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Changing Demographics

One factor that has strongly impacted all teaching, and especially the teaching of reading, is the rapid shift in student population that has occurred across the United States and Canada in recent years. Our schools reflect an increasingly rich linguistic diversity, and this brings with it a challenge for teachers because many more students at all grade levels have limited English proficiency.

Data from the National Clearinghouse on Bilingual Education (NCBE) reflect a tremendous growth in the number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in the United States. Between 1989 and 2000, for example, the general school population, K–12, grew by about 5.5 million students. This represents a 13.6 percent increase. During the same period, the number of students classified as LEP rose from about two million to over four million, an increase of over 100 percent. In 1989, LEP students represented about 5 percent of the total school population, and by 2000 they account for nearly 9 percent of all students.

English learners are not concentrated in one area of the country. The five states with the greatest number of LEP students are California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas. All five of these states have identified more than 100,000 students as limited English proficient. Teachers everywhere face the challenge of teaching reading to students whose English proficiency is limited. English learners make up more than 10 percent of the school population in Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, New Mexico, and Texas. Even in states like Montana, North Dakota, and Rhode Island, the number of students who are classified as LEP is between 5 and 10 percent (NCBE).

California has the highest number of LEP students. The statistics for 1998 show the following:
1,442,692 LEP students out of a K–12 population of 5.7 million.

25 percent of the total K–12 school population are English learners.

2.6 percent increase from the previous year.

254 percent increase from 1986.

Several of the teachers whose classes we describe in this book work in the Central Valley of California, where student demographics have shifted rapidly as in many other areas across the country.

Between 1988 and 1996 the LEP population of Fresno County schools increased 109 percent.

English learners now represent 57.4 percent of the total school enrollment.

The California numbers are especially high, and that, in part, is because the total state population is high. However, the growth of LEP students as a percentage of the school population is lower in California than in many other states. Between 1990 and 1997, for example, twelve states had a greater than 200 percent increase in LEP students. These states include Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Oregon. Another nine states experienced between 100 and 200 percent growth of English learners. During that same period, California was only one of fourteen states whose LEP population increased between 50 and 100 percent (NCBE).

Teachers like those described in the Introduction, who work in multilingual classrooms, are faced with the challenge of implementing new ways to teach reading with some or many students whose English proficiency is limited, and whose background knowledge and experiences are very different from the characters in the stories they are asked to read. To ensure that their students develop the literacy they need, teachers need guidelines for effective practices they can use to promote literacy development for all their students.

In the following section, we offer a set of guidelines in the form of a Checklist for Effective Reading Instruction (Freeman and Freeman, 1997). We do not pretend to have the magic pill, the solution to all the reading woes we read about in academic journals, papers, and magazines. In fact, we question the bleak picture of reading that the newspapers often paint (see McQuillan’s The Literacy Crisis, 1998). But we have confidence in the
Checklist for Effective Reading Instruction

1. Do students value themselves as readers, and do they value reading?
2. Do students read from a wide variety of genres?
3. Do students see teachers engaged in reading for pleasure as well as for information?
4. Do students have a wide variety of reading materials to choose from and time to read?
5. Do students make good choices in their reading?
6. Do students regard reading as meaning making at all times? That is, do they construct meaning as they read?
7. Are students effective readers? That is, do they make a balanced use of all three cueing systems?
8. Are students efficient readers? That is, do they make minimal use of cues to construct meaning?
9. Are students provided with appropriate strategy lessons if they experience difficulties in their reading?
10. Do students have opportunities to talk about what they have read, making connections between the reading and their own experiences?
11. Do students revise their individual understandings of texts in response to the comments of classmates?
12. Is there evidence that students’ writing is influenced by what they read?

Figure 1–1 Checklist for Effective Reading Instruction
professionalism of teachers, and we believe that if they follow certain basic principles, they can help all of their students become proficient readers.

**Checklist for Effective Reading Instruction**

We have developed a Checklist for Effective Reading Instruction (see Fig. 1–1) that we invite teachers, reading specialists, curriculum developers, and administrators to use as they plan and evaluate reading lessons and programs for all their students.

In the chapters that follow, we will discuss each of the questions on the Checklist in detail. We hope that readers will use the practical suggestions we offer and learn from the classroom scenarios we present to illustrate points from the Checklist. Our goal will be accomplished if readers of this book are able to use the Checklist to evaluate and refine the way they teach reading.

In the next section, we provide an example of one teacher who teaches reading effectively. This teacher has developed a reading curriculum that follows the Checklist.

**Literacy Through a Content Theme: “What About Bugs?”**

In the introduction, we described Veronica as a first grade teacher working in a multilingual classroom. To help her students become competent readers and writers, Veronica organizes her curriculum around themes (Freeman and Freeman, 1998). Figure 1–2 lists some of the reasons why this is beneficial for English language learners.

Because her students speak several different languages, Veronica teaches mainly in English. She is able to preview lessons in Spanish when working in small groups with her Spanish-speaking students, and she has gathered some resources in Spanish. But she has few resources in Vietnamese, Khmer, or the several Indian dialects of her other bilingual students. Her unit on bugs is an example of how she carefully chooses activities and materials that help her students develop academic concepts and linguistic proficiency by using a theme as a central focus.

Veronica knew that she wanted to use a theme that would interest all her students, and in which all students would have some background. She also knew she needed to work on developing her students' reading profi-
Students see the big picture so they can make sense of English language instruction

Content areas (math, science, social studies, literature) are interrelated

Vocabulary is repeated naturally as it appears in different content area studies

Through themes based on big questions, teachers can connect curriculum to students’ lives, making curriculum more interesting

Because the curriculum makes sense, English-language learners are more fully-engaged and experience more success

Since themes deal with universal human topics, all students can be involved, and lessons and activities can be adjusted to different levels of English language proficiency

Figure 1–2 Reasons to Organize Curriculum Around Themes

...
Veronica then asked the students what the songs had in common. The children immediately called out, “spiders.” Next, Veronica asked the students what they knew about spiders and wrote down student responses as they called out their answers. “They are bugs.” “They can bite you.” “I don’t like spiders.” “They eat flies.” “They make webs.” “Baby spiders come from eggs.” After the students talked about spiders for a while, Veronica read them *The Very Busy Spider* (Carle, 1984). All the students wanted to feel the raised spider web on each page, so Veronica allowed one student to come up each time the page was turned. The children talked about the spider web catching the fly at the end of the story. When they talked about spiders and flies, Veronica asked them what the two had in common. "They are bugs!" several children replied. For the next day, Veronica asked the students to try to find a bug and bring it to school in a jar with twigs and leaves. She suggested that the students ask for help from their parents to be sure none would get stung or bitten.

The next day, several students brought in bugs to show. Some had beetles; some had ants; others had caterpillars or crickets. One student brought in a moth; one had a butterfly; two had ladybugs; and one had a bee. Veronica then read to them *Have You Seen Bugs?* (Oppenheim, 1996), a delightful book in rhyme about bugs. The book explains where bugs are found, what they eat, and how they reproduce. She asked the students to think about where they found their bugs and if their bugs were like the ones discussed in the book. After the reading, the children brought up their bugs during share time and told how and where they caught them. Many of the children connected their experience to the book Veronica had just read. Veronica wrote the kind of bug each child had found on a large strip of paper. She and the students talked about the first letter of the words and different sounds they heard when saying them. For example, Veronica explained, “‘Bee’ has the same first sound as ‘beetle.’ Do you notice any other letters that are the same in ‘bee’ and ‘beetle?’” If students had bugs that were in *The Icky Bug Alphabet Book* (Palotta, 1986), another resource book, Veronica read that page to the students. For example, ant, bumblebee, cricket, grasshopper, and moth were bugs featured on the pages for the letters A, B, C, G, and M.

Next, all the jars of bugs were placed on a table in front of the classroom, and the strips of paper with the bug names were laid out on a table. Veronica read the children three limited-text books in the Science for Emergent Readers series: *Bugs, Bugs, Bugs* (Reid and Chessen, 1998), *Where
Do Insects Live? (Canizares and Reid, 1998), and What Do Insects Do? (Canizares and Chanko, 1998). These books are illustrated with large photographs of insects. The children were fascinated by the pictures and commented on the bugs they recognized. Since the text is limited and predictable, Veronica encouraged students to read the text along with her. Then she invited the students to read the books with her a second time, so everyone could think about the pictures, the words, and the information in the books.

Next, each child was asked to choose a bug to draw and write about. Veronica told the children they could look at the bugs in the jars or use the books she had read or other books about insects that she had in the room, to get ideas for their drawing and writing. She pointed out that she had several books in Spanish about insects, including one about ladybugs, La mariquita (Cappellini, 1993), one about flies, La mosca (Almada, 1993), and another about mosquitoes, El mosquito (Almada, 1993). Veronica showed the children the pictures in the books and told them they could all look at those pictures, and that maybe some Spanish speaker could help them if they wanted to read the books. She also announced that she was going to read a book in Spanish about amazing insects as they got started on their drawings, and anyone who was interested could come and listen.

As the students began their work, Veronica encouraged her three Spanish speakers to listen to Insectos asombrosos (Amazing Insects) (Kite, 1997) and was pleased when four other students in the class, including two Southeast-Asian children, also came to listen. For the Spanish speakers, this short book reinforced concepts already discussed, such as where insects live and how they eat. The non-Spanish speakers contributed to the reading by asking questions about the pictures.

As the children drew their bugs and labeled their pictures or wrote short sentences about their insects, they made important observations. Some students noticed that spiders have eight legs, but beetles, ants, bees, and butterflies have only six. Veronica put up large posters of an insect and a spider and discussed the difference in number of legs with all the children.

The next day Veronica began the day by inviting children to share their picture and what they wrote. Students hung their pictures around the room under letters of the alphabet; so ants were under A, and caterpillars and crickets were hung under C. Then Veronica took out the word strips
she had made the day before and asked students to pin the large, printed words up under the letter of the alphabet the word started with. When they were finished, the student pictures and the large, printed insect words covered the wall under the alphabet.

At recess that day, several children had trouble finding their insects in the jars among the twigs and leaves. This brought up the concept of camouflage, so after lunch Veronica read How to Hide a Butterfly (Heller, 1985), The Mixed-Up Chameleon (Carle, 1989), The Icky Bug Counting Book (Pallota, 1992), and The Big Bug Search (Jackson, 1998)—books that show how insects are camouflaged in nature. The children loved finding the insects in the illustrations of leaves and branches. Next, Veronica brought out an old favorite, The Very Hungry Caterpillar (Carle, 1969). First, she did a "picture walk" through the book. She turned the pages and had students tell her what they saw and what they thought was happening. Picture walks help English-language learners build up vocabulary and help all students focus on the overall meaning of a story before they begin to read. Then, the whole class read the book together.

After reading the book, the children talked about how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. Veronica took out a new story, La mariposa (The Butterfly) (Jiménez, 1998). She read the English version of the book (which retains the Spanish title). It tells the story of a first grade Hispanic boy who does not speak English. He is lonely at school. His only joy comes from watching a caterpillar in the classroom spin a cocoon and eventually emerge as a beautiful butterfly. The book had been read in Spanish to her Spanish speakers by a parent volunteer the afternoon before. In discussion, many of the children in the class related to the loneliness of the non-English speaker. Veronica then showed the class a caterpillar that she had brought in a jar and explained that over the next few weeks, they would watch the caterpillar change into a butterfly, just as Francisco in the story did.

Another butterfly book that Veronica showed the students was The Butterfly Alphabet (Sandved, 1996). The author has taken photographs of butterflies all over the world. By taking closeups of butterfly wings, he has been able to include patterns that represent each of the letters in the alphabet. As Veronica read the poetry on each page, she showed the class the page, and they identified the alphabet letter on the wing. During shared reading time that day, Veronica put out a variety of books for students to read, including the camouflage books and The Butterfly Alphabet. She also
displayed The Butterfly Counting Book (Pallotta, 1998) and some more-limited-text books, like Butterfly (Canizares, 1998) and The Tiny Dot (Whitney, 1996), for students to read together and discuss. As she moved about the room, she was excited to see how involved all her students were in reading and discussing the books.

Figure 1–3 lists the books Veronica used in this unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ada, Alma Flor.</td>
<td>Días y días de poesía.</td>
<td>Carmel, Calif.: Hampton Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Almada, Pat.</td>
<td>El mosquito</td>
<td>Crystal Lake, Ill.: Rigby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canizares, Susan.</td>
<td>Butterfly</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<td>Canizares, Susan, and</td>
<td>What Do Insects Do?</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canizares, Susan, and</td>
<td>Where Do Insects Live?</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<td>Cappellini, Mary.</td>
<td>La mariposa</td>
<td>Crystal Lake, Ill.: Rigby</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Very Busy Spider.</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<td>Facklam, Margery.</td>
<td>Bugs for Lunch</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<td>Florian, Douglas.</td>
<td>Insectlopedia</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<td>Heller, Ruth.</td>
<td>How To Hide A Butterfly And Other Insects.</td>
<td>New York: Grosset and Dunlap</td>
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<td>Jackson, Ian.</td>
<td>The Big Bug Search</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<td>Jiménez, Francisco.</td>
<td>La mariposa</td>
<td>Boston: Houghton Mifflin</td>
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<td>Oppenheim, Joanne.</td>
<td>Have You Seen Bugs?</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<td>Pallotta, Jerry.</td>
<td>The Butterfly Counting Book.</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<td>The Icky Bug Alphabet Book.</td>
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<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<td>Reid, Mary, and Betsey Chessen.</td>
<td>Bugs, Bugs, Bugs (Science Emergent Readers).</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandved, Kjell B.</td>
<td>The Butterfly Alphabet.</td>
<td>New York: Scholastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wainman, Margaret.</td>
<td>One Elephant, Two Elephants.</td>
<td>Port Coquitlam, Canada: Class Size Books.</td>
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Figure 1–3 "What About Bugs?" Unit Bibliography
Evaluating the Unit with the Checklist for Effective Reading Instruction

Using the Checklist to review the activities Veronica used to launch her theme shows that she has developed an effective reading program.

♦ She included a large variety of activities so that all her students could come to value reading and value themselves as readers.

♦ Veronica’s students read both content area texts and literature, including songs, poems, and stories, several times each day.

♦ Veronica also read to her students every day so they could see how she enjoyed reading.

♦ The students had constant access to a wide variety of books to satisfy the curiosity that was stimulated by each day’s activities.

♦ Veronica helped students at different proficiency levels choose books they could read and enjoy.

♦ By organizing around a theme, Veronica kept the focus of reading on constructing meaning.

♦ Veronica’s students are on their way to becoming efficient and effective readers. Even when Veronica was helping them focus on beginning sounds and letters, she connected this to the content they were learning. Bringing in The Butterfly Alphabet Book made that connection even stronger. Veronica also planned strategy lessons, including reading to students with limited English in their native language, helping students predict words, and doing a picture walk.

♦ Even at this beginning level, students were encouraged to read, write, and share their ideas relating what was being read to what they were learning about bugs.

Through careful selection of materials, close observation of her students, and an understanding of how literacy develops, Veronica supported the first graders with her effective reading program. In the next chapter, we examine in more detail the theory of reading that supports the practices that Veronica and other effective teachers follow.