

# **Bilingual Basics**

Shackelford Elementary School

November 16, 2004

Joan Wink

CSU Stanislaus

College of Education

[www.JoanWink.com](http://www.JoanWink.com)

Okay, so how do we get another language?

Okay, so what is bilingual education?

Okay, so does it work?

Okay, so how do we do it?

But, now we are wondering. . .

## **Bilingual Basics**

English is the primary goal of bilingual education.

Bilingual education is all about *literacy* and *knowledge*.

The truth is that we can all stop worrying about the kids not getting conversational English. They're all doing it. We can't stop them. However, conversational English alone is not the answer. Our job, as teachers, is to focus on academic language.

Kids can't learn what they don't understand. Me either.

Knowing your first language really well makes learning the second easier and faster.

Lots of first language literacy is a great indicator of success in school.

Poverty is a great roadblock to literacy and knowledge; our job is to level the playing field while the kids are with us in school.

People around the world feel strongly about their first language. And, why not? It is how we all originally received love from our parents and families. It is okay to love your first language. It is okay for everyone to love the first language.

Being bilingual is not bad. In fact, it is very good.

Students must be prepared for a world we can only imagine. Students need to be able to pose problems and solve programs with technology, which stretches beyond our wildest thoughts. Being able to do this in more than one language will be an advantage.

Above all, students who will succeed socially and economically are those who can thrive in a multilingual world. And, when that day comes, it will still be okay for each of us to have strong feeling about our first language.

### **Benefits of Bilingualism**

- Increases intelligence

- Stimulates creativity

- Promotes cognitive flexibility

- Fosters divergent thinking

- Facilitates high levels of mental-linguistic and mental-cultural awareness

- Enables faster and more efficient learning of other languages

- Heightens sensitivity to feedback cues and general verbal communication

### **Resources**

Greene, J. (1997). A Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Bilingual Education Effective Reading Programs for English Language Learners: A Best-Evidence Synthesis. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 21(2,3), 103-122.

In a recent review of research on the effectiveness of bilingual education, Greene concluded that the use of the native language in instruction English learners has beneficial effects and that “efforts to eliminate the use of the native language in instruction. . . harm children by denying them access to beneficial approaches” (p. 115).

Thomas, W., & Collier, V. (2002). A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement. Santa Cruz, CA and Washington, DC: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

[http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/research/llaa/1.1\\_final.html](http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/research/llaa/1.1_final.html)

Thomas, W., & Collier, V. (2002). A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement. Santa Cruz, CA and Washington, DC: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

Stephen D. Krashen has repeatedly summarized the research by stating that

Children in well-implemented bilingual education programs typically acquire English faster, and at worst, do just as well as those in all-English programs, even though non-native speakers of English enter programs with less English and higher rates of poverty. Properly organized bilingual education programs use the first language in ways that accelerate and facilitate second language development.

Steve D, Krashen generously shares all of his work at [www.sdkrashen.com](http://www.sdkrashen.com)

Prepared November 2004 by Joan Wink as a brief overview of the effectiveness of good bilingual programs. A complete summary of the research is available as an annotated bibliography at the end of chapter six of *Teaching Passionately: What's Love Got To Do With It?* (2004) by Joan Wink and Dawn Wink, available at [www.JoanWink.com](http://www.JoanWink.com); just click on the book cover icon.