize translanguaging and the use of languages other than English in oral and written expression – you can learn new languages and students can learn new languages from each other!
Don't over-correct grammar unless it is a language or grammar lesson - students are monitoring themselves	Develop assessment mechanisms that are diversified and/or multilingual. Unless it is an assessment of English language, allow students to mix home and English language on tests and other graded work
	Make classroom texts or signs multilingual with students' help

Table 2. Some Tips to Implement Translanguaging.

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[60] See Ofelia García and Li Wei, *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

TEACHER TAKEAWAY

For more theory on second language learning and the cognitive benefits of multilingualism, see:

Jim Cummins's work on language and literacy development among English Learners in Canada and the US. He refers to the set of underlying knowledge and skills students acquire in their first language and can use as resources in the development and use of other languages as a "**Common Underlying Proficiency**" (CUP).[61] Cummins also distinguishes between students' acquisition of **Basic Interpersonal and Communication Skills** (BICS), or conversational fluency, which has been shown to take about 2-5 years on average, and **Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency** (CALP), which can take from 4-7 years depending on many variables such as language proficiency level, age and time of arrival at school, level of academic proficiency in the native language, and the degree of culturally relevant support for achieving academic proficiency.[62]

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[61] James Cummins (1979).

[62] James Cummins, *Bilingualism & minority language children* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1981); James Cummins (2008), "BICS and CALP: Empirical and theoretical status of the distinction", in *Encyclopedia of language and education*, pp. 487-499. US: Springer.

ACTIVITY #5: TEACHER OR STUDENT REFLECTION
Language Autobiographies

Audience: The below exercise is designed for teachers of any subject to reflect on their own language biographies in a professional development session; however, it can be adapted for students from elementary to high school or university to complete the interviews in class and the autobiography for homework.

A good way to call students' attention to how they use language and strengthen their metalinguistic awareness is to examine the role language has played in your own life to help students reflect on and examine their very own varied linguistic resources.[63]

INSTRUCTIONS

Pair Interviews

This activity is designed to help you think about how language has shaped who you are and how you learned to talk and listen, read and write, in and out of school, throughout your life.

With a partner, read the following questions and take turns answering them. **Take notes on your partner's answers** so that you can remember them later. These questions are meant as suggestions for reflection rather than a list to be completed.

Interview Questions
- What role has language played in your life? Has this changed over time?
    - **Example sentences:**
        - I grew up hearing my parents speak _____ at home.
        - I spoke/speak _____ language at home and _____ in school.
        - I think of myself as a _____ speaker.

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1

Pair Interviews (continued)

- What were major moments (turning points or points of realization or reflection) and/or themes in your own language and literacy education?
- How was the language(s) you used at home different from the language you used in school?
- What experiences in school had the greatest impact on your literacy? Were these experiences more positive or more negative?
- How have these experiences with language impacted your identity today?
- How have your experiences with formal language learning influenced how you view the literacy of your students?

2

Language Autobiography

Use your partner's notes on your answers from the interview as a jumping-off point to create a language autobiography, or a story about the role language and/or literacy have played in your life. Because this is in part an expression of your unique experience, feel free to be creative in your writing – turn it into a poem, mix multiple languages or voices, use your own style!

Need some inspiration?
Both creative writers and academics use translanguaging/codemeshing to powerfully convey the full force of their ideas, which often cannot be expressed using only one language. For an audio-visual example, see this video of a multilingual poetry slam by Elizabeth Dakash that uses translanguaging/codemeshing[64]:
https://youtu.be/a124d0cyYaI

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

[64] Elizabeth Dakash, "Multilingual Poetry Slam", Australian Poetry Slam, June 22 2015, https://youtu.be/a124d0cyYaI

> " **I want you to speak English.** Pa'hallar buen trabajo tienes que saber hablar el inglés bien. Qué vale toda tu educación si todavía hablas inglés con un 'accent' ", my mother would say, **mortified** that I spoke English like a Mexican. At Pan American University, I, and all Chicano students were required to take two speech classes. Their purpose: **to get rid of our accents.**
>
> Attacks on one's form of expression with the intent to censor are a violation of the First Amendment. El Anglo con cara de inocente nos arrancó la lengua. **Wild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out.** [65]

TEACHER TAKEAWAY

For more discussion of language and literacy autobiography, and implementing them with a view to codemeshing and translanguaging, see the work of A. Suresh Canagarajah:

Canagarajah, A. Suresh. "Negotiating translingual literacy: An enactment". *Research in the Teaching of English* 48, no. 1 (2013): 40-67.

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[65] Gloria Anzaldúa, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue", in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 53-64, pp. 75, 76.

FROM LATIN AMERICA TO YOUR CLASSROOM:
INTERCULTURAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION

INTERCULTURAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

In recent decades, largely due to local and regional demands and grassroots activism as part of a global Indigenous rights movement, governments of Latin America have been pushed to increasingly recognize both the pluricultural nature of society, and citizens' cultural and linguistic rights. These demands have included mobilizations for education that are equitable and relevant to the many Indigenous citizens that Latin American school systems from Mexico to Costa Rica to Argentina serve.

Fig. 17. An intercultural bilingual school in Mexico.

Though Indigenous teachers and teachers of Indigenous students in many Latin American countries have contributed to bilingual education since the '60s or '70s, in some cases starting in the 1990s, constitutional amendments in nine countries and education legislation and policies in many others have made what is now often named ***"educación intercultural bilingüe"*** or intercultural bilingual education (EIB for its acronym in Spanish), an educational right guaranteed by the state to those children who grow up speaking a language other than Spanish in their home or community.[66]

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[66] Regina Cortina, "How to improve quality education for Indigenous Children in Latin America", in *Indigenous Education Policy, Equity, and Intercultural Understanding in Latin America* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 3-25.

Fig. 18. Some of the material inside the intercultural bilingual school showing words in an indigenous language.

In theory, unlike previous bilingual education programs that used the home or native language as a tool to help students assimilate into Spanish-speaking society and culture, EIB programs emphasize the equal teaching and acquisition of Spanish and the mother tongue / Indigenous language of the students. Intercultural education is also meant to promote dialogue of knowledge and understanding between members of a pluralistic society.[67]

While EIB is currently being implemented in many areas at the primary level, in some countries at the secondary, and sometimes even in higher education (in Mexico, for example), there have been criticisms of the gaps between the policy and practice of EIB when it comes to adequately trained teachers, lack of bilingual teaching materials, and social obstacles such as discrimination towards Indigenous language speakers that discourage the development of full bilingualism.[68]

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[67] Martyn Barrett, "Introduction–Interculturalism and multiculturalism: concepts and Controversies", in *Interculturalism and multiculturalism: Similarities and differences* (London: Council of Europe, 2013), 15-42.
[68] Cortina, Regina (editor). *The Education of Indigenous Citizens in Latin America.* (Bristol, Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2014). See also Ofelia García and Patricia Velasco, "Insufficient Language Education Policy: Intercultural Bilingual Education in Chiapas", *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education: Studies of Migration, Integration, Equity, and Cultural Survival* 6 no. 1 (2012): 1-18.

In these aspects, perspectives and experiences of EIB in Latin America are not dissimilar from those of multicultural and bilingual education in the United States.

TEACHER TAKEAWAY

For more reading on the conceptual differences and similarities between interculturalism and multiculturalism, see:

Meer, Nasar and Modood, Tariq. "How does interculturalism contrast with multiculturalism?". *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 33, no. 2 (2012): 175–196.

And for a Latin American perspective:

Solano-Campos, Ana. "Models of diversity in the Americas: avenues for dialogue and crosspollination". In *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Debating the Dividing Lines*, edited by Nasar Meer, Tariq Modood and Ricard Zapata-Barrero (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 178-200.

3.3 (RE)ESTABLISHING SAFETY, TRUST, AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM:
CHALLENGING THE MYTH THAT ACADEMIC OUTCOMES ARE SEPARATE FROM STUDENTS' SOCIAL AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Recognizing the experiences and funds of knowledge students bring from Latin America as part of implementing culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy is important for teachers not just because of its cognitive benefits, but also because it supports the socio-emotional needs of students.

In the midst of high and increasing rates of poverty and segregation, children of immigrant families often live in underserved, low-income neighborhoods where social services are lacking and crime rates are high.[69] Some Latinx students and students from Latin America are likely to be dealing with past or ongoing traumatic experiences of either their own migratory process or that of someone they know.[70] Whether these students have legal status in the US or not, fears of deportation and uncertainty about their future or that of someone they love can haunt them.[71] Dealing with such trauma can result in decreased aspirations, uncertainty, and logistical/financial obstacles to college that can hold them back from achieving academically to their full potential.[72]

It can be difficult as a teacher, especially without social work or psychological training, to know how to help students cope with such issues; even if one does have such training, compassion fatigue can negatively affect educators' own health and wellbeing.[73]

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[69] Jorge Ruiz-de-Velasco, Michael Fix and Beatriz C. Clewell, 2000.

[70] Elizabeth Kennedy, 2014; William P. Simmons and Michelle Téllez, 2014.

[71] American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012; Lisa Martinez, 1873–1873. Lorraine Salas, Cecilia Ayón and Maria Gurrola, 1005–1020.

[72] Laura M. Gonzalez, Gabriela L. Stein, Juan I. Prandoni, Mark P. Eades and Rossana Magalhaes, "Perceptions of undocumented status and possible selves among Latino/a youth", *The Counseling Psychologist* 43 no. 8 (2015): 1190-1210; Eddie Triste, "Exploring the Relationship of How Indigenous Students' Identity Formation Affects their Aspirations for a Higher Education: From the Standpoint of Mixtecas", *McNair Scholars Journal* 15 (2013): 149-164.

[73] Brittany S. Sansbury, Kelly Graves and Wendy Scott, "Managing traumatic stress responses among clinicians: Individual and organizational tools for self-care", *Trauma* 17 no. 2 (2015): 114–122.

ACTIVITY #6: STUDENT ACTIVITY

Comic Book Micro-Narratives[74]

Suggested Audience: Elementary, middle, or high school students
Suggested Subjects: English Language Arts, Foreign Language, Social Studies, Arts

One pedagogical strategy for establishing safety and trust in the classroom and recognizing students' experience outside the classroom - with their families, transnational communities, or in their home countries - is through the **use of micro-narratives (or personal stories).**

> **Macro-narratives:** common stories that use universal themes and are accessible across the dominant culture;
>
> **Micro-narratives:** "stories that are uniquely relevant to members of a particular group."[75]

Students "encounter, enact, and live stories every day, and those informal learning experiences allow them to relate to formal learning."[76]

INSTRUCTIONS

1 With the goal of creatively and/or multimodally learning from their personal experiences – whether with migration, family history, life in their countries of origin, or otherwise – ask students to create a comic book strip narrating a personal experience or journey that has been significant to them.

2 What was silenced or not included in the first comic strip? Ask students to imagine what occurred in the blank spaces (the gutters) between the panels. Now ask them to narrate those blank spaces.

TEACHER TAKEAWAY

To find out more about micro-narratives, take a look at Maria Paula Ghiso and David E. Low's article "Students using multimodal literacies to surface micronarratives of United States immigration," *Literacy 47* no. 1, (2013): 26-34. Specifically, page 31 provides a graphic example of how they can be applied.

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[74] This project was adapted from Maria Paula Ghiso and David E. Low, "Students using multimodal literacies to surface micronarratives of United States immigration", *Literacy* 47 no. 1 (2013): 26-34.

[75] Jaclyn R. Devine, Todd Quinn and Paulita Aguilar, "Teaching and transforming through stories: An exploration of macro- and micro-narratives as teaching tools", *The Reference Librarian* 55 no. 4 (2014): 273-288, p. 273.

[76] Jaclyn R. Devine, Todd Quinn and Paulita Aguilar, 2014, 273-288, p. 277.

ACTIVITY #7: STUDENT ACTIVITY

Timeline Micro-Narratives[77]

Suggested Audience: Middle or high school students
Suggested Subjects: Social Studies, History, Geography, Economics

For older students, **Timeline Micro-Narratives** can be a great teaching strategy to get to know your student's personal histories, allowing them to express events that might have made a significant impact on them.

Further, asking students to put these personal narratives on a timeline allows them to connect what happens to them or a group they belong to personally with what is happening in society at large. This activity opens up space to discuss the historical, political, economic, and social structures that shape our personal lives. This activity is especially apt for a social studies or history class unit, though it could be also used in English class or to weave literacy projects transversally through the curriculum.

INSTRUCTIONS

Ask your students to write a narrative paragraph or short story about a significant event that happened to them in their life. If you are studying a particular topic in your class, it might be helpful for them to write a narrative related to that topic.

Example of a micro-narrative:

One day I was walking home from school with my older sister, Magda, when a group of boys we knew from our neighborhood ran up to us. One of them had been trying to get my sister to date him for weeks. Before I knew what was happening, I heard my sister scream and when I looked down, I saw blood all over the sidewalk.

Even though I explained in court who killed my sister, they didn't do anything to punish the boy. Then some of the other kids at school started threatening me, and my friends didn't want to talk to me.

That December, my parents sent me from San Salvador to live with my aunt in New York.

[77] Created by Martha Rosas, Ed.D. Candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, 2017.

2 Have students map their story onto a timeline, assigning a date, year, or time-range to it.

February 2014

One day I was walking home from school with my older sister, Magda, when a group of boys we knew from our neighborhood ran up to us. One of them had been trying to get my sister to date him for weeks. Before I knew what was happening, I heard my sister scream and when I looked down, I saw blood all over the sidewalk.

Even though I explained in court who killed my sister, they didn't do anything to punish the boy. Then some of the other kids at school started threatening me, and my friends didn't want to talk to me.

That December, my parents sent me from San Salvador to live with my aunt in New York.

3 Have students investigate and map onto the timeline events that occurred in the larger society around the time of their narratives.

February 2014

2013
Breakdown of truce between rival Salvadoran gangs

2016
Rate of violent death for women in El Salvador rises to be third highest in the world and 1/3 of unaccompanied minors arriving in US are girls

One day I was walking home from school with my older sister, Magda, when a group of boys we knew from our neighborhood ran up to us. One of them had been trying to get my sister to date him for weeks. Before I knew what was happening, I heard my sister scream and when I looked down, I saw blood all over the sidewalk.

Even though I explained in court who killed my sister, they didn't do anything to punish the boy. Then some of the other kids at school started threatening me, and my friends didn't want to talk to me.

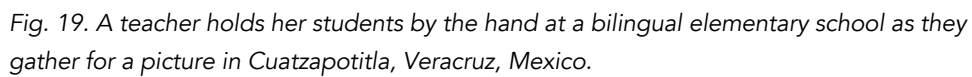That December, my parents sent me from San Salvador to live with my aunt in New York.

FROM LATIN AMERICA TO YOUR CLASSROOM:
SOCIO-EMOTIONAL NEEDS ACROSS SCHOOLING CONTEXTS

CONTEXTS OF SCHOOLING IN LATIN AMERICA

It is impossible to generalize across Latin American school systems, teachers, and students, as contexts always vary depending on nation, region, and locality. Nevertheless, when teaching students of Latin American background, it can be helpful to keep in mind that logistical, physical, and even emotional aspects of their experiences of schooling in their home countries (or the experiences of their parents) might have been very different than the contexts they encounter in the US.

As an example, in countries such as Mexico and Argentina, it is common that students do not change their groups from class to class, so taking every class together throughout secondary (middle school) or even high school, for instance, creates a different sense of belonging between students. Similarly, in rural primary or secondary schools, classes or groups might be multi-grade, with students of various ages and levels working in the same classroom and only 2-3 teachers to teach all subjects. Rather than have a cafeteria, it is not uncommon for mothers (or in a few cases fathers) or other guardians to bring lunch to their children at school in the middle of the day, or to come and cook at the school. In Cuba, which is known for its nationalized and successful (as measured by its exceedingly low dropout rate) state school system, teachers stay with the same group or class of students throughout their primary school career, allowing teachers to gain an in-depth knowledge of students and their families.[78] These dynamics, too, create a different type of bond between teachers, students, and their parents.

In fact, research on supportive pedagogies for Latinx students has pointed to psycho-cultural factors that help explain immigrant students' particular adaptation to and achievement patterns in US schools. Some have found that recent immigrant students from Latin America – as well as their parents – often display strong work ethic, familism, and *respeto* or "respect" for teachers that both helps them to succeed, but also at times might hold them back from speaking up or "talking back" to school authorities so as not to "interfere" in their children's education.[79]

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[78] Martin Carnoy with Amber K. Gove and Jeffrey H. Marshall, *Cuba's academic advantage: Why students in Cuba do better in school* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

[79] Angela Valenzuela, *Subtractive Schooling: US-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1999).

Fig. 19. A teacher holds her students by the hand at a bilingual elementary school as they gather for a picture in Cuatzapotitla, Veracruz, Mexico.

Some research has highlighted that students from Latin America expect more "caring" and personalized relationships with their teachers, as if they were friends or even family, and can be disappointed by the lack of *confianza* or "trust" generated by the more "professional" or independent style of many US teachers.[80] In her study of Mexican immigrant and Mexican-American students in the US, Valenzuela (1999) explains that Mexican youth's perceptions of "educación," which is translated as "education" but in Spanish encompasses more than just schooling or learning, necessarily implies a type of caring that deals not just with school, but also with moral and social responsibilities as well as reciprocity, all inculcated in family and social relationships. Thus, part of fomenting culturally relevant education for students of Latin American background is recognizing and validating the behavior and achievements of students in their families and communities – in their larger social worlds.[81]

Research has also shown that encouraging students to engage in social activism promotes their empowerment, increased self-confidence, and agency. In other words, engaging in activism and making their voices heard can have positive effects on students' socio-emotional well-being and thus their academic achievement and vice versa.[82]

[80] Virginia Vogel Zanger, (1993) "Academic Costs of Social Marginalization: An Analysis of the Perceptions of Latino Students at a Boston High School", in *The Education of Latino Students in Massachusetts: Issues, Research, and Policy Implications*, edited by Ralph Rivera and Sonia Nieto (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Boston, 1993), 170-189.

[81] Angela Valenzuela, pp. 22-23.

[82] Llezli Green Coleman, "Exploited at the intersection: A critical race feminist analysis of undocumented Latina workers and the role of the private attorney general", *Virginia Journal of Social Policy & the Law* 22 no. 3 (2015): 397-433; Julián Jefferies and Dafne Blanca Dabach, "Breaking the Silence: Facing Undocumented Issues in Teacher Practice", *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal* 8 no. 1 (2014): 83–93; Lorraine Salas, Cecilia Ayón and Maria Gurrola, 1005–1020.

ACTIVITY #8: STUDENT PROJECT

Dreamline Project: Empowering Students of Latin American Backgrounds to Move in the Direction of Their Dreams

Suggested Audience: This project can be implemented with students of any age.
Suggested Subjects: English Language Arts, Foreign Language or Arts classes

Dreamline[83] is a nonprofit organization that supports teachers to create "Dream Banners" with their students through which each student creatively expresses their values and dreams for the world on pieces of fabric or individual Dream Banner, and teachers physically string them together to collectively form a Dreamline, a connected statement of dreams for the group.
Under the teacher's guidance, the class can choose to share them through the freely downloadable Dreamline mobile app with other youth around the world who have made banners in order to connect and collaborate with other people who want to make a difference.

INSTRUCTIONS

Students of any age may participate. On a piece of cloth, each student writes down or expresses through art their dreams, values, hashtags, and any other element they want to create a connection with others.

Fig. 20. Dreamline Banner. Image reproduced with Dreamline's permission.

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[83] For more information on how to join and implement the Dreamline project for free, to order materials to complete banners, or to see the gallery of student Dream Banners from around the world, visit www.dreamline.org.

2 Teachers use a string to attach all banners to it. They may display the Dreamline locally, and even globally by using the Dreamline World app.

Fig. 21. Dreamline Banner app options. Image reproduced with Dreamline's permission.

3 Schools may also display the Dreamlines at special events, on boards, or through activities that help their students be heard.

FROM LATIN AMERICA TO YOUR CLASSROOM:
DREAMS FOR THE WORLD FROM MEXICO

DREAMS OF MEXICAN YOUTH TRANSLATED

The Banners from the activity above are a way for students to express themselves both multimodally – through text and image – and multilingually. The Dreamline app allowed the students to upload an audio recording of their texts/poems to share with other Dreamline participants. Any single Banner can be accompanied by multiple audio recordings in different languages, facilitating cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation around shared global goals. The Dreamline also uses a hash-tagging system for the UN Sustainable Development Goals. For example, in the online gallery, users can search for topics such as "Ending Hunger," #sdg01, and see Banners from around the world that include this topic.

The following Dream Banners represent some of the values and dreams of Indigenous and rural students studying rural development. They were created in 2019 at *La Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural – Huasteca,* or the Intercultural University of Veracruz, Huasteca campus, a local university serving Indigenous and rural students in Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz, Mexico.
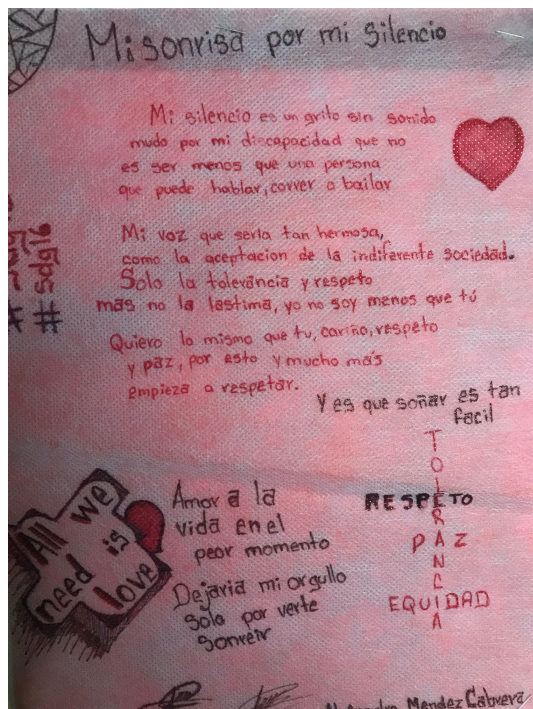
"My smile for my silence

My silence is a shout without sound
Mute because of my disability which is not
being less than a person who can speak,
run or dance

My voice would be as beautiful
as the acceptance of an indifferent society.
Only tolerance and respect
And not shame, I am not less than you.

I want the same things as you, affection,
respect
And peace, for this reason and more
Start to respect.

Dreaming is so easy.
Love life in the worst moment.
I would abandon my pride only to see you
smile.

Respect, tolerance, peace, equity."

18-year-old Otomí student Alex writes about his dream
that his peers with physical disabilities experience
respect, tolerance, and expression. #SDG 10 Reduced
Inequalities, #SDG 16 Peace & Justice
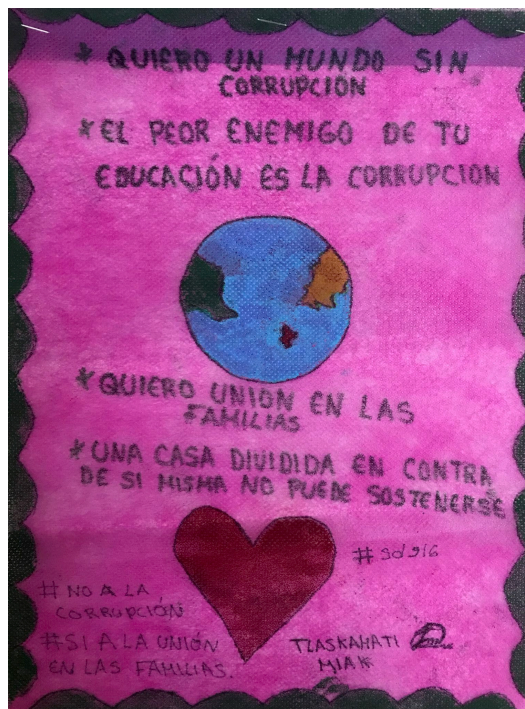
"I want a world without
corruption
The worst enemy of your
education is corruption
I want unity within families
A house divided against itself
cannot be sustained

#NotoCorruption
#YestoUnion in Families

Thank you very much (Náhuatl)."

18-year-old student Francis dreams of
#SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong
Institutions

"Me here lucky and others
unlucky
Me having it all and
Others not having anything.
Me living in a dignified house
and others on the street."

17-year-old Mimi dreams of #SDG10
Reduced Inequalities, #SDG11
Sustainable Communities, and
#SDG12 Responsible Consumption &
Production
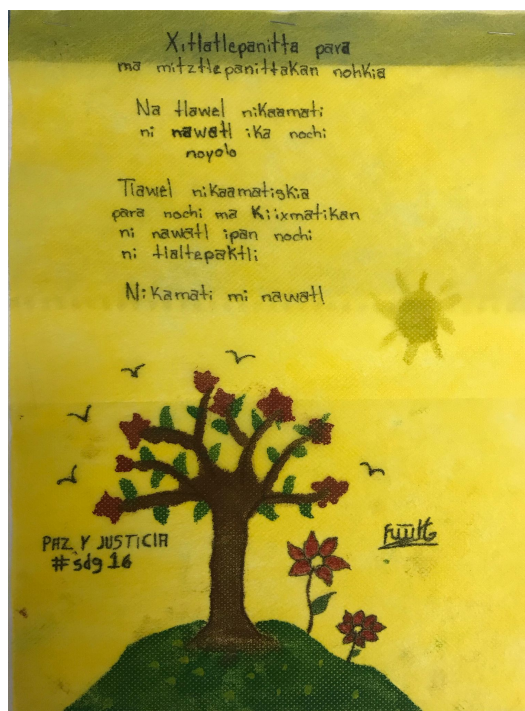
"Respect so that others respect
you as well.
I love to speak my language
Náhuatl with all my heart.
I would like that Náhuatl, my
language, be known around the
world.
I love Náhuatl."

19-year-old Fredy dreams of #SDG16
Peace & Justice, and a world in which
linguistic rights are recognized and
respected

Figs. 22-25. The images illustrate Dream Banners.

PART 4 WRAP UP AND REFLECTION

Odds are that, as a thoughtful and prepared educator, you are already implementing a number of supportive strategies that facilitate student learning, maybe even some of the strategies recommended in this guide. After all, as Ladson-Billings[84] points out in her important article arguing "the case for relevant pedagogy," a common reaction of those seeking a silver bullet strategy to raise student achievement is that culturally relevant pedagogy just seems like "good teaching." Yet, as she also emphasizes, good pedagogy is not just about good teaching strategies or activities, but is dependent upon connecting them to the experiences of our students – in this case those of Latin American backgrounds – and infusing those strategies with their cultures, languages, and ideas; something that unfortunately can fall by the wayside in US schools.

As a final exercise, think about what you are already doing in your classroom that aligns with the theory and research reviewed in this guide.

• What activities do you already have in your curricula that employ culturally relevant strategies or topics?
• Are there specific students or groups of students for whom an activity in this guide might be particularly helpful?
• How can you connect your curricula to the funds of knowledge of your students? How can you incorporate or encourage translanguaging into your own classroom?
• What is one topic that you want to explore further or learn more about?

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84 Gloria Ladson-Billings, "But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy", *Theory into practice* 34 no. 3 (1995): 159-165, p. 159.

The aim of this guide has been to provide those working in US classrooms with contextual and theoretical information in addition to teaching strategies and exercises to not only accommodate but, most importantly, leverage and sustain the varied experiences of students from Latin American backgrounds. As research and most likely your own practice show, when students and their family members or guardians feel that their languages, cultures, and home practices are being recognized and respected by teachers and other school authorities, then their cognitive abilities, self-esteem, and motivation to continue their educational journeys are strengthened. Being familiar with this research can be useful for convincing reticent administrators, parents, or students themselves about why the implementation of culturally relevant teaching strategies is important for students' increased academic achievement and college access. While making time in an already packed syllabus to get to know the unique histories and identities of your students and making space in the formal classroom to recognize and use multiple languages can be challenging, it can result in a learning environment that is richer in quality and of a higher standard for all students.