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# The NYSABE Bilingual Times



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## NYSABE 41st Annual Conference

Uncovering talents was one of the major themes at the 2018 NYSABE conference. Talents were in full display among student performances and breakout sessions throughout the weekend. During the conference opening, students from Newton High School in Queens performed a Dominican dance. It was art through movement, a beautiful representation of *la herencia hispana*. In their breakout session members of the Union Dale School District shared how technology can be a transformational tool in the classroom. These educators captivated the attention and interest of all attendees as they demonstrated videos of their students sharing ideas and learning together through a video discussion platform called Flipgrid. It was wonderful to see bilingual students' linguistic talents as they shared their ideas in English and Spanish.

Presentations throughout the conference were informative and inspiring. In this issue, we are glad to share four articles contributed by some of the keynote speakers. Special thanks to Dr. Zoila Morell, Dr. Fabrice Jaumont, Dr. Deborah Palmer and Dr. Maria Cioe-Peña for their contributions. In this issue, you will read how Dr. Jaumont inspires parents

to “invest in their linguistic heritage” and become bilingual revolutionaries. He presents a roadmap where families help organize themselves and advocate for quality bilingual programs that ultimately “foster respect, tolerance and mutual understanding... the cornerstones of a peaceful world.”

Dr. Palmer's thought provoking message on Critical Consciousness and its four elements, brought increased awareness of equity and social justice to the forefront in dual language schools. She believes that “with a focus on critical consciousness, DL programs can help *all* children become bilingual and biliterate, achieve academically, and develop cross-cultural understandings.”

Additionally, Dr. Cioe-Peña advocates for inclusive learning spaces where students labeled as dis/abled can share their gifts. She encourages us to “shift our gaze from their inabilities and explore their abilities...how they can contribute greatly to the learning of others.” We encourage you to join the NYSABE conference next year as we continue to work together to become true agents of change for Bilingual education.

Thank you for your  
support and commitment,

Lourdes Roa and Hulda Yau

# — From the Desk of the President —

## Iraida A. Bodré



Dear NYSABE Community,

I welcome you to this next edition of The Bilingual Times. In its pages, you will be taken on a journey across New York State to witness the ways in which the mission of NYSABE is extended and supported. In the Fall issue of this publication, I shared my goal for the year “to be about the celebration of diverse voices, the sharing of stories and the recognition of greatness”. I thank the Editors of the newsletter for bringing the goal to life through the articles and works that have been included here.

Although this issue highlights our magnificent 41<sup>st</sup> annual conference, *Uncovering the Talents of Multilingual Learners from Early Childhood through High School and Beyond*, NYSABE is more than an annual conference. The organization continues to uplift, support and advocate for the needs of bilingual/ multilingual learners, their families, and the educators who serve them throughout the year. I am proud of this issue for bringing to light the work that is being done on behalf of our learners and reminding us of the importance to come together to achieve common goals.

As I come to the end of my term as president, I give thanks for the opportunity to have served in this capacity. It has been a rewarding experience that has helped me to grow in many ways. Throughout the 2017-2018 year, our Board of Directors, Delegate Assembly, Executive Director and members have contributed their time and their talents to extend the mission of NYSABE across the state of New York.

Some of these efforts include the participation in rallies, fundraisers and events, supporting

- Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Caribbean countries affected by natural disasters;
- DACA;
- the NY Dream Act; and
- reunification of immigrant families.

NYSABE has

- developed position statements, conducted letter writing campaigns. and held a Call-in Day of Action for prioritizing of the needs of NYS's ELLs/multilingual learners in the NYS Education Budget;
- added the LEAD Coalition and the Long Island Immigrant Student Advocates to the growing list of partner organizations at the local, state and national level, with whom we engage in joint advocacy;
- continued to participate in NYSED's ESSA Think Tank and The Early Childhood/Pre-K programs for ELLs/Bilingual learners; and
- participated in the annual NABE, NYS TESOL conferences and in the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of NYSAFLT.

None of this could be possible without the diligence and dedication of the amazing Board of Directors, Delegate Assembly and Executive Director who selflessly give of their time to the work of this organization. Their commitment to the goals/mission of NYSABE is an inspiration that is fueled by the love of our treasures, the students & families we serve every day. I will never be able to completely express my gratitude to the NYSABE leaders, our Board of Directors and the Executive Director, Nancy Villarreal de Adler, for sharing their talents in a way that brought color, excitement, energy and strength to the organization. I thank them and all the conference committee chairpersons (especially our wonderful conference chairperson, María-Angélica Asilis Meyer) and the volunteers who made this year's conference such a great success as well. A special thank you to Dr. Tamara Alsace, outgoing past president, for the example of leadership and advocacy that she has provided.

As this year comes to an end, I look forward to continued service under the leadership of soon-to-be- president Rebecca Elías. I wish to remind all members that *we are a collective voice for our Treasures. When we believe in their TALENTS and invest our TIME to develop those talents, we recognize their greatness and celebrate the leaders they will become. I am proud of the work that has been done, and continues to be done, on behalf of our learners. As NYSABE members, you are part of that work, you are an extension of the mission/message of our organization, and you are the piece that connects that message to others. We need all the pieces of us to make for a stronger NYSABE!*

*“We cannot accomplish all that we need to do without working together”* -Bill Richardson

Iraida A Bodré  
NYSABE President 2017-2018  
Time, Talent & Treasure



## — From the Desk of the Executive Director —

### Nancy Villarreal de Adler

*“Learning without reflection is a waste. Reflection without learning is dangerous” Confucius*

Our late spring/summer conversations usually focus on the outcomes of our three-day statewide annual conference, held this year on March 15-17. More than 500 educators, researchers, parents and elected officials attended this successful event, in which we learned not only from each other but also from student advocates who charged us with continuing our fight to support multilingualism and to end racism in schools.

As we reflect individually and together on last year’s conference, and as we think ahead to planning for our 2019 conference, I would like to suggest that we re-center our discussions on the alignment of all our work to NYSABE’s mission and goals.

We can frame our thinking around two key questions:

- \* How does NYSABE’s conference, from the planning stages and coordination to the execution of all activities, embody NYSABE’s mission statement?
- \* How effective are all conference activities on focusing on our five major goals: ADVOCACY, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION, LEADERSHIP, and NETWORKING?

NYSABE’s Mission statement declares our commitment to:

- (1) Promote the establishment, maintenance, and expansion of high quality bilingual education programs for students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as a means to ensure equitable and enriching educational opportunities for all students;
- (2) Promote bilingual education as a valid and research-based educational process and approach by which academic success and socio-emotional development of students is ensured as they develop bilingualism and biliteracy; and
- (3) Advocate for broad public recognition of the importance of bilingualism and biliteracy as a path toward equitable participation in a globalizing, multilingual and multicultural world.

In order to accomplish its Mission, NYSABE activities are framed by the following major goals:

- (1) **Advocacy:** NYSABE works with advocacy groups, elected officials, families, and educators to address socio-political issues and policies impacting the education of ELLs/bilingual learners;
- (2) **Information and Communication:** Through the Journal of Multilingual Education Research (JMER), *The Bilingual Times* newsletter, website, and social media, NYSABE disseminates current information on policies, research, and current events related to bilingual education and ELLs/bilingual learners;
- (3) **Professional Development:** NYSABE offers an annual conference and regional seminars, workshops, and meetings focusing on current policies and research-based practices in bilingual education;
- (4) **Leadership:** NYSABE provides leadership training and hands-on experiences to members of the Board of Directors and Delegate Assembly to enhance their leadership skills; and
- (5) **Networking:** NYSABE offers members a forum to establish relationships and strengthen linkages among members of diverse educational communities.

This exercise will provide us with meaningful information to construct all our activities around our shared mission and the important work we do to serve our children, families and communities. In closing, I would like to thank all the individuals who attended our 2018 annual conference, all those who worked tirelessly to create this inspiring event, and all who shared their generous insights and suggestions with us.

*“Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action” Peter Drucker*



# Bilingualism, Biliteracy, Biculturalism ... and Critical Consciousness to Support Equity in Dual Language Bilingual Education

By Deborah Palmer (University of Colorado Boulder), Claudia Cervantes-Soon (Arizona State University), Lisa Dorner (University of Missouri), and Daniel Heiman (University of North Texas)



Dual language bilingual programs (DL) share three core goals: academic achievement, bilingualism and biliteracy, and sociocultural competence, sometimes also called “bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy.” Along with a team of colleagues, I propose a *fourth core goal: critical consciousness* (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). Although DL programs are often designed to integrate students from diverse language, culture and race backgrounds, equity is unfortunately still a challenge, just as it is in any school context. Inequalities in DL can occur at district, school, and classroom level.

At the school or district level, non-English languages are often still marginalized, with English often used for truly “important” things like official announcements, schoolwide meetings, or standardized tests. Not all children have equal access to DL programs, as they are more and more marketed to middle-class English-speaking communities. School governance meetings usually happen in English (even if translation into other languages is available), and active parent leaders are predominantly middle-class English-dominant speakers.

At the classroom level, children are sensitive to the status of English and English-speakers. Even teachers who are extremely vigilant may find that English-dominant students in their classes dominate classroom conversations. And even during times dedicated to practicing non-English languages, students often still use English widely.

If we focus on *critical consciousness*, we can support increased equity and social justice in DL schools. To focus on critical consciousness means to foster among teachers, parents and children an awareness of structural oppression and inequality, and a readiness to take action to correct it. I will define and illustrate four elements of critical consciousness: interrogating power, critical listening, historicizing schools, and embracing discomfort.

*Interrogating power* means learning to notice when something is not right, and pointing out inequality when we see it. This means teachers develop strategies to

support equitable participation in their classrooms, such as turn-taking systems that ensure all kids have a chance to share ideas. It means schools and districts use data to make sure we are serving *all* members of our communities fairly. If we interrogate power we take a stand against unfair practices whenever we see them.

*Critical listening* means having conversations about racism, sexism, and poverty, among adults and children. It means opening up spaces to hear the voices in our communities that are usually silenced, such as Spanish-dominant working-class parents.

*Historicizing* our schools means remembering the struggles that brought us to this point, where we have DL bilingual education opportunities in public schools. If we historicize our classrooms, we include the histories of the marginalized members of our communities as a central part of our curriculum, using culturally responsive children’s literature and interviewing real members of our communities.

*Embracing discomfort* means that we take the risk to move out of our comfort zones, to engage with difference and interrogate our own privilege. A tremendous benefit for children – and their parents – of growing up in a DL program is the opportunity to engage across difference. But this is not always comfortable. It can be painful to open ourselves up to see and hear about injustice. It is uncomfortable to acknowledge that we have been excluding someone, or that we benefit from unearned privilege. But engaging with that discomfort allows us to learn, and to make things right.

These four elements come together to *humanize* our DL schools and classrooms, leading us to engage everyone in teaching and learning together in more authentic, caring ways as a community. With a focus on critical consciousness, DL programs can help *all* children become bilingual and biliterate, achieve academically, and develop cross-cultural understandings. With critical consciousness at the core, DL programs can realize their full potential to transform our children’s world for a better future.

Cervantes-Soon, C. G., Dorner, L., Palmer, D., Heiman, D., Schwerdtfeger, R., & Choi, J. (2017). Combating Inequalities in Two-Way Language Immersion Programs: Toward Critical Consciousness in Bilingual Education Spaces. *Review of Research in Education*, 41(1), 403–427. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X17690120>



# Empowering Families & School Communities for a Future of Education in Two Languages

By Dr. Fabrice Jaumont



In her foreword to *The Bilingual Revolution*, Ofelia Garcia writes: "Bilingual education takes a U-turn that returns it to the direction in which it began—as a way of recognizing the communities' wishes to educate their children bilingually". If this

idea inspires you, then know that there is a way to do it. Through the hard work of parents and educators, a renewed push for bilingual programs is changing the educational landscape of schools, communities, in New York State, across the nation, and around the world.

Over the last two decades, the American approach to education has gradually shifted away from the mastery of one language to the goal of bilingualism, language enrichment, and the preservation of heritages and cultures. This new approach has pushed linguistic communities to create bilingual programs that have embraced these new goals. The new programs have attracted thousands upon thousands of families who embrace multilingualism and have triggered interest among many parents.

Although the roots of bilingual education in the United States can be traced back to the early 17th century, a new phenomenon is emerging with three objectives: First, to espouse the cultures specific to families and linguistic communities, and to promote this cultural heritage as an important part of the mosaic of our society. Second, to help facilitate reconciliation between parents and schools, and encourage a fruitful dialogue between parents, school administrators, and education professionals. And third, to promote a social, economic and cultural environment that is respectful of all and helps to bridge the gulfs that divide us today.

Bilingual education means different things to different people. Some want access to English and the equal opportunity it provides. Others want to sustain their heritage, and utilize bilingual education as a tool to do so. Others are interested

in the benefits of bilingualism for cognitive development. Others are interested in the acquisition of a second, third, or fourth language because of the professional opportunities and advantages it will yield. Ultimately, these perspectives share the same goal: to create a multilingual society with greater access to languages and cultures.

It is critical that we make an effort to weave together these different perspectives, ensuring that more bilingual programs are created to generate greater opportunities for all children. Being bilingual is no longer superfluous nor the privilege of a happy few. Being bilingual is no longer taboo for immigrants who want their children to blend into their new environment. Being bilingual is the new norm, and it must start with our youngest citizens.

By affording the advantages of bilingualism to as many children as possible, we can bring forth a viable 21<sup>st</sup>-century approach that will advance the growth of our societies by encouraging communities to invest in their linguistic heritage, by pushing schools to embrace bilingual education, and by raising new generations to be multilingual citizens of the world. This vision is reinforced by the belief that when quality bilingual education is available to everyone—in public schools across the country from preschool to college—our children's chances of success improve, our schools flourish, and our communities thrive.

More importantly, this vision places parents at the center of change, as they have the power to transform the educational landscapes of their communities. The parents that have spearheaded recent bilingual programs, value the benefits of bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism. They ask that schools help foster multilingual competencies and encourage new language acquisition as early as possible. Some of these parents are also motivated by a strong desire to sustain their linguistic heritage and ask that schools place value on their children's heritage language and culture.

As school authorities reconstruct bilingual education so that it serves more children and meets new objectives, it is important to empower parents to make a difference by forming initiatives and establishing new objectives, it is important to empower parents to make a difference by forming

initiatives and establishing new bilingual programs. This would be a huge benefit for any society whose citizens are willing to open their minds to the world—the world of others—by mastering languages and discovering new cultures.

The initiatives that I have supported in New York and in other cities are the fruit of a bottom-up, grassroots approach conducted through the efforts of parents that positively transformed schools and communities in unprecedented ways. To succeed, parents should educate themselves on various aspects of bilingualism, bilingual education, community engagement, and the organization of volunteers. They also need to understand the partnerships that are required to build strong programs and gain the commitment of school leaders, the dedication of teachers, and the ceaseless involvement of parents at all levels.

A few years ago, we created a roadmap for parents interested in creating a dual-language program in a public school. The central theme of this roadmap and of my book is that parents can make a difference in their communities by starting dual-language programs, no matter where they are located. The information presented in the roadmap help parents organize themselves, build a strong proposal, and inspire others to join their initiatives along the way. The roadmap is a suggested path for both parents and educators to use as a guide. The roadmap details how to put together information sessions, organize volunteer groups, prepare a convincing rationale for principals and teachers, develop strategies to canvass the community, identify potential families who are interested in enrolling their children in the dual-language program, and work efficiently with all stakeholders to get the project off the ground.

The roadmap is divided into three phases: Phase One introduces ways to create a family base through community outreach and organizing committees; Phase Two shares strategies to develop a strong rationale for a dual-language program and to present it to a potential school site; and Phase Three focuses on the implementation and planning a dual-language program so that it will succeed from the first day of school. With this informed approach and sensitivity, parents and schools hosting these programs can benefit from the multifaceted population they serve. These programs also call upon the diversity of the teaching staff, as well as their ability to incorporate linguistic and

cultural differences into their pedagogy.

It is important to acknowledge the fact that, in the context of the United States, issues of race, poverty, segregation, class, and gentrification have had and continue to have a significant bearing on the development of bilingual education programs and on public education in this country. We must be careful that these programs do not become exclusively for the privileged, and must continue to work in solidarity with minority communities that have the most to gain from these programs and the most to lose should their neighborhoods become gentrified.

It is equally important that we find ways to inspire and engage all parents to become bilingual “revolutionaries.” These individuals will not just be advocates of bilingual education, but true pioneers willing to spur positive change in their societies and re-enchant the public with public schools, all while promoting an active community life for minority groups and people of varying sociolinguistic and economic backgrounds.

In this light, bilingual education can become a learning approach that has the potential to foster respect, tolerance, and mutual understanding. And I’ll repeat these words. *Respeto, tolerancia y comprensión mutua*. I believe that this approach can empower communities in unprecedented ways and improve schools thanks to the efforts of parent groups. It offers a path to break the crippling cycle whereby access to good education is often linked to household income and status. Like many parents, I am convinced that bilingual education is a universal good that should be offered everywhere, because it can constructively change a child, a school, a community, and even a country.

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# Gifted, Talented & Neurodiverse: Emergent Bilinguals Labeled as Dis/abled

By María Cioè-Peña



When most people think about gifted and talented (G&T) students, they most often visualize a student with a high aptitude, an artistic talent, someone with super human cognitive abilities. Depending on their “giftedness” some of these children are even referred to as prodigies. However, when one reviews the bylaws that govern gifted and talented programs, within New York State in particular, one is able to see that the definition is much more broad and inclusive:

Chapter 740 of the Laws of 1982 defines gifted pupils a “pupils who show evidence of high performances capability and exceptional potential in area such as general intellectual ability, special academic aptitude and outstanding ability in visual and performing arts. Such definition shall include **those pupils who require educational programs or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program** in order to realize their full potential. (Office of Work/Life, 2013, p.2)

While the first portion of the bylaw defines G&T using the terms “high performance” and “exceptional potential,” the latter portion explicitly includes “those pupils who require educational programs or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program”. While at first glance one would think that this a secondary reference to students with high IQs and extended cognitive or artistic ability who require educational programs beyond those offered by the regular school program. However, the ambiguity of the language indicates that ANY student whose needs are not met by the “regular school program.” As such “those pupils” can include emergent bilinguals (EB) and students labeled as dis/abled (SLADs). Nonetheless, it is rare for people to think of a gifted student as a student who can and/or may also have a disability. When they do, they often fall back on pop culture references to “savants” such as Temple Grandin or Rain Man.

Even though the Bilingual Education community has vocally advocated for the inclusion of EBs within the definition of gifted and talented, it has not been as inclusive of EBs within special education settings. For most bilingual education advocates, the mention of special education often results in a reactionary stance. This stance focuses on the overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students within special education, as well as

inappropriate referrals and diagnosis that result in inappropriate placements. Many bilingual educators respond rather negatively to the mention of special education alongside emergent bilinguals, and with reason. Historically, special education has been used as a tool to reinforce racist ideologies as well as the “Othering of CLD people and people of color” [Gallagher, 2010]. Nonetheless, we must recognize that this rhetoric, no matter how well intentioned, can lead to the denial of bilingual services and resources for students who are in need of both linguistic and academic support.

In order to ensure that the needs of all emergent bilinguals are being met, regardless of their labels, we must be attune to the shifting perspectives around disability and normalcy. One of the greatest shifts deals with the ways in which diverse academic abilities are being viewed. As such, students with diverse academic needs are no longer viewed as “special,” “deficient”, or “abnormal” within the scientific community, rather they are understood to fall under the umbrella of neurodiversity.

## What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity, unlike disability or special education is not a term rooted in medical ideology but rather a term that is grounded on scientific research. As such neurodiversity is a term that describes the fact that thinking (performing and functioning) differently is within the definition of normal – it represents human variation [Robinson, 2013]. As Robinson explains,

Neurodiversity is the idea that neurological differences like autism and ADHD are the result of normal, natural variation in the human genome. This represents new and fundamentally different way of looking at conditions that were traditionally pathologized [...] Autism, ADHD, and other conditions emerge through a combination of genetic predisposition and environmental interaction; they are not the result of disease or injury (para. 1)

This view of human diversity as difference rather than deficiency is similar to stances that view cultural diversity as difference rather than deficiency. Cultural and ethnic devaluation is a discriminatory perspective that EB students often contend with. In these cases, the struggles that these students encounter are said to be the result of a lack of cultural competence rather than exclusionary educational practices (Redford, 2017). Aligning student struggles with their culture, immigration statuses and language has often led to general perspectives of cultural deficiency and cultural inferiority. How often have you heard a teacher speak of newcomers in



pejorative ways? Using phrases like “these students come here with nothing.” The ideas that underline this type of bias also underline the bias that SLAD students face; one that places their lack of academic success on the individual child, their family and their circumstances rather than acknowledging the ways in which current educational practices not only contribute to these failings but ultimately generate them (Gallagher, 2010).

### ***Thrice-exceptional easiest to overlook?***

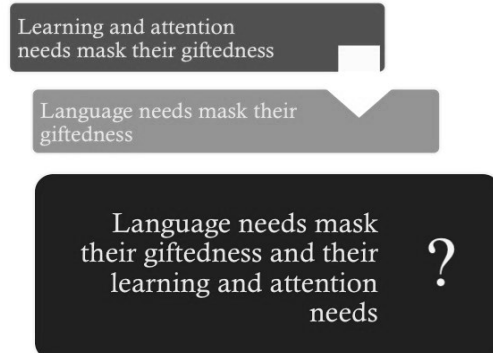
SLADs who are also identified as gifted are recognized as being twice exceptional. A student who is twice exceptional is one who may struggle with spelling but has the ability to recall facts and talk elaborately about American history. This may also be a high school student who reads at a first grade level but is able to succeed in AP math courses. Nonetheless, these students are easily overlooked because of the ways in which their disability and “giftedness” interact. Often the disability may mask the giftedness, the gift may mask the dis/ability or they mask each other (Reis, Baum, & Burke, 2014).

However, emergent bilinguals labeled as dis/abled (EBLADs) are not viewed as twice exceptional. Instead they are viewed by many as being thrice deficient. Leonard Baca has said that “English-language learners [(ELL)] with disabilities were once referred to as the triple-threat students because they have three strikes against them: disability, limited English proficiency, and lower- socioeconomic status.” For this reason, it is easy to understand why the bilingual education community has spent so much time and energy in removing, or at least changing, the labels that are used to grant students the linguistic services and supports that they need. The shift in terminology from ELL to EBs highlights the desire to recognize the linguistic resources students bring with them and the fact that they are not simply learning English but adding English to an existing linguistic repertoire thus developing their bilingualism (and/or multilingualism). There has also been a major push within the bilingual education research community to highlight the gifts and talents of EBs as a way to counter the deficit-based narratives that contribute to so many CLD students being erroneously placed in special education.

Within the educational and scientific community, bilingualism is recognized as a valuable resource that can result in more employment and educational opportunities, increased financial security and expanded access to cultures and countries around the world. In addition, neurological research has even shown that bilingualism leads to mental flexibility and can even stave off disabilities, such as Alzheimer’s, that arise from mental deterioration. A great deal of academic energy has also been used to keep EBs out of special education. However, while this shift from “bilingualism as a disability” to “bilingualism as a valuable ability” eliminated the negative perceptions of EB students through the

removal of labels, it creates new issues particularly for EBLADs who need the labels to access educational and social resources.

So, while they may no longer be referred to as triple threats, EBLADs continue to be viewed this way and even more problematic, these values continue to dictate their educational experiences. Similarly to the twice-exceptional children and typically developing EBs, EBLADs’ learning and attention needs can mask their giftedness, their language needs can mask their giftedness but so too can their language needs mask their giftedness AND learning and attention needs.



As a result of these three types of needs masking each other, deficit-based perspectives continue to permeate the education of EBLADs and so they are more likely to not only be excluded from G&T programs but also bilingual education and general education as a whole. So unlike EBs who have seen increased access to bilingual programs from these new understandings of bilingualism and language function, EBLADs have continued to be excluded from bilingual programs and least restrictive learning environments.

### **Shut out & Pushed out**

NYS reports that 52,890 (21.9%) of the EBs enrolled in 2013-2014 (Diaz & Santana-Eccardi, 2017) were also labeled as disabled. NYC reports that it services 36,286 EBLADs (23.3% of the city’s EB population) during that same academic year (Department of English Language Learners and Student Support, 2015). Additionally, within NYC, 75% of all EBLS have a learning need that cannot be met solely within the general education classroom (Office of English Language Learners, 2013). And yet, these students, which represent nearly a 5<sup>th</sup> of the students that receive language support, ENL, TBE and monolingual English programs. Additionally, bilingual special education programs are considered, at least within NYC, to be a specialized program which results in a more restricted environment where students are segregated not only from their typically developing peers, but also their multilingual peers and the general education curriculum. In the long term,

these isolated placements result in increased dropout rates and even those who stay, often do not get the education needed to fulfill the requirements for a regents diploma.

However, these students are not kept out of bilingual programs as a result of policies, they are most often excluded from these programs as a result of erroneous information. Many bilingual and special education teachers advise families to move their EBLADs to monolingual settings under the guise that bilingualism is “too hard” for children with disabilities (Cioè-Peña, 2018). However natural this assumption may be, we must push back against it because the reality is that while these students may not be formally educated bilingually and biliterately, their lives already are. They speak multiple languages at home. They navigate complicated linguistic landscapes and serve as cultural and linguistic intermediaries between their families and their schools. However, excluding children from formal opportunities to develop their bilingualism and biliteracy has multiple consequences. It alienates families from schools. If a child is not successful in maintaining their bilingualism through social interactions they may eventually become expressive monolinguals, which has a grave impact on their capacity to access resources within their families and their communities. But the consequences are even bigger than this. In saying that bilingual education is too difficult, or not the right setting for a student who is labeled as disabled, we are buying into the same underlying ideas that in the 50s and 60s, promoted bilingual education as a cause for mental retardation. In that case, we are pushing forward the idea that there is a specific or good bilingual education candidate (Peal & Lambert, 1962; Saer, 1923). In the current political climate, bilingual education is also being used to further the linguistic capacities of White, middle class students, while Minoritized students continue to be steered to monolingual placements (Mathewson, 2016). By excluding EBLADs from bilingual education programs, we not only deny those children the opportunity to develop their bilingualism, but we also miss an opportunity to increase bilingual program enrollment and as such, increase the number of bilingual programs within each school, district, city and state.

### **Exclusion by any other name**

As I’ve noted here, emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled (EBLADs) experience multiple points of exclusion on the basis of their perceived incompetence and limited learning capacity. These erroneous beliefs about the linguistic and neurological needs of EBLADs are inadvertently upheld by bilingual education researchers’ ongoing disregard for neurodiversity and special education researchers’ continued dismissiveness of multilingualism [Cioè-Peña, 2108]. EBLADs’ capacity to communicate in their home language at home and in English at school is indicative of the ways in which bilingualism is not a limitation for students labeled as dis/abled. Once again, research

has to take the lead in eradicating inaccurate statements that are based in perception rather than actual data. There remains a need to address the exclusion of neuro-diverse students from bilingual education programs. Additionally, the bilingual education community needs to examine the ways in which its pursuits of self-preservation contribute to the “Othering” and exclusion of EBLAD students and their families, not only from bilingual learning spaces but from bilingual education discourse as a whole. Similarly, the special education community needs to consider the ways in which monolingual placements, be they inclusive or not, contribute to the ongoing isolation of EBLAD children within their homes and of their mothers within their schools. It is important to consider how the linguistic decisions that are made for children lead to segregation within families, but also to the segregation of families within schools.

Within the field of dis/abilities studies the word “dis/ability” has been reclaimed to include the slash as a way to highlight the abilities that are inherent in people with a label, not just their inabilities (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013). In many ways, we must view bilingualism in this way also. Not just for who it includes but also for who it excludes. Like any other “ism”, bilingualism falls under two definitions: it is a distinctive theory and worldview of how multilingual speakers navigate the world. It can also be viewed as an oppressive or discriminatory attitude or belief (Merriam-Webster, 2004). If we hope to be true agents for change, we cannot view bilingualism only from a position of whom it benefits. We must also consider who is left out and who is left behind. Ultimately, who gets to be bilingual? And who gets to decide?

### **Becoming Change Agents**

The reality is that EBLADs are bilinguals, regardless of the language of instruction they are exposed to. In order to make sure that all children who wish to be bilingual have access to bilingual learning spaces, we must first change our approach to special education. If we believe that special education is an inappropriate learning environment for any child, then it is inappropriate for every child. As such, we must engage in special education discussions within our schools and communities. We must ensure that every child has access to the same opportunities for growth. Teachers and parents can become part of their schools’ leadership committee or be asked to sit in on pupil personnel support meetings. These are often when special education decisions are made on both individual and school wide levels. Secondly, we must advocate for inter-sectional school policies. Regardless of whether or not an EB is correctly placed in special education, we must ensure that each EBs needs are being met for however long they have to engage with the special education system. Third, we must all do our part to create truly inclusive learning spaces and be sure to include neuro-diverse students in all

general education bilingual classes. It is an amazing opportunity for all children to interact and to have linguistic contact with a diverse community. One way to ease the burden on teachers is to expose all teachers to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2014). Through UDL teachers learn the necessary principles to ensure that every kind of learner can grow in their class, from each lesson, each and every day. Another way to create more inclusive spaces is to push for the use of translanguaging spaces across entire school communities, so that even those students who continue to be placed in monolingual settings will have an opportunity to interact with and maintain their home language. Lastly, we must push for intersectional educational policies. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the NYS Commissioner's regulations Part 154 discuss language and disability under the umbrella of assessment and evaluation (Carrasquillo, Rodríguez, & Kaplan, 2015; ED.gov, n.d.). Neither of these regulations discuss what happens next. Ultimately, the focus of these policies, which heavily influence not just the development of practice but the day-to-day instruction. They are not about how to best meet the needs of EBLAD students, as much as how to make sure EB are not inappropriately referred and evaluated. Once under the care of special education providers, these students' multilingual needs are whitewashed and the focus on English acquisition intensifies. However, if a student needs any kind of academic or linguistic accommodation during an evaluation period, it is safe to assume that they can benefit from those same accommodations during their educational tenure.

### Gifts, not deficits

Students labeled as disabled are full of gifts. Students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder have an uncanny ability to concentrate and have unmatched fine detail processing. Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder are full of creativity, energy & passion. Students who manage anxiety and depressive disorders are also known to be deep thinking and incredibly empathic. If we shift our gaze from their inabilities and explore their abilities, we would see all of the ways in which SLAD not only benefit from bilingual education, but they can contribute greatly to the learning of others. So it is our duty to grant EBLADs the space to share their gifts in English and in their home language.

Finally, for EBLAD students, regardless of whether they are properly labeled, being placed in Monolingual classrooms, is tantamount to being sent to California in the 1990s. As long as special education students continue being segregated, we must fight to bring home language access to every setting they inhabit, with the same fervor and sense of justice that we embody when we push for bilingual education access within general

education spaces. Bilingual education for all needs to start with us. And it needs to start today.

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iv In 1998 the state of California voted to drastically change the instruction of emergent bilingual students by focusing heavily on English-only instruction. As a result, bilingual education was almost completely eradicated. In November 2016, the proposition was repealed.

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i Attorney General Jeff Sessions is on record having said very similar statements about immigrants from Dominican Republic (Stein & Terkel, 2016)

The use of the term EBLAD rather than English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities is an intentional attempt to highlight how these labels are imposed on children.

"Emergent bilingual" acknowledges the fact that regardless of the language of instruction in school, these students are in fact developing their bilingualism and as such are bilingual. "Labeled as dis/abled" is used as a way to recognize that disability is a social construct that is placed on children both appropriately and inappropriately. Additionally, most children with these labels do not self-identify. Lastly, the use of "dis/ab\*" with a slash in between acknowledges not only the needs, but also the abilities of children whom are designated with this label.

iii Unlike traditional special education, which views disability as an ailment that requires remediation and intervention, Disability Studies (and Disabilities Studies in Education) advocates believe that disability is a social construct. As such, society and its institutions create the circumstances that lead to a person being perceived as disabled. In this way DS scholars and advocates believe that it is society and its institutions that must change in order to be more inclusive and make space for all expressions of humanity.



# A Surprise Guest at the Conference: Dr. Carlota Del Portillo

By Lourdes Roa

During this year's Conference, we had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Carlota Del Portillo. For some who may be too young to remember, Dr. Del Portillo was married to Raymond Del Portillo, the Nobel Prize winner and a significant player in the Lau v Nichols case in 1974. In this landmark decision, the Court unanimously decided that the lack of supplemental language instruction in public school for students with "limited English proficiency" violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The court held that since non-English speakers were denied a meaningful education, the disparate impact caused by the school policy violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the school district was demanded to provide students with "appropriate relief". The rest of that story is our history.

Dr. Carlota happened to be at the hotel this weekend because she was visiting family. She graciously stopped at the NYSABE registration table to let us know that she was so happy to see our presence and our continued advocacy for Bilingual Education. She graced us with a conversation and even stepped in to address the whole crowd on Saturday morning for a brief hello.

Dr. Del Portillo was born in Fajardo, Puerto Rico. She came to New York City in 1945 with her mother and sister. She was educated and as a young adult, she became involved in community activism against institutional racism. This is where she met her husband, Raymond Del Portillo. They were married for 44 years. In the early days of their advocacy, Raymond told Carlota, "If you marry me, we can continue the fight together." She knew then that they were a match made in heaven. She married Raymond Del Portillo, and together they made a real difference in their community, for language diverse populations.

As an educator and advocate for Bilingual Education, Dr. Carlota Del Portillo believes strongly that "a child must be taught in the language they understand." She cites the Lambert Study of 1963, by Wallace Lambert, a psycholinguist from McGill University. She also discussed the work of Joshua Fishman, whom she considers "the Moses of Bilingual Education". Dr. Fishman was an American linguist who specialized in the sociology of language, language planning, bilingual education, and language and ethnicity.



Dr. Del Portillo goes on to tell us, "Children need to feel loved. It's not only about Mentorship...It is about love. We need to meet kids where they are and offer movement forward." This

belief has fueled her work as a community leader, educator, and advocate. She has never let down her passion for the betterment of education for Bilinguals.

Dr. Del Portillo spent her early days as a child and young woman in New York City, then later moved to San Francisco where she and Raymond continued their work. They went on to grow the City College of San Francisco program at the Mission Campus. They were founders of the Puente program that supports the education of Latino/a students, using the home language and culture to support student success. This program continues today. You can read more about this program at <https://www.ccsf.edu/en/our-campuses/mission.html>

We feel so fortunate at NYSABE to have had this moment in history to share with one of Bilingual Education's pioneers. Thank you, Dr. Carlota Del Portillo, for your generosity of time, talent and you are a true treasure to the field!

# Linguistic Tolerance in a Multilingual Society

By Hulda Yau and Lourdes Roa



Yennifer Pinales with her parents, Kate Menken and Maite Sánchez

As our society becomes more culturally diverse, while being culturally challenged by its political leadership, it is critical that we have deep dialogues around cultural and linguistic acceptance. Yennifer Pinales, a 2018 graduate from Cliffside Park High School in New Jersey, shared her story of discrimination with the 2018 NYSABE conference attendees.

Yennifer was in her math class when she shared a comment with a friend in Spanish. She was shocked when the teacher said, “They’re not fighting for you to speak Spanish. They’re fighting for you to speak American”. Yennifer and several students were outraged and left the classroom in disgust. The incident was captured by a classmate on a cellphone video that went viral. The situation became public. Yennifer was disciplined for walking out of class. Days later, senior class students organized a walkout in protest of their linguistic rights, and several other students were punished for participating in the protest.

At the conference, Yennifer, along with the Student Council President, another immigrant student named Kleidon Ndreu, both spoke candidly about this experience. We learned at the NYSABE conference that Yennifer’s family submitted a request for an investigation by the school board, and received a response from her school principal stating the district “did not find evidence that Yennifer was the target of the investigated act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.” A few weeks later,

we interviewed Yennifer over the phone. She shared with us her story as an immigrant child arriving to the United States from the Dominican Republic at the age of nine. She is from the city of Santiago and takes great pride in her heritage. We find ourselves inspired by her words, “This very uncomfortable moment has shaped my future, has shaped my life, shaped how I see people. It has helped me so much and I value it.” As I thought deeply about the truth behind these words, she said, “I’m glad this happened to me. It opened my eyes.”

She shared with us how Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks inspire her to bring about change. She hopes her story paves the way for school districts to create language friendly policies and diversity trainings for educators. This fall, Yennifer will be attending the Borough of Manhattan Community College. In the future, she hopes to be an immigrant lawyer and advocate for social justice issues.

Yennifer’s incident brings awareness to school language policies that are restrictive of languages other than English and marginalize students’ languages, cultures, and identities. Its imperative we open up spaces for dialogue with the goal of creating a multilingual society where languages and cultures thrive. We are grateful to Yennifer and her classmates for their courage, their candor and their inspired action. We have much to learn from the youth.





# In Gratitude for 15 years in Multicultural Publishing

By Abraham Barreto



It honestly never gets old to watch children of color light up when they see themselves in the pages of a book. I hope there's no longer a question that visibility matters. Children of color need many more books that reflect their beautiful faces and their diverse, rich experiences. To that end, I am proud to say that Lee & Low is now the largest publisher of multicultural books in the U.S. I am even prouder to say that I have been representing this company and advocating for children of color for the last 15 years of my adult life!

As time passes, the old adage rings truer and truer still: "Choose a job you love, and you will never work a day in your life." Truth is, I could not be more satisfied with my professional life, and I have certainly never been happier at work. I never get tired of hearing how beautifully written and illustrated our books are. The excitement of introducing schools, districts, professors, institutions and above all—students—to our diverse collection of books just keeps growing.

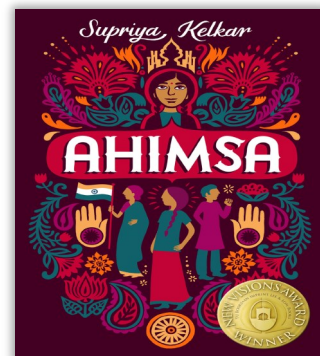
Of course, we'll always need more authors writing and artists illustrating in this genre, but I can also say it's incredible how many inclusive books have been published in the last decade alone. There's now a significant, acclaimed collection of work out there, and there is more on

the way. I'm proud to say we have enough to even enable us to create booklists based on developments and trends in modern education. For example, there is now a body of diverse books large enough to create a list that targets "social emotional" learning. We're out there helping model and explore strategies for tackling challenges and building community. I never wonder if any of this matters, because I'm routinely in touch with educators and librarians who witness the impact of these materials every single day. It's no wonder our info-graphics go viral: People are moved when they learn the scope of the lack of diversity and equity and its effects on children. More and more, they're moved to meaningful action. This is a movement! We're inspiring young people and their allies; the most passionate change agents in society! How can I not be proud of who we are and what we do?

I continue to be thankful for my part of the last 15 years at Lee & Low Books. With so much hope and enthusiasm, I look forward to sharing our materials with all of you for many more years to come.

All the best,

Abe



# NYSABE 2018

## Conference Highlights





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NYSABE 2018

Nivia Zavala Art Contest Award



RCM  
Photography

Cristian Jiménez  
Dr. Nivia Zavala Art Contest  
1st Place



Cristian Jiménez - 6th grade

P.811Q Marathon School

Little Neck, NY

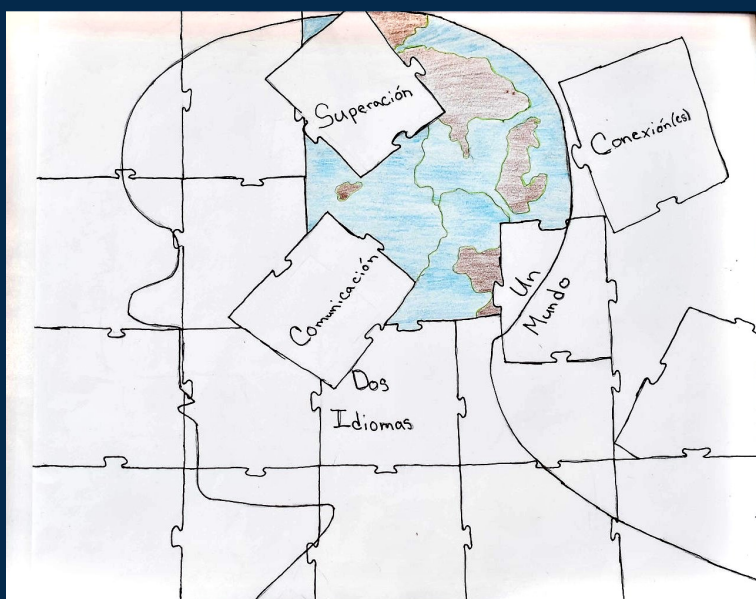




# NYSABE 2018



## Nivia Zavala Art Contest Award



2nd Place

Suheily Márquez Claudio - 8th Grade

Bilingual Center #33



3rd Place

Jahir Rivera Pérez - 8th Grade

Bilingual Center #33



# 2018 NYSABE Conference

## Bilingual Student Essay Awards

### Grades 3-5



### Grades 9-12



SAVE THE DATE: **March 21-23 2019**

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*Transforming Language Learners,  
Their Multiliteracies, and the World through  
Bilingual Education*

An examination of our complex education system, in which all the parts affect one another. Our diversity is pushing the status quo, and making us rethink how we educate all of our students; how we prepare them for a multilingual and multicultural world that is not only transforming our schools, but that is being changed by those who teach and learn in those schools.



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## New York State Association for Bilingual Education

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### NYSABE Dues: (please check one)

- ☐ \$35 Associate (full time student, parent, paraprofessional)  
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- ☐ Advocacy  
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**CONTRIBUTION:** I would like to contribute to NYSABE's continuing efforts to strengthen Bilingual Education in New York State with my tax deductible contribution of:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please duplicate and disseminate this application among your colleagues and others.

Please make check payable to NYSABE and mail it with this completed form to:

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#### THE ORGANIZATION:

NYSABE is a multilingual, multicultural professional association that promotes the academic achievement of more than 300,000 English language learners (ELLs)/bilingual students, and supports the development of biliteracy skills among all students in New York State. Founded in 1976, NYSABE unites educators, parents, community and business leaders, elected officials, researchers, members of professional organizations, educational institutions, and the news media sharing a common goal-to ensure excellence and equity for students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

NYSABE encourages the establishment, maintenance, and expansion of quality programs in bilingual education.

NYSABE promotes bilingual education as a process by which students achieve academic success through instruction in English and a language other than English. NYSABE supports the belief that language pluralism and literacy in more than one language benefit the nation and all its citizens.

NYSABE collaborates with the NYS Education Department, school districts, and educational institutions by participating in their initiatives and ensuring excellence and equity in the education of ELLs /bilingual learners NYSABE is affiliated with the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) and the New York State Council of Educational Associations (NYSCEA).

#### MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

Join the NYSABE team! Through your membership dues and involvement, you will have the opportunity to make integral contributions towards positive educational change for ELLs/bilingual learners.

Membership benefits include:

**NYSABE Journal of Multilingual Education Research (JMERE):** The yearly issue of this journal is a must for every library and member of the association. It publishes current research on best practices in instructional methodologies, optimum program models, and key elements in the implementation of successful bilingual education programs.

**The NYSABE Newsletter, The Bilingual Times:** The quarterly issues of The Bilingual Times offer updates on the regional and statewide activities of the association and its members. *The Bilingual Times* also provides information on current legislative and policy developments as well as articles on best educational approaches for ELLs/bilingual learners.

**Professional Development:** NYSABE offers local, regional, and statewide professional development activities that focus on optimum, research-based practices in bilingual education. These activities create a professional forum suitable to network with other professionals in your field of interest, to share experiences, and explore new ideas.

**Advocacy and Leadership:** NYSABE offers opportunities to develop leadership skills while participating in hands-on training, special committees, language group events, and advocacy activities on behalf of students, their parents, and educators.