## A Study Guide for *Learning in a New Language: A Schoolwide Approach to Support K–8 Emergent Bilinguals*

## This Study Guide is designed to deepen your understanding of *Learning in a New Language: A Schoolwide Approach to Support K–8 Emergent Bilinguals,* an ASCD book written by Dr. Lori Helman.

You can use the study guide before or after you have read the book, or as you finish each chapter. The questions are not intended to address all topics in the book. Rather, they are designed to encourage reflection and thoughtful discussion.

Most of the questions contained in this study guide are ones you can think about on your own, but they will be useful for discussion in your HELP Summer Book Club.

**Chapter 1: An Urgent Call to Action**

1. Demographic shifts are taking place throughout the United States. How many students at your school or in your district are multilingual? What language backgrounds do they represent? What are the profiles of students who are linguistically diverse (per the definition on page 5) in your school setting?
2. What current goals exist at your site regarding building on the linguistic capabilities of your students, and how will this book help you achieve those goals?

**Chapter 2: Engaging with Linguistically Diverse Families and Communities**

1. What are your reactions to the foundational principles for school-family-community engagement—a humanizing framework, being asset based, bidirectional learning and communication, examining educator dispositions, and building mutual trust—outlined in this chapter? In what ways is your school doing well and what can be enhanced?
2. Listening to family members is key to learning about students’ backgrounds, building trust and collaboration, and continuously improving the school program. Considering the ideas presented in this chapter and others you have heard about, what could your school learn from implementing these listening activities?
3. Try out one of the strategies from Figure 2.2 for making a school event become more culturally and linguistically responsive. Reflect, with a team or individually, on how the adaptation improved school-family-community engagement.

**Chapter 3: Essential Pieces of Program Improvement**

1. This chapter sets up three foundational principles for carrying out the work of educational equity for culturally and linguistically diverse students—culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy, multitiered systems of support, and job-embedded professional learning. Are there other bedrock principles that you believe should be included? If so, what are they and why are they important?
2. Consider your school or district’s use of these three foundational principles. What is working and what still needs to be implemented for greater success?
3. What processes or discussions will help you and your colleagues assess whether new initiatives at school are based in a solid understanding of culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy?

**Chapter 4: Creating Inclusive Schoolwide Structures and Environments**

1. Figure 4.1 presents some of the areas that can guide work in equity at a school site—student identities, belonging and equity of participation, high expectations, and conflict resolution. Reflect on how these areas take shape at your site. Which areas require immediate and intense thought and action? What are some potential next steps to guide improvement?
2. What evidence do you have that all students feel “known” at your school (as outlined on pages 53 and 54)? What can be done to help students who may be participating “under the radar” to become better known at school?
3. Make a list of descriptors that reflect your school’s culture. What next steps would help this culture embrace equity at its heart?

**Chapter 5: Learning Through a New Language: A Primer for Leaders**

1. Review the components of linguistic proficiency on page XX and Figure 5.1. With a partner or small group, discuss your awareness of the complexities of oral language communication and the ways that linguistic difficulties appear in your classrooms.
2. This chapter presents numerous ways that educators can provide scaffolded instruction for emergent bilinguals. Which of these practices are regularly evident in your school? Which practices would you like used consistently? Make a plan for prioritizing implementation of strategies that support emergent bilingual students in their classrooms.
3. Using the observation guide A.4 in the Appendix, visit a classroom for 10–15 minutes and focus on one of the areas outlined in the document (e.g., modifying language, vocabulary instruction). Look for teacher or student behaviors that provide data about what language support is present or is needed. Plan to briefly share with the teacher the observation and collaboratively brainstorm with the teacher additional potential language supports.

**Chapter 6: Evidence-Based Practices in the Literacy Classroom**

1. This chapter lays out steps in literacy learning from emergent literacy through advanced skills and overlays the impact of language learning on this development. Identify a student or two in your school who embodies points on both of these continua (e.g., a beginning reader who is learning to put together longer phrases in their oral English or a transitional reader whose English is advancing but still needs support with academic vocabulary). Find out more about the overlap of literacy and oral language learning by observing the student(s) in class, discussing a book with the student(s), or asking the student/students about her/their goals and motivations for reading. What did the exercise teach you about developing literacy in a new language? What surprised you?
2. Of the core literacy components—language/vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension—which areas do you think a solid knowledge base exists at your school? Which do you think need additional professional learning support? What led you to this assessment?
3. Take a walk around the community in which your school is situated. What literacies do you see taking place? What do signs, reading materials, and digital information communicate about the interests and needs of the community? How can these out-of-school literacies be more fully included in the school setting?

**Chapter 7: Evidence-Based Practices in the Content-Area Classroom**

1. What was your personal experience in disciplinary learning at school? Did you feel welcomed and apprenticed as a member of the discipline (e.g., identity as a scientist, writer, historian, mathematician, or reader)? How did the identity you took on influence your motivation or success in your studies? What did teachers in your past do to make you feel more like a member of the disciplinary community?
2. To what degree do the content-area teachers in your school use scaffolded instruction with their emergent bilingual students? What support strategies do you see in action? What effect do these practices have on student learning?
3. Review the language used in minilessons, during work sessions, and during debriefing (language stems) outlined on pages 116 and 117. Select three to four stems and use them in a lesson or conversation to encourage problem solving and deeper thinking. Reflect on what resulted from your use of the stems. What benefits surfaced based on these types of language stems that use open-ended questioning to encourage reflective language?

**Chapter 8: Facilitating Professional Learning**

1. In a small group, share examples of powerful professional learning you have experienced. What contributed to the success of this learning opportunity?
2. Review Figure 8.1 and the components of focused professional learning outlined on pages 127–132. In which of these areas would you say your school is strong and where do you think additional focus is needed? What might be a first step on your school’s journey to more fully implement a plan for meaningful professional learning?
3. Dig into one or more of the resources for further learning described on pages 146 and 147. Use the tools these sites offer to self-assess the quality of your PLCs or other team meetings. What kind of “tune-up” of your procedures is needed and how could that be implemented?

**Chapter 9: Assessing Your Progress Through an Equity Lens**

1. Plan to collect data from students or their families that can support program improvement. What kinds of data will you gather? What important questions will you ask? What team of people will look at the data and consider how it can be used?
2. Examine your school goals, in particular the elements that relate to equity. Examples of areas you might consider looking into are teacher quality, equity across program involvement, access to enriched curriculum, and access to up-to-date learning materials and technology. What data currently exist to help you assess your progress in meeting these goals? What do the data say about your progress? What additional data should be gathered to better inform your self-evaluation?
3. Set a personal goal for improving your intercultural understanding and share this goal with a colleague. Find community representatives or online information (such as resources listed at the end of the chapter) to gather input and enlarge your cultural knowledge base. Share with your colleague what you are learning or wondering about.

**Appendix: What to Look for When Visiting Classrooms**

1. Select one of the observation guides to focus a brief visit to a classroom that serves emergent bilingual students. Identify what sources of data you will be looking for and document the evidence you observe during a 10- to 15-minute time period. Take the stance of being a learner and invite the teacher you observe to reflect with you at a later time about the participation and success of their emergent bilingual students.

*Learning in a New Language: A Schoolwide Approach to Support K–8 Emergent Bilinguals* was written by Lori Helman. This 192-page, 6" x 9" book (Stock #120015; ISBN-13: 978-1-4166-2866-8) is available from ASCD. Copyright © 2020 by ASCD. To order a copy, call ASCD at 1-800-933-2723 (in Virginia 1-703-578-9600) or buy the book from the ASCD Online Store.