

# FOREWORD

## *Teaching Content to Latino Bilingual/Dual Language Learners: Maximizing Their Learning*

The growing population and diversity of students in our schools is of great interest and concern to teachers, administrators, university faculty, and the general public. Several recent reports have identified dramatic demographic changes in the United States with particular emphasis on shifts in the ethnic composition of school-age children. The increase in the number of students who speak a language other than English has been dramatic and is expected to continue growing. The picture presented in *Teaching Content to Latino Bilingual/Dual Language Learners: Maximizing Their Learning* underlies some of the most critical educational issues and challenges that educators must address—quickly, responsibly, and creatively. The knowledge and skills required of teachers to work effectively with bilingual/dual language learners (B/DLLs) include reflective and responsive understanding of the principles of learning, theories of language acquisition, and knowledge of the theories and application of pedagogies that are most effective for teaching and learning literacy across all subject areas.

In this book, Diaz, Esquierdo, De León, Almaguer, and Curts explore the conditions within which B/DLLs can effectively thrive and excel in our schools. Their goal is to provide pre- and in-service bilingual teachers with the resources to assist them in delivering effective instruction to these students. The first several chapters, in particular, help teachers make connections between the theoretical and practical information about bilingual instructional contexts that enhance teachers' classroom performance. The work these authors present increases the possibility of students' academic success, particularly as it relates to content literacy. In my opinion, the uniqueness of this book resides in the power of the themes addressed by the authors in helping teachers understand how B/DLLs develop new knowledge within the school context. In the second part of the book, the authors provide a wealth of ideas for engaging students in literacy activities across the content areas—math, science, and social studies—in a very accessible manner. That is, these chapters are full of practical ways teachers can scaffold their instruction to build content literacy. The authors facilitate the understanding of complex concepts by integrating the use of graphic organizers, a strategy that teachers themselves can also use in their own classrooms. In doing so, they help the reader make a conceptual connection between language and learning theories, and learning theories and pedagogy, as they prepare pre- and in-service teachers to become effective bilingual teachers.

The theoretical base established in the first several chapters of the book, in particular, provides a meaningful and functional overarching framework within which the authors of this book recommend instructional practices in literacy and biliteracy in the content areas. The research cited provides the reader with substantive evidence for best and promising practices and sets the stage for the application sections in the following chapters. These application sections describe state-of-the-art practice and related issues associated with effective teaching and learning within a bilingual context. Their goal here is to enhance the confidence of pre- and in-service teachers relative to the selection and use of best or most promising practices in content area instructional contexts.

Drs. Diaz, Esquierdo, De León, Almaguer, and Curts bring closure to the book in the form of a *dicho*, “Poco a poco se anda lejos,” that focuses on a central theme: with perseverance and patience, teachers will strengthen their knowledge base and become excellent teachers. In addition, the editors provide strong recommendations for effective educational practices with bilingual students. A powerful theme throughout the book is that excellent teaching can make a positive difference for students. Thus, they maintain that in order to provide high quality education for B/DLLs, we must develop educators with the

knowledge and skills to work effectively with these students. Achieving this goal calls for improved teacher preparation programs and quality professional development for practicing educators. I agree. Teachers must be prepared to create the best possible environments for B/DLLs.

In sum, the present collection of chapters responds to this need. *Teaching Content to Latino Bilingual/Dual Language Learners: Maximizing Their Learning* provides both pre-and in-service teachers with information they need to make powerful choices for themselves and for their students. It challenges them to use this information to create learning environments where learning is facilitated and stimulated by caring adults. The editors' goal in compiling this book is that best practices for bilingual/dual language students will be distributed across significantly more classrooms in the United States. Their hope is that the critical reading of this text will influence teachers to view students' backgrounds and experiences as the assets that they are. I am confident that Diaz, Esquiedo, De León, Almaguer, and Curts have achieved their goal.

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