

EDUCACIÓN EN EL MUNDO ACTUAL:

Equity in bilingual settings



Introduction

2020 has brought much uncertainty about what K-12 education will look like in the near future. One thing that has not changed is educators' deep commitment to supporting the development of multilingual learners through equitable practices and actions that value student diversity.

This Focus Bulletin, prepared by WIDA Español, looks to support educators in the *mundo actual*, a world that is impacted by COVID-19 and other stressors. It also presents resources and recommendations to enhance *equity in bilingual settings* in school year 2020-2021 and beyond. While the examples and resources in this bulletin emphasize Spanish-speaking students, educators in all settings will find ideas that can help prepare them to provide equitable instruction for multilingual learners. In addition, a Spanish-language version of this Focus Bulletin, called *Educación en el mundo actual: equidad en los programas bilingües*, is also available.

Equity is one of the four Big Ideas of the WIDA English Language Development Standards, 2020 Edition.

These four Big Ideas anchor the standards and are interwoven throughout the document:

1. Equity for Multilingual Learners
2. Teach Language and Content Together
3. Functional Approach to Language
4. Collaboration Among Stakeholders

A new set of comprehensive resources will replace earlier standards-related publications from 2007 and 2012. Look for them soon at wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld

Equity in Education

Equity in education has become a catch-all term that is used when discussing educational opportunities and the supports that are provided to underserved students. In exploring equity in education, in this focus bulletin, we begin with the role of administrators and then look at decisions teachers can make to integrate [funds of knowledge and translanguaging practices](#) in the instruction. We wrap up with technological resources for instruction.

WIDA Focus Bulletins are resources for practitioners and educators who support, instruct, and assess multilingual learners in early care and education and K-12 settings. To see other Focus Bulletins, include bulletins on Translanguaging and Collaboration, please visit wida.wisc.edu/resources.

Administrator's Responsibility for Ensuring Equity

While teachers working with underserved communities can directly work towards increasing equity through their instruction, the job of ensuring education equity for all students begins with the administration. Thus, school, district, and state-level leadership should ensure that education policies support the implementation of equitable instructional practices.

It is important that education leaders continue to advocate for and prioritize the education of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) through equitable policy and funding decisions. In addition, education leaders need to consider the socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic experiences of students participating in language development programs, like Spanish-English dual language bilingual education, for example. Policies that support BIPOC can lead to the increased representation of students' linguistic and cultural assets in instruction, which in turn can expand equity in education.

Administrator decisions on budgeting for equity need to support the needs of educators and students in bilingual settings. In order for teachers to leverage students' linguistic and cultural practices effectively for instruction, it is important that they have the proper tools and professional development. In response to distance learning, for example, that might mean access to technology that enables the transmission of audio-visual recordings and the time that will take teachers to prepare them. In turn, in the development of equitable instruction in bilingual settings, teachers should prioritize the linguistic and cultural diversity of multilingual learners.

A school's commitment to education equity begins with the administration and should be part of all aspects of the school culture, from the use of funds, to professional learning, to curriculum and instruction.

Valuing Multilingual Students' Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

In schools with linguistic and cultural diversity, as is the case in most schools across the U.S. and in many international schools, a key element of equity is attention to both **language and culture**. When educators recognize the individual talents and needs of students (in part by attending to their language and culture), they can provide a culturally responsive learning experience that enables academic success for their students, even in troubled times.

In times of global disruption, educators have to consider their students' experiences more than ever. The global impacts of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement have filtered into the lives of every member of society, including our youngest students. By recognizing and integrating students' home and community experiences in lessons, teachers help students apply those connections to classroom learning.

Multilingual learners bring a diversity of experiences to the learning process. These experiences can vary tremendously depending on the linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic background of students, among other factors. Ensuring that educators are responsive to student backgrounds in their physical or online learning environments contributes to helping prepare all students to meet challenging academic and language targets.

On the next page is a Closer Look Activity that can help connect educators and students through shared storytelling.



Valuing Cultural Wealth

Students from diverse backgrounds bring with them cultural wealth. According to a [journal article](#) authored by Dr. Tara Yosso, a professor at the University of California-Riverside who examines critical race theory, Communities of Color have at least six different kinds of cultural wealth: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance. All of these forms of capital are ever changing, dynamic, and they build on one another. One in specific that can be leveraged tremendously under distance learning is linguistic capital.

Linguistic capital, which incorporates intellectual and social skills of multilingual learners, is a component of cultural wealth, says Yosso. Linguistic capital emphasizes the notion that BIPOC hold multiple communicative and linguistic skills based on their cultural diversity. For Spanish instruction, those skills are reflected in oral histories, parables, cuentos, and dichos. The sharing of cuentos expands beyond the simple production of language, as Spanish speakers make ample use of tone, rhythm, and volume to illustrate the feelings behind a story. A great way to recognize both the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students, while elevating them through instruction, is by incorporating authentic stories and cuentos in lessons.

Linguistic and cultural wealth: Embracing Spanish oral traditions

Educators sometimes struggle to find authentic written literature that reflects the language and culture of their students. However, the lack of written pieces provides a great opportunity to leverage the oral traditions of students coming from Spanish-speaking households. Teachers can ask students to retell the oral stories they have heard at home, which can strengthen their oracy. Likewise, the students' writing and reading can be enhanced by having them write down the stories they have heard from their family members and then reading them aloud to peers (or others in the home during distance learning). If students struggle with finding the right story, they can interview members of their family to learn new oral traditions. Teachers should remember that all these activities can be done primarily in Spanish, which will provide additional opportunities for students to strengthen their Spanish linguistic and language arts skills. For Spanish learners who do not live in homes where Spanish is widely used, they can connect with peers and listen to authentic stories. As they listen, they can take notes and then write their own versions of the stories in Spanish. During remote learning, a teacher may be able to lead these activities through a call with students (ideally a video call).



Authentic literature can be generated by families if they are given an opportunity to recount and write down their traditional cuentos and historias.

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¡Recursos y herramientas! • Resources and tools!

The website tucuentofavorito.com has a variety of readings in Spanish that educators can use in their lessons:

- The website houses a great variety of cuentos, fábulas, and other reading resources that educators can share with students.
- The leyendas section extends beyond Latin America to include leyendas from Africa, Asia, and some countries.
- The cuentos and other readings can be read online or be printed for students without online access.

The website [No Time for Flash Cards](#) published an [informative article](#) on integrating funds of knowledge in lessons:

- The article stresses the importance of ensuring that students and their families are present in academic lessons.
- The intended audience of the article is preschool educators, but many of the practices can be leveraged into K-12 multilingual education, including Spanish language development lessons.
- One of the recommendations of the article is to invite parents into the classroom, an opportunity that is more achievable now that students may be learning in virtual or home environments.

The [Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction \(OSPI\)](#) published an article on funds of knowledge that provides a number of examples for educators:

- An FAQ provides ideas for integrating funds of knowledge in the learning experience.
- The page also includes sample lessons for educators.

WIDA, in collaboration with the **National Science Teacher Association (NSTA)**, has published the [Design Principles for Engaging Multilingual Learners in Three-Dimensional Science](#), a paper addressing equity in science education.

- The paper presents eight principles that can help science teachers make the content engaging for multilingual learners by drawing on their cultural and linguistic diversity.
- The principles encourage teachers to disrupt the traditional western view of science by recognizing that science is everywhere and not unique to a single approach.
- Contributions of multilingual learners and student agency are also highlighted by the principles.

Enhancing Equity through Translanguaging Practices

Translanguaging is an instructional approach that recognizes multilingual students' full range of language resources for learning new content, expressing their thinking or representing who they are. Recognition and intentional planning for translanguaging is key for the delivery of instruction via distance learning, as students are often active participants in conversations that flow back and forth across languages with others in online settings, like social media. It's very important that all educators, including school administrators, encourage the creation of spaces where students' holistic linguistic identity is recognized and validated.

In [an article](#) grounded on concepts of funds of knowledge and translanguaging, Li Wei, a leading scholar in applied linguistics out of University College London, points out that it is common for classrooms to have students with a diversity of cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds as a result of global migration patterns. Li Wei recommends the use of translanguaging, as it

- Allows for students to explore the fluidity of their languages and identities
- Can serve as a means of confronting dominant linguistic practices that are not representative of minorities
- Enhances social interactions and relationship building.

Through this lens, translanguaging becomes a learning practice that leverages students' funds of knowledge and provides avenues for educational equity. On the next page you can find a Closer Look at translanguaging.



In instruction and assessment, translanguaging is a practice that enables students to use all their languages for learning academic content, while at the same time providing opportunities to develop linguistic practices that support their socioemotional development and bilingual identities.

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Translanguaging

Many teachers emphasize a distinct separation between the target language and any other languages used by students. While educators recognize that translanguaging is always active in students' brains, they often hesitate to use translanguaging as an instructional approach. They express a fear that translanguaging will be a distraction from the focus on a single target language. This issue can be resolved through clearly stated student expectations. For example, guidance can include the following:

- (a) the use of translanguaging by students and the teacher in the introduction of a lesson and during lesson activities

- (b) whether students can use translanguaging when presenting their learning for evaluation purposes.

The following scenario provides some additional considerations about the benefits for using translanguaging in face-to-face and distance learning.

Introduction of the lesson

A teacher who only speaks English and works in a dual language Spanish-English program is presenting a lesson on photosynthesis. The lesson introduces new content and vocabulary of high academic rigor, including photosynthesis, chlorophyll, glucose, sunlight, carbon dioxide, and oxygen. The teacher presents the vocabulary in context by saying, "the process of photosynthesis occurs when sunlight hits

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the plant's leaves," as she points to the sun outside the window and a plant she has to help model. She continues, "the chlorophyll in the plant kicks off a process that takes in carbon dioxide and produces oxygen and glucose." Next, she shows the students the Spanish translations of the words. The teacher also shows several images to further facilitate the learning. Next, she models a discussion with a student by asking probing questions on the content of the lesson and points out that the student can use another language, if desired. Sample questions include, where does the energy that the plant takes in originate? And, in the process of photosynthesis, what is produced by the plant? Next, the teacher tells the students that they will work with a partner to discuss the process of photosynthesis by asking each other probing questions and a few will share with the group afterwards.

Use of translanguageing in student activities

In the classroom, as students discuss with a partner, the teacher encourages them to use all of their languages. The students go back and forth between Spanish and English in their discussions talking about plantas and chlorophyll, el sol and carbon dioxide, and oxígeno and glucose. The teacher observes their behavior and asks probing questions about the images presented in the introduction of the lesson to ensure that the students remain on topic. She listens for the use of the vocabulary in English and the cognates in Spanish. As the class comes back together, the teacher calls on two random students to report in English, the target language of the class. Opportunities for additional input from others are provided. If a student needs help expressing an idea in English, the student can say it in Spanish and others in the class provide suggestions for saying it in English. For example, a student says, "the sunlight le pega a las hojas en el proceso de fotosynthesis." The teacher acknowledges the student's contribution and asks if anyone can help with the word "hojas", and another student says, "the sunlight hits the leaves in photosynthesis." To which the teacher replies, "yes, the sunlight hitting the hojas is a key component in the process of photosynthesis."

In distance learning spaces enabled via videoconferencing or phone call, the teacher asks the students to discuss the learning with a partner at home or in their distance-learning environment by using the information presented at the start of the lesson. Students are able to use all their languages to discuss their learning. Prior to the lesson, the teacher had explained the process to caregivers and now relies on them to keep the students on topic. The students at home talk about el proceso de fotosynthesis, cuando las plantas toman sunlight para hacer oxígeno and glucose. Translanguageing allows for all caregivers to engage with the students regardless of the language they speak. When the class is reconvened for discussion, the teacher asks a couple of students to share what they have discussed. The teacher also calls on a few other students to agree or disagree and provide additional comments. The target language (English) is used for the student responses. If a student needs help expressing an idea in English, the student can say it in Spanish and others provide suggestions for saying it in English.

Key Outcomes of the Closer Look Scenario

From this scenario, several key outcomes highlight educational equity with the use of translanguageing. These can be broken out into three main areas, the use of translanguageing to

- Value and validate student's linguistic and cultural identities
- Maintain the rigor of the academic content
- Assess student learning.

By allowing students to use translanguageing in the classroom, the teacher creates a learning environment in which every student's linguistic and cultural background is validated. This is evident when the teacher allows her students to translanguage in their conversations with a partner and when she presents the Spanish translations of the vocabulary words. By allowing students to explore their learning in more than one language, the teacher is also providing opportunities for greater engagement with the content (and often times, higher retention). The teacher also creates an environment of trust in which students are able to use Spanish, even if the teacher does not speak it. She ensures that students are on topic by listening for the use of the vocabulary words and their Spanish cognates. Moreover, allowing for students to share their learning in Spanish, through translanguageing, and then produce it in English with the help of their peers also creates a safe learning environment where everyone feels supported. The use of translanguageing and the respect for students' home languages can also enhance the relationship between the teacher and the families under distance learning.



The teacher also leverages translanguageing to maintain the high academic rigor of the academic content. The teacher recognizes the rigor of the content and vocabulary, but maintains high expectations of every student and allows them to engage with the material in their own way, using their own language practices. There is no "watering-down" of the curriculum. By showing the Spanish translation of each word, the teacher provides yet another entry point for students to engage with the academic content. The multimodal presentation of the content via relevant context, examples, and images also allows students to engage with the lesson in a variety of ways. These actions provide more avenues for students to retain content. Additionally, in classroom instruction, the probing questions of the teacher during student

discussions can keep the conversation on topic. For distance learning, the teacher's ability to communicate the lesson process with families can ensure that the students are actively learning during that time. The presentation of the vocabulary in both languages can further support the students' families in participating in the learning process.

Lastly, the teacher designs opportunities for assessing student learning with the use of translanguaging. Introducing the lesson with the use of translanguaging can lead to effective assessment at its conclusion. In doing this, the teacher is clear on the expectations of the activity by modeling for the class. Even though the teacher may not be able to model translanguaging, the students are encouraged to use all their languages and they know these will be acceptable to demonstrate their learning when the lesson evaluation comes along. For example, by presenting the Spanish translation of the vocabulary, the teacher reaffirms that the language is welcomed in the classroom and that students can use it during discussion. Additionally, when the teacher makes clear that a few students will share with the class after their discussion and that they can use all their languages, it gives students a sense of the way in which their learning will be assessed.

When the class is back together, the teacher can evaluate students' understanding of the concepts based on their reports back to the group. The reports of students at the end of the activity allow for formative assessment of the concepts presented. Encouraging several students to share allows the teacher to have a greater sense of the class's learning. For classroom instruction, students may be more willing to add on to their peer's responses. For distance learning, the teacher may have to call on a few students to agree or disagree with the previous comments and to add additional input to back their claims.

Overall, the use of translanguaging recognizes and brings the linguistic and cultural diversity of students to the forefront and the outcomes can be numerous, which leads to greater equity in the learning experience.

Examining Technological Resources with an Equity Lens

A major concern during remote learning is the access to technological resources. This is a major issue in ensuring that students have equitable access to education. In a brief titled ["Distance Learning During COVID-19: 7 Equity Considerations for Schools and Districts"](#) published by Southern Education Foundation, the authors explore important equity considerations that touch on the use of technology and other distance learning practices. Southern Education Foundation supports low-income students of color in the southern states of the U.S., but the considerations they cover are applicable to all schools. In the brief, they highlight issues like the lack of technology, supports for students with disabilities and English learners, professional development for teachers to utilize the technology, and the expectations of parents to support their children. They also provide a number of recommendations and highlight school districts' responses to address the concerns. Educators can use resources like

this one and the ones on the ¡Recursos y herramientas! section below to bridge linguistically and culturally diverse practices, including translanguaging, into the learning experience. Ensuring that technology resources are accessible to students and that these are driven with a linguistically and culturally responsive lens will increase education equity.

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EdSurge published an article titled [“Equity Isn’t Just About Technology. It’s About Supporting Students and Families”](#):

- The article highlights responses from a webinar on the topic of digital equity.
- The questions and answers provide real world perspectives from educators.
- The article is part of a [comprehensive guide](#) in responding to COVID-19.

Digital Promise published a blog titled [“How Access to Technology Can Create Equity in Schools”](#):

- The blog speaks about the need for students to have reliable internet and tech tools, professional learning for educators to implement technology, and the ability for educators to gather and analyze student data.
- Equity is maintained as the main theme throughout the entire blog, giving the reader a strong sense of how to ensure that equity is prioritized.
- The blog has a number of links imbedded in the content to point educators to additional resources and tools.

Conclusion

The future of equitable instruction resides in the hands of local school communities. That means that school administrators, teachers, school staff, and parents will all play key roles in ensuring that learning is equitable for all students. As educators plan and implement instruction for the school year, they should consider ways in which effective practices can be maintained long after the end of the pandemic and other disruptions. Additionally, the acquisition and implementation of essential recursos and herramientas (resources and tools) can have positive impacts on equitable instruction that takes us from the mundo actual into the future. This is particularly true when addressing equity in bilingual settings. As always, WIDA advocates for a continued commitment to advocacy and delivery of effective services that will enable the success of multilingual students.

What is WIDA Español?

This Focus Bulletin was researched and prepared by [WIDA Español](#). WIDA Español is a program at [WIDA](#), a project at the [Wisconsin Center for Education Research \(WCER\)](#) at the [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#). WIDA Español focuses on developing and delivering resources and professional development for educators (in teaching and administrative roles) who support Spanish language development of multilingual learners. WIDA Español's main projects include [professional learning workshops](#) for educators, a forthcoming Spanish language arts framework, a refreshed edition of the [Spanish language development standards](#) (published by WIDA in 2013), and a future assessment of Spanish language development.

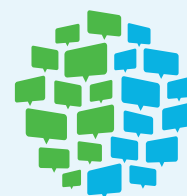
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WIDA Español's professional learning opportunities expand on the ideas presented on this focus bulletin. Our workshops and eLearning webinars and courses take a deeper dive into strategies for valuing students' linguistic and cultural diversity, implementing translanguaging, and promoting equitable instruction in bilingual settings. To learn more, check out our

[WIDA Español Professional Learning](#)

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