The Role of National Geographic Reach in a Dual Language Classroom

The National Literacy Panel’s meta-analysis of research and other similar analyses have demonstrated the importance of building first-language literacy for all students (Francis et al., 2006). While models for building first-language and second-language literacy vary, key ingredients for success include a focus on achieving high levels of academic proficiency in both students’ primary languages (L1) and their second languages (L2) and a recognition of culture and competence (Gomez, L. 2000).

To address these issues, National Geographic Reach provides tools to:
• build on the rich cultural and linguistic assets bilingual students bring to their classrooms;
• connect to grade-level core content with interactive, collaborative instruction; and
• provide flexible resources that can be integrated easily into district program models.

Culture

Classroom communities are dynamic learning environments that are rich in social relationships; promote collective agency and responsibility for learning; and foster collaborations involving talking, listening, reading, writing and thinking (Rousculp and Maring 1992). The language, cultural, and content knowledge that students bring to classroom communities are essential to building productive learning environments, serving as resources for content and literacy learning (Goldenberg et al. 2006). To build upon these resources, National Geographic Reach provides culturally relevant, high-quality, authentic literature and expository texts by authors from diverse backgrounds. For further support, Cultural Perspectives features in the Teacher’s Editions detail activities teachers can use to build classroom communities that celebrate the diversity of students who inhabit the classroom communities and develop students’ awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the many cultures of our world.

Increased parent involvement is also a key characteristic of successful dual language enrichment models. Connecting in-school and out-of-school experiences builds mutual multicultural respect (Gomez, Richard 2006) and further enhances learning. While family involvement is beneficial and most families are willing to build literacy, schools have not always taken advantage of family involvement (Goldenberg et al. 2006). National Geographic Reach provides a variety of instructional...
Dear Family Member,

Greetings!

In this unit, our students will explore the concept of "How do animals change as they grow?" Have your student imagine that they have a caterpillar. What animal does she think it will become? Why? Is she right? What other animals can she think of that go through this process?

Directions:
1. Have your student look at the New Words on the next page. Then follow these directions.
2. Have your student read the New Words on the next page.
3. Remind your student to bring the description or drawing to class.

Qué estamos leyendo

"Guarden lo que hará el" por Jonathan Emmett

El autor describe el ciclo de vida de una mariposa.

"A Butterfly Is Born" por Mariana Fuentes

La exploradora Mariana Fuentes describe cómo nacen las tortugas marinas.

"Ruby in Her Own Time" por Nikki Grimes

En este poema, la narradora se compara con una oruga.

"Caterpillar" por Nikki Grimes

Un caterpillar es un insecto que cambia de forma cuando crece.


Content

Students build language in both social and academic concepts in school (Cummins 2000). Unfortunately, traditional curricula for students who are learning English have often emphasized low-level content, language, and literacy skills in English (Au 2006). Research shows, however, that ELLs can learn academic content when teachers effectively build their background knowledge and enhance their content vocabularies (Fitzgerald 1993). A focus on Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is required to help students engage in rich grade-level content, and instruction in grade-level social studies, science, reading, and math concepts may be conducted in L1 or L2 or both languages. National Geographic Reach tools and resources include authentic texts, audio, video, photographic, and hands-on instructional materials that are specifically designed to address grade-level science and social studies standards, enabling teachers to integrate rigorous, grade-appropriate materials into instructional plans for ELLs. Each unit of Reach centers on a Big Question that not only aligns with core content standards but also encourages ELLs to think critically about new ideas and concepts, express their ideas and interests, and inquire about their world.

Research shows that the most effective instruction in all subjects is authentic and interactive (Thomas et al. 1997). Students must be given the opportunity to engage with content in relevant and meaningful ways (Echevarría, et al, 2000), and collaboration is a key component of language acquisition (Freeman et al. 2001). Project-based learning in resource centers, which incorporates concepts of all these findings, is a key characteristic of many successful programs, including dual language enrichment models (Gomez, R. 2006). National Geographic Reach provides a variety of oral language activities, including Theme Theater and Oral Language Projects. At all levels, each unit of Reach is structured around content-based Big Questions that are explored repeatedly throughout each unit, sparking inquiry projects, exploration, and interaction around substantive concepts in social studies and science. Materials to support these activities—songs, fiction and nonfiction texts, National Geographic images, videos, and more—are provided in varied formats to facilitate easy integration into a variety of program model configurations.

Dual language enrichment and other models promote the use of
Learning Centers, or learning stations, for further enhancement of content rich concept attainment. For maximum effectiveness, the learning stations must include oral language to provide opportunities for students to use language in authentic and meaningful contexts; allow for negotiation of content-area meaning among learners; and provide students with independent learning experiences which foster self-regulation and confidence (Gomez, R. 2006).

**National Geographic Reach** Teamwork Activities meet all of the key criteria for successful implementation of best practices in learning and resource centers. Reach employs a variety of interactive learning opportunities that utilize:

- highly visual, photographic presentations of concepts in multiple formats;
- frequent oral language activities;
- hands-on and cooperative learning activities; and
- audio, interactive, and multi-media enrichment.

These strategies support students' language enrichment, whether they are engaging in building concepts during instructional time allotted to teaching or are learning new terms and vocabulary in separate L2 instructional blocks.

**Flexibility**

Research indicates that programs using instructional materials that are aligned to district initiatives or curriculum maps are most effective (Jacobs, H. H. 1997). **National Geographic Reach** includes an array of materials designed on research-based principles that can be integrated easily and compatibly into a comprehensive district plan. Printed materials are structured to include Student Books, Leveled Libraries, Big Books, Learning Center flip charts, and other resources. Audio and multimedia resources present engaging 21st-century content. Reach also provides instructional planning supports, such as a variety of pacing plans, Teacher eEditions, and customizable digital planning and assessment resources.

To meet the needs of interactive instruction and flexible grouping, programs must include resources for use in centers, whole-class language arts and vocabulary enrichment experiences, independent and
collaborative technology resources, and other flexible resources that provide a variety of tools for teachers to employ. The componentry of National Geographic Reach includes highly flexible Learning Centers (Teamwork Activities), whole-class activities (Literature and Song Big Books), and independent activities in both print and digital formats.

In effective programs, all levels of the instructional community fully understand the model and their roles in its effective implementation, conduct ongoing monitoring to ensure program fidelity, and utilize appropriate instructional materials to support fidelity of implementation (Darling-Hammond, L. 1998). In addition to the planning resources noted above, National Geographic Reach provides resources to support teachers in effective implementation of resources, including language frames and activity structures specifically designed to meet the Texas Language Proficiency Standards (Seidlitz 2008); Keys to Efficacy to support best practices in instruction, such as structuring instruction in L2 to ensure comprehensible input (Krashen 1985); information about language transfer issues; and consistent instructional routines.

Conclusion

National Geographic Reach is a culturally-relevant, content-rich, flexible resource designed to support language and literacy development for elementary grades. The research-based instructional strategies and supports foster rigorous grade-appropriate learning experiences that are linguistically accessible and complement L1 and L2 instruction in content and language arts. The comprehensive array of materials provides a rich toolkit that is motivational and engaging and supports student achievement.

Bibliography