



## Karen Cadiero-Kaplan

PhD in Multicultural Education:  
Curriculum & Instruction by Claremont  
Graduate University.

Karen Cadiero-Kaplan led the English Learner Support Division for the California Department of Education (2012-2014). Her research focuses on the role of literacy education and language policies that impact curriculum development and teacher's professional development. She has authored research articles and published the book *The Literacy Curriculum & Bilingual Education: A Critical Examination* and has served on the boards of national and international organizations, including President of the California Association of Bilingual Teacher Educators, Californians Together, and the California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Professor at San Diego  
State University in the  
department of Dual  
Language and English  
Learner Education.



# Overview of LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT & BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA K-12 SCHOOLS

Karen Cadiero-Kaplan  
Co-autor: Jorge Ramírez

## 1 Introduction

In 2012 the State of California was the first in the nation to adopt a State Seal of Biliteracy, a seal awarded to students graduating high school that demonstrate a high level of academic proficiency in English and another language. Since then, more than 25 other states have similar programs. Professor Karen Cadiero-Kaplan had the honor and privilege of working with the California Department of Education (CDE) from 2012-2015 in leading the implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy. Across the nation California has been a leader in developing standards and programs that foster biliteracy development from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Part of Dr. Cadiero-Kaplan's leadership was spearheading the adoption of innovative English Language Development Standards, which take into consideration both aspects of language acquisition and child and adolescent development alongside academic curriculum.

To best understand the programs, policies and school system, we open this article with a depiction of California's diverse student population. This is followed by an overview of the language policies and program models that are informed by the CA English Language Development (ELD) Standards, standards that focus on biliteracy and language development. We include resources that readers can access to further develop key knowledge on two-way dual language education models and connect these policies that inform the work we do. While this is a brief overview, it is our intention that those reading this will use it as a conversation starter for how to approach the development of programs from policy and programmatic perspectives. We conclude by providing an example of the program model that informs the Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School, a pre-K-12 school located in Southern California which was founded by Dr. Jorge Ramirez. Key to this model is the inclusion of parent and community partners towards the development and engagement of both policy and pedagogy.



## 2 U.S. & California Context

The population of students labeled “English learners” in the United States has increased most rapidly in California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey (the six largest immigrant receiving states). In fact, nationally in 2014-2015, the percentage of public school students who were ELs was 10% or more in the District of Columbia and seven states. These states, were Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas (National Center on Educational Statistics, 2017) In California, the state where we live and work preparing bilingual (Spanish-English) teachers, more than 25% of the 6 million students in the public school system come to school speaking a language other than English, almost 1.4 million are considered English learners (ELs), and another 1.4 million students enter school speaking English and at least another language. Thus, in California alone almost 50%, in total over 2.6 million students, come from homes where there is a language spoken other than English. According to the California Department of Education (CalEdFacts, 2017), “the majority of English learners (73%) are enrolled in the elementary grades, kindergarten through grade six. The rest (27%) are enrolled in the secondary grades, seven through twelve, and in the ungraded category. Although English learner data are collected for 60 language groups, the top six languages spoken by ELs include Spanish (83.5%) followed by Vietnamese (2.2%), Mandarin (1.5%), Filipino (1.3%), Arabic (1.3%) and Cantonese (1.2%) (CalEdFacts, 2017).

To further understand the U.S. context is important to note that English Learners come to school not only with languages other than English but also with varying cultural experiences (immigrant, refugee, migrant), differences in education backgrounds (from high to low levels of previous schooling), various learning abilities and from low to high income

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socio-economic communities. In addition, the United States generally has an approach to education and society that values monolingualism in English as a priority and the learning of languages other than English are encouraged but no federal policy mandates the teaching of languages other than English in public school settings. Federal policy does ensure, through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, that all students are to be provided an education as well as equal access to an education regardless of language, learning ability or socio-economic status.

## 3 Program Approaches for English and Bilingual Education

In California, all schools are required to provide educational programs designed to ensure that students entering schools as ELs have an opportunity to acquire and develop English in order to participate in all subjects from Math and Science to Language, Arts, and Physical Education. In general, United States schools approach the teaching of English in either a “subtractive” or “additive” manner. Subtractive programs focus the learning on the majority second language and often times place little to no value on the student’s first language and culture, thus creating a subtraction of the first/primary language in order to acquire the second or dominant language of a society. In California and the United States the focus for subtractive programs is the acquisition and development of English as a priority. Two types



of subtractive program approaches are named and defined by the state of California as: Structured English Immersion (SEI), a classroom setting where English Learners who have not yet acquired reasonable fluency in English, as defined by the school district, receive instruction through an English language acquisition process, in which nearly all classroom instruction is in English but with a curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language; and English Language Mainstream (ELM), a classroom setting for English Learners who have acquired reasonable fluency in English. In addition to ELD instruction, English learners continue to receive additional and appropriate educational services in order to recoup any academic deficits that may have been incurred

in other areas of the core curriculum as a result of language barriers.

Conversely, additive bilingual programs are those that place value on the students primary or native language, and provide support and development of the primary/native language alongside the second or “new” language, in particular English. In California such programs are labeled alternative Programs: a language acquisition process in which English Learners receive ELD instruction targeted to their English proficiency level and academic subjects are taught in the primary language, as defined by the school district.

Before we describe the specific types of alternative programs that focus on biliteracy development it is important to clarify the approach of the 2012 California (CA) ELD Standards.



#### 4 CA ELD Standards an Additive Shift

The 2012 CA ELD Standards were innovative as they approached English language development from an additive perspective. First, the standards made clear the role a student's native language and culture play in the development of English. In addition, they specifically provided a broad definition of the term academic English: "Academic English refers to the language used in school to help students develop content knowledge and the language students are expected to use to convey their understanding of this knowledge. Interpreting, discussing, analyzing, evaluating, and writing academic texts are complex literacy processes that involve the integration of multiple linguistic and cognitive skills, including word-level processing, such as decoding and spelling. Furthermore, these advanced English literacy tasks especially involve higher order cognitive and linguistic processes, including applying prior knowledge, making inferences, recognizing the grammatical structures and linguistic features of texts, resolving ambiguities (e.g., semantic or syntactic), and selecting appropriate language

resources for specific purposes, not to mention stamina and motivation" (CDE, 2012 p. 151).

In the past, standards focused solely on grammar form and function that were more language specific than content and context specific. That is, they did not consider the grade level academic demands on students who have to both acquire a new language and engage in grade level academic curriculum and process. Below is an excerpt from the introduction the CA ELD Standards that highlights the linguistic and language development approach and focus: "Students are expected to participate in sustained dialogue on a variety of topics and content areas; explain their thinking and build on others' ideas; construct arguments and justify their positions persuasively with sound evidence; and effectively produce written and oral texts in a variety of informational and literary text types. ELs must successfully engage in these challenging academic activities while simultaneously developing proficiency in advanced English" (CDE, 2012 p. 9-10).

The CA ELD Standards emphasize specific linguistic processes (e.g., structuring cohesive texts) and linguistic resources (e.g., expanding sentences) that ELs need to develop in the context of rigorous academic learning for successful academic achievement. By focusing on these two areas, educators can more effectively support all ELs to:

#### The Ed.G.E. Initiative authorizes "school districts and county offices of education to establish language acquisition programs for both native and non-native English speakers

- Read, analyze, interpret, and create a variety of literary and informational text types.
- Develop an understanding of how language is a complex, dynamic, and social resource for making meaning and how content is organized in different text types and disciplines using text structure, language features, and vocabulary, depending on purpose and audience.
- Be aware that different languages and variations of English exist and recognize their home languages and cultures as resources to value and draw upon in building proficiency in English.
- Contribute actively to class and group discussions, asking questions, responding appropriately, and providing useful feedback.
- Demonstrate knowledge of content through oral and multimedia presentations, writing, and collaborative conversations.
- Develop proficiency in shifting register based on context.

Thus, these standards refocused the development of English to take a more additive approach and the "how to approach" such instruction is addressed in the the CA English Language Arts/English Language Development Curriculum Framework<sup>2</sup>. These new standards and framework then set the stage for supporting the expansion of bilingual education in California.

<sup>2</sup> The California ELA/ELD Curriculum Framework can be found online at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/cf/elaeldfrmwrksbeadopted.asp>

#### 5 Biliteracy & Bilingual Policy & Dual Language Education

Recently, California voters approved Proposition 58, also known as the California Education for a Global Economy Initiative (CA Ed.G.E.) Initiative: "The purpose of the CA Ed.G.E. Initiative is to ensure that all children in California public schools receive the highest quality education, master the English language, and access high-quality, innovative, and research-based language programs that prepare them to fully participate in a global economy. The Ed.G.E. Initiative authorizes "school districts and county offices of education to establish language acquisition programs for both native and non-native English speakers, and requires school districts and county offices of education to solicit parent and community input in developing language acquisition programs" (CDE, 2017).

This initiative provides opportunity for additive bilingual education programs to expand across the state. While there are many models for approaching bilingual education, the most successful models are dual language. Such program models focus on the equal development of both the students primary/native and 2<sup>nd</sup> language to develop balanced biliteracy. The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) outlines the key characteristics of two-way (dual language) immersion programs.

#### Characteristics of Two Way Immersion

1. At least 50% of instruction is provided in the partner language (e.g., Spanish) at all elementary grade levels to all students.
2. The program extends at least five years, preferably K-12 or PreK-12 © 2009 CAL.
3. Both literacy and content are taught in both the partner language and English over the course of the program.
4. Instruction is delivered in one language at a time without translation.



English Instruction 1/2 Day	Spanish Instruction 1/2 Day
Common Core Standards for English Language Arts	Common Core Standards for Spanish Language Arts
Next Generation Science Standards*	
Common Core Standards in Mathematics	Common Core Standards in History/Social Science**

\*Next Generation Science Standards in Middle School/High School is instructed in English  
 \*\*History/ Social Science in High School is instructed in English TK-6 MicroSociety\*, Academy and Electives are taught in the language choice of the teacher

Based on the above then the school can determine to approach the education model as either 90/10: the partner language is used most or all of the day in the primary grades and the partner language and English are use equally in the later grades; or 50/50: The partner language and English are used equally throughout the program.

For further details on these models and guidance on design and program we refer you to the resources page for the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). CAL is a nationally recognized leader in providing research and resources to school leaders and teachers interested in providing quality bilingual education. Their purpose is to continuously promote access, equity and understanding for linguistically and culturally diverse people from around the world. The website provides key resources and training opportunities to support language instruction by providing effective models to implement guided by research protocols to enhance current educational programs.

**Chula Vista Learning Community Charter Bilingual Model:** The models described above are research based and provide clear guidance to schools looking to develop bilingual education programs in preK-12 schools. However, one key component to determining the appropriate model for a school is to examine both the student population and community which the school will serve. In California there are schools that range from severing 5-8% English learners to 85-90% English learners, some schools have majority Spanish speakers while others can have up to 20 languages or

more spoken by the student population. Thus, one size does not fit all. So Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School examined and implemented a research based model for dual language education and over time, more than 20 years, has refined and has research data to support the success of the model outlined below. One key to this success is the inclusion of parents and community members alongside educators in the development and ongoing engagement of the schools programs.

**Dual Language School Values:** The entire school community values multiple languages and promotes a cultural experience for a global society. Research suggests dual language programs enhance students' cognitive abilities and have a strong potential for high academic achievement for all students. Further studies show students in dual language programs for at least 4-5 years tend to score high on standardized tests. The model program at Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School gives students the opportunity to acquire a second language by the time they exit eighth grade, and utilize language skills acquired through 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades, given the student has been consistent with the program from Transitional Kinder through Twelfth Grade.

**Transitional Kindergarten - Twelfth Grade Instructional Model Design - Dual Language Model**

Students spend half of their instructional day in English and Spanish. The program integrates students by working together on academically challenging content areas

through their first and second languages as illustrated in the table. The language and academic curricula is centered on units of study through a common core standards-based approach.

Since the inception of the school, collaboration and consistency of practice are two major components of the school. In TK through 12th grade, teachers work in grade level and/or department teams to plan standards-based curriculum and instruction. Teachers create daily lessons together in each program, the programs also have practices specific to grade levels: In TK-6th, teachers develop and execute the same exact subject lesson plan. All teachers are provided weekly planning time with their colleagues to construct tasks, calibrate written responses to tasks, and craft new lessons based on student mastery. Academic coaches support teachers during their planning time; kinder through 3rd grade teachers work in biliterate teams. Students work with two teachers a day. Half of the day is taught in English and half of the day is taught in Spanish. In grades 4th, 5th and 6th, students travel to four to five classrooms per day: English, Spanish, History, Math and Science; middle School attends six periods two days a week and block schedules two days a week. Electives are held on Fridays; and high School operates on a research-based block schedule.

**6 Conclusion**

The purpose of this article was to provide a brief overview of the context for bilingual education programs in California. While this work has been ongoing for decades, there is more movement and interest, both politically and educationally, to foster biliteracy for all in California. As educational leaders, we believe that in order to prepare current and future teachers in biliteracy instruction there is a need to integrate language acquisition pedagogy with culturally responsive teaching. It is imperative, as our schools grow more diverse, that we promote and foster language development

alongside, and as part of, the social cultural context in which our students and their families live and work. This then pushes us, as researchers and leaders, to continue to challenge current educational paradigms, which includes opportunities to value global perspectives, social justice themes, engagement of community, and to further challenge the one size fits all mentality.

While we have outlined here key policy and program components that inform our work in California, we recognize there is continual development needed to improve leadership practices and identify key components that school leaders must acquire to further perspectives in mirroring program models that support student outcomes. Thus, this piece is a first step towards understanding the policy and programmatic intersections that are inherent in developing biliteracy for all, both within and across borders.

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