

Vignette: Uplifting Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Learning

Read through the following vignette highlighting efforts to uplift multilingualism and multiculturalism at the classroom, district, and state levels. As you read, reflect on how this connects to your own context. Record your thoughts and ideas in the notes section at the end of this document.

Classroom Level

Miriam Peña teaches multilingual learners (MLs) in the Wautoma Area School District. While this is her first year as an ML teacher, she worked for over eight years as a bilingual paraprofessional in the district. Prior to that, she worked at an organization that serves migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Miriam developed deep relationships with families during this work and still connects with many of them. In her current role as an ML teacher, Miriam strives to integrate students' and families' backgrounds and experiences into her teaching and classroom curriculum through a variety of ways.

For example, Miriam uses an education technology platform designed to connect teachers and schools with students' families. A student from Mexico recently joined Miriam's class, and his mother was very nervous about him starting school. Miriam shared the application with the student's parents and sent pictures of what he was working on throughout the day, which eased their concerns and encouraged parent collaboration. Miriam was the first to start using the technology at her school and advocated for professional learning opportunities to support its use. It has since been adopted by many teachers and is now used by administrators to manage attendance.



Student and Miriam Peña

Another example of how Miriam incorporates multilingualism and multiculturalism in her classroom is by facilitating an assignment on life stories. Students brainstorm a story of their life in the language(s) they prefer and create a final product in English. When finished, each student shares their story in front of the class. Each student reads their story aloud, and Miriam makes a digital recording for the student's portfolio. Other students comment on the story presented and the read-aloud. A student may need to sound out every letter in English, and this is okay as it is a part of learning and development. Peers are encouraged to say something positive as well as note areas for growth in writing and oral language.

District Level

Miriam and other educators also guide students to achieve the Seal of Biliteracy. The Wautoma Area School District offers the Seal of Biliteracy, an award that honors and recognizes students who have demonstrated proficiency in English and at least one other language. Offering this award shows one way that the district has committed to uplifting multilingualism as a part of its work and values.

"En la sociedad global actual, ser bilingüe constituye un activo invaluable. Amplía las oportunidades profesionales, fortalece las relaciones interculturales y prepara a los estudiantes para prosperar en un mundo interconectado. Pero, más allá de los beneficios prácticos, también permite a las personas mantener vínculos con su herencia, su identidad y sus tradiciones familiares. Invertir en educación bilingüe significa invertir en un futuro que valora la inclusión, la comprensión y las oportunidades para todos" (Wautoma Area School District, 2026).

State Level

This year, Miriam also found a state-level opportunity for her students. She supported her students' participation in the Wisconsin Association for Bilingual Education (WIABE) Concurso de Arte y Escritura/Student Art and Writing Contest. The theme was "Mi vida multilingüe en Wisconsin/My multilingual life in Wisconsin," and the contest provided students with the opportunity to share their language and cultural experiences as multilingual learners in Wisconsin.

"Los estudiantes de tercer grado de la Sra. Peña participaron recientemente en un concurso de escritura y dibujo para WIABE. Cada estudiante recibió un certificado de participación por su esfuerzo durante el proyecto. Como parte de la actividad, los estudiantes compartieron historias sobre su cultura, ilustraron sitios históricos de sus países y entablaron conversaciones significativas entre sí. Fue una oportunidad maravillosa para el intercambio cultural, la creatividad y el aprendizaje" (Wautoma Area School District, 2026).

After reading this vignette, what ideas do you have for uplifting multilingualism and multiculturalism in your context? Record your thoughts below.

Wautoma Area School District. (2026, March 30). *In today's global society, being bilingual is an invaluable asset. It opens doors to more career opportunities, strengthens cross-cultural relationships* [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/wautomahornets/posts/pfbid0AMGSweD4W4eNvfDeLhNozU9tQoBeunSQzyJRby78rsQBumACTb3ljh2Ksqk3E9U9I?rdid=3qMsZDrxEMzyNvOX#>