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Promising Practices from the Field

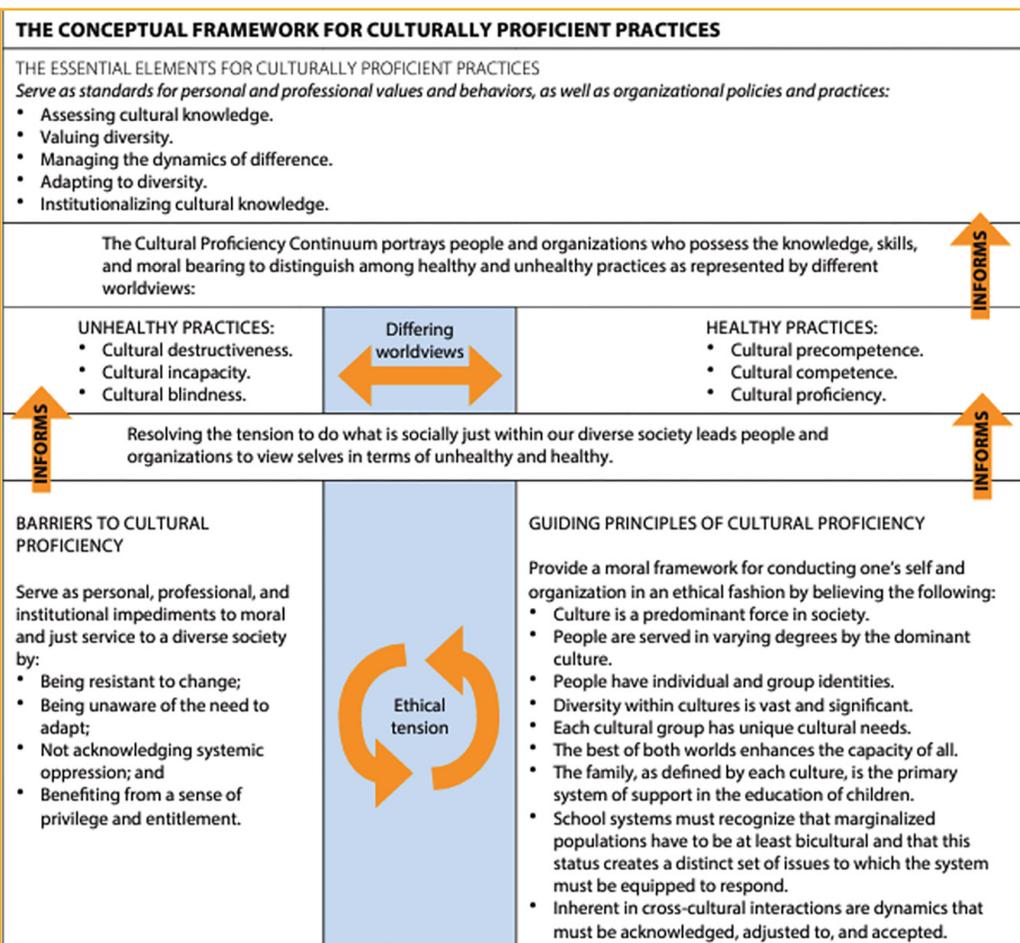
Cultural Proficiency in Action: Expanding the Role of Dual Language Education in Equity and Transformation

by Kelly Forbes, Ed.D.—Lead Consultant, Kelly B’s Consulting and Adjunct Professor, University of Central Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, OK

As an educator, I have consistently sought ways to foster equity within educational institutions - most specifically, in local education agencies. “Cultural proficiency is a mindset, a worldview, a way a person or an organization makes assumptions for effectively describing, responding to, and planning for issues that arise in diverse environments” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 5). Cultural proficiency, as both a mindset and a practice, has emerged as a powerful means to create inclusive environments that address systemic inequities while intentionally meeting the needs of underrepresented populations (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016). However, cultural proficiency must be more than a checklist—it must be an evolving,

action-oriented framework. In this article, I move beyond the findings of my study, *The Dual Language Impact: The Role Cultural Proficiency Can Play in Supporting All Students* (Forbes, 2023), to reflect on the broader implications of cultural proficiency and dual language education within educational agencies and institutions.

In any educational space, cultural proficiency should be viewed as a



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Note: From www.learningforward.org “Build cultural proficiency to ensure equity,” by Lindsey, D., & Lindsey, R., 2016, *Journal of Staff Development*, 37(1), p. 52.



The Quiet Frustration of PD Para Nosotros

by Berenice Pernaleté—Director of Innovation, Instituto Mundo Verde, Washington, DC

Imagine yourself, eager and hopeful, sitting in a professional development session meant to inspire and equip you. You arrive wanting tools, strategies—something that will help you reach your bilingual students in a way that feels real, that feels true. Yet, as the session unfolds, you feel that familiar weight of disappointment: this training was not meant for you. And so, you leave with your heart a little heavier, your job feeling a little lonelier, knowing that you'll spend hours later—translating, adapting, reinventing—to make it meaningful for your students. And with each of these hollow sessions, a piece of the deep joy you once felt for teaching quietly fades away...

How strange it is, that in a field founded on the idea of learning, so many are left out. We, bilingual educators, know this well. We know what it is to sit in these spaces, our needs overlooked, our voices unheard. It is a quiet kind of erasure. And yet, we are asked to return, again and again, to trainings that don't reflect our classrooms, our cultures, or our languages. At Instituto Mundo Verde, it was this quiet frustration that stirred something in us—a determination to turn the experience of professional development completely around.

We asked ourselves: What if PD for bilingual educators was much more than an afterthought? What if we designed everything from the ground up with bilingual teachers as the central focus? What if we could create a space where PD didn't just stop the fading of our joy for teaching, but actually expanded it?

These questions became our guide, sparking a vision of professional development that would help

bilingual educators truly rediscover their joy for teaching. We knew this meant creating experiences that went beyond the norm and we knew that to get there we needed a set of guiding design principles to ensure that every element of our PD was grounded in what matters most: an unwavering focus on the needs of bilingual educators to best support their multilingual learners.

From Frustration to Foundation: Crafting the IMV Design Principles



Bilingual teachers often attend professional development sessions only to find the tools and strategies shared were not meant for them or their students.

In our earliest days, as we envisioned this work, we decided that every project, every endeavor we would take on for dual-language educators would place them, unambiguously, at its heart. Our aim was not to make PD accessible by adaptation or translation alone, but to design a process with bilingual educators as the central audience. To keep

this commitment clear and true, we established our guiding framework—a set of five principles born from this deep frustration, but also from the voices, the stories, and the needs of those we serve. We've written this article with that same regard, understanding that your time spent here is a choice, a commitment amidst many demands.

Designing Professional Development for Equity: Five Principles

Design Principle #1: Mirrors and Windows The Power of Reflection and New Perspectives

Personal reflection and inspiration are essential for change, a concept David Rock explores in *Quiet Leadership* (2007). His work highlights the brain's need for both introspection and new perspectives to make lasting change. At IMV, the principle of

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Mirrors and Windows helps bilingual educators look inward to recognize their growth and look outward to see new possibilities.

In IMV's Fellowship program, educators engage in a rhythm of reflection after each session, applying what they've learned in their classrooms, and completing final performance tasks. This consistent reflection serves as a "mirror" for personal growth. At the same time, each educator gains a "window" into the practices of other bilingual educators, sparking new ideas for their own classrooms. One participant shared, "I see myself in others' stories, and I feel inspired to try things I never thought to try."

Applying Mirrors and Windows to Your PD

To bring this principle into your PD, you can:

- ◇ **Pause for Reflection:** Incorporate moments for participants to jot down reflections or answer a prompt during sessions.
- ◇ **Foster Peer Learning:** Create opportunities for participants to share "wins," offering insights into each other's practices.
- ◇ **Close with Intention:** End each session by asking participants to identify one new idea they will apply, linking knowledge with action.

Design Principle #2: Walk the Walk—Modeling the Learning We Teach

Experiential learning is powerful. The principle of Walk the Walk means that PD designers should model the very practices they promote, engaging educators as learners and participants in the inquiry, curiosity, and hands-on learning that we hope to see in classrooms.

In The Fellowship, Walk the Walk is a commitment to immersive, inquiry-based PD. Educators experience strategies firsthand, building confidence in using these methods in their own classrooms. Our evaluation report showed that 70% of Fellows felt more confident in implementing student-centered strategies after engaging in this experiential learning. One educator noted, "Experiencing inquiry firsthand helped me see its impact. It wasn't just theory; I could feel the difference in my own learning."

Applying Walk the Walk to Your PD

To bring this principle to your PD, try these approaches:

- ◇ **Model Hands-On Activities:** Use role-play, simulations, or interactive learning experiences that mirror classroom practices.
- ◇ **Encourage Inquiry and Curiosity:** Design questions or scenarios that prompt participants to explore, discover, and reflect.
- ◇ **Practice What You Preach:** If the session promotes collaboration, let participants engage in collaborative exercises; if it advocates for reflection, include reflective moments.

Design Principle #3: Create for the Margins—Designing for Accessibility

IMV's commitment to Create for the Margins ensures PD is accessible, flexible, and inclusive. Many educators juggle demanding schedules, often joining PD sessions between classes or from second jobs. To meet this reality, IMV shifted from live-only sessions to a flexible, asynchronous model, enabling educators to engage with content on their own time.

This approach resulted in our largest cohort, with 139 educators completing the Fellowship. Approximately 85% of participants valued the flexibility, saying it allowed them to balance PD with other responsibilities. Offering content in both Spanish and English removed language barriers, enabling educators to focus on growth rather than translation. One participant remarked, "Being able to access everything in my language and on my schedule meant I could finally be fully present for my students and myself."

Applying Create for the Margins to Your PD

To make PD more accessible:

- ◇ **Offer Asynchronous Options:** Provide recordings, self-paced modules, or flexible session times.
- ◇ **Prioritize Language Accessibility:** Whenever possible, offer materials in multiple languages.
- ◇ **Design for Real Lives:** Acknowledge the constraints participants may face, offering extended deadlines, on-demand resources, or flexible group work to make PD accessible to all.

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Building Math Success for Multilingual Learners in Alabama: Proven Strategies from Diverse Frameworks

by Jhina García-Snell—EL Regional Specialist, Alabama Department of Education

As a multilingual learner education coach in Alabama, I have learned of the importance of integrating content and language when supporting K-12 English learners. Integrating content and language has the potential to bring about a positive change, especially in a state where the population of English learners is growing, and the number of multilingual learners varies significantly between schools and districts. In particular, by consistently implementing math and language instructional strategies, we can facilitate a significant difference in learning outcomes for our English learners.

In Alabama, multilingual learners comprise nearly 4% of the state's student population (Alabama Framework for English Learner Success, Alabama State Department of Education). This means that there are one or two multilingual learners in most classrooms. All students participate in state assessments, and although multilingual learners recently showed improvement in our math state assessment, there is still a substantial performance gap between English learners and their native-speaking peers. After analyzing tests results, our goal became clear: we must be dedicated to implementing evidence-based instructional practices that foster language learning and academic success to support our multilingual learners.

María Franco, Multilingual Learner Administrator for the State of Alabama, has worked diligently to support the success of our students. As an English learner herself and a former science classroom teacher, she played a key role in designing the Alabama Framework for English Learner Success with a designated team. Additionally, she supervised the development of High-Quality

Instruction and Assessment (HQIA) for English Learners with support from the Region 7 Comprehensive Center (R7CC). This promising tool seeks to provide Alabama educators with evidence-based instructional practices in order to increase academic achievement for MLs in the state (IES REL Southeast, 2023).



Lisa Meyer, AIM4S^{3™} Developer, models strategies that equip educators to provide access to grade-level math content and language for all students.

Under the guidance of Mrs. Franco, the state efforts to promote academic success for MLs began in 2023 with the implementation of Alabama's HQIA. First, instructional coaches familiarized themselves with best practices and then trained teachers on the key instructional components of the HQIA: asset-based instruction, student-centered engagement, academic discourse, scaffolding, and formative assessments.

After a successful learning journey with HQIA, we contracted with Dual Language Education of New Mexico in 2024 to be trained in Achievement Inspired Mathematics for Scaffolding Student Success (AIM4S^{3™}), a tool that equips educators to provide access to grade-level math content and language for all students, with a particular focus on supporting multilingual learners. This framework consists of the following components in support of math success (AIM4S^{3™} Math Training Overview, 2024):

- **Focus and Motivation** – Encourages connections between students' prior knowledge and new concepts and builds relevancy and interest for students.
- **Compendium** – Provides a “big picture” of the unit, incorporating visuals, key vocabulary,

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student-friendly goals, and students' questions and experiences.

- **Unit Lessons** – Align with state standards while embedding scaffolding strategies into daily instruction.
- **Closure and Goal Setting** – Helps students reflect on their learning and set future goals.

The AIM4S^{3™} Framework training provided us with an incredible opportunity for collaboration between state math and multilingual education coaches. In addition to exploring mathematical principles and instructional strategies, we engaged in reflective practices based on modeled lessons that aligned with our HQIA for ELs and WIDA language development standards (wida.us). The components of the AIM4S^{3™} framework were essential in supporting our learning and the development of strategies to assist English learners (ELs).

The first component of AIM4S^{3™} is **Focus and Motivation**. This component encourages students to connect their current understanding with new concepts, aligning with the HQIA asset-based learning approach. Both frameworks emphasize the importance of activating ELs' prior knowledge to help them understand new math concepts. HQIA particularly stresses the significance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into their learning experiences to facilitate the understanding of new concepts.

Questioning is also a fundamental aspect of the Focus and Motivation component. This practice allows students to develop their questioning skills. For example, students might be encouraged to ask questions like, 'How did you arrive at that answer?' or 'Can you explain your reasoning?' This dynamic not only helps MLs develop their questioning skill, but allows teachers to gain deeper insights into students' thought processes and approaches to arithmetic operations.

The Compendium, the second component of the AIM4S^{3™} framework, is a powerful community resource built with students that creates a reference that grounds student learning with visuals and key vocabulary and includes student inquiry and student-friendly standards and mathematical practices. When visuals are incorporated into

accessible tools for multilingual learners, they significantly enhance all learning.

The building of the Compendium and its use by students as a resource not only helps students develop their language skills but also empowers them to take ownership of their own learning. This is a key aspect of HQIA's student-centered engagement indicator. Educators integrate language and literacy development across all disciplines, building on EL students' strengths and experiences while promoting autonomy and supporting student motivation for language learning in a variety of settings.

The Compendium also facilitates the integration of academic discourse. As students discuss and document their findings on the Compendium, sentence frames and word repetition support students in acquiring math-related language. Sheltering and scaffolding are Key Instructional Principles of the AIM4S^{3™} Framework that align with HQIA's Scaffolding Indicator. When lesson planning, it is necessary to consider each student's level of English proficiency, academic ability, and the language demands of the lesson. According to HQIA, educators should work within students' zones of proximal development, offering the appropriate level of support necessary for their advancement.

Scaffolding is flexible and can take diverse forms depending on students' learning experiences and language proficiency levels. Educators develop appropriate scaffolds over time, finding new and effective ways of supporting their students, particularly as they gain more experience in content and language teaching. By gradually removing scaffolds as students gain proficiency, teachers are able to promote productive struggle and encourage independence in students' learning processes.

In AIM4S^{3™}, the component area of Closure and Goals Setting reflects HQIA's formative assessment indicator. It is designed to revisit learning and reinforce key math and language concepts as well as have students see themselves as active participants in the assessment and learning cycle. In the HQIA framework, students' goal setting plays a significant role in guiding content and language instruction,

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Today's Learners: Understanding Gen Z, Gen Alpha, and Multilingual Students

by Christopher S. Culver, Ed.D.—Orange Sparrow Consulting, Oklahoma City, OK

Today's learners, Gen Z (born 1995–2012) and Gen Alpha (born 2013–2024), represent a unique cohort shaped by unprecedented societal, cultural, and technological shifts. These generations are often characterized as social media-loving, trend-following, slang-using, and highly tech-savvy individuals. They are deeply integrated into digital spaces, with lives on screens often vastly different from their real-world experiences.

Despite being physically present, they can appear detached, reflecting their engagement with virtual realms. Influencers on social media significantly shape their worldview, a phenomenon unheard of in prior generations. Their upbringing reflects a digital-first environment, leading to traits such as restlessness, anxiety, and a growing disconnect from traditional in-person interactions (Elmore, 2019; Haight, 2021; Harding, 2019).

Educators and parents report that children today arrive at school more exhausted than previous generations, largely due to late-night device usage (Elmore, 2019). This behavior has contributed to increased diagnoses of ADHD, mental health disorders, and diminished focus and confidence (Haight, 2021). Alarming, even toddlers are immersed in technology—28% of one-year-olds use tablets, and 28% of two-year-olds navigate smartphones independently. Furthermore, 27% of parents use mobile devices as sleep aids for their children, despite knowing it hampers quality sleep, a foundational component of emotional regulation and healthy development (Harding, 2019).

In the 1990s, screen time averaged less than three hours per day, mainly television (Harding, 2019). Today, students often exceed eight hours of screen

use daily (Elmore, 2019). The National Health Institute (2018) warns that spending over seven hours on devices negatively affects the prefrontal cortex, the brain region responsible for thought and action processing. This overuse has led many students to believe they can multitask across five screens simultaneously, a claim debunked by Simon Sinek (2014), who explains that multitasking is simply distraction. This means children are now five times more distracted than prior generations, fostering a fear of missing out (FOMO), irritability, and mental health challenges (Elmore, 2019).



Students in today's classrooms are deeply integrated into digital spaces.

The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies mental health as a more significant global health threat than heart disease, cancer, or diabetes (Harding, 2019). Today's children are

growing up with adult tools—smartphones, social media, and unrestricted internet access—without the cognitive and emotional maturity to manage them. They are overexposed to information before they are developmentally ready and underexposed to firsthand experiences, which has limited their resilience (Elmore, 2019). This shift has also discouraged failure as a learning tool, robbing them of critical growth opportunities. Internet use has altered brain function, diminishing focus, reflection, and patience, while fostering entitlement and shorter attention spans. The average attention span of today's generation is just eight seconds, exacerbating anxiety and panic attacks (Elmore, 2022). While connected online, they often struggle to connect in meaningful, face-to-face relationships (Haight, 2021).

Loneliness is a significant concern. One in five adults reports chronic loneliness, and one in ten children say they lack friends. Research equates

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the health effects of loneliness to smoking 15 cigarettes daily (Harding, 2019). A 2015 Pew Report showed that 25% of Gen Z/Alpha felt online almost constantly; by 2022, this number had nearly doubled to 46%. Even when engaging in real-world activities, such as eating, many remain preoccupied with virtual anxieties. Social media occupies up to 16 hours daily, equating to 112 hours weekly. Acceptance from peers is critical, while online shaming is their worst fear (Haight, 2021). A 2023 Pew Research study revealed that 58% of teens said social media helps them feel accepted. While face-to-face bullying has decreased, cyberbullying has surged. Between 2011 and 2019, approximately 1 in 10 boys and 1 in 5 girls experienced cyberbullying. Tragically, the National Mental Health Institute (2024) found suicide rates among 8- to 11-year-olds due to bullying have risen, even as rates for older students (12-15) have declined.

Social media exacerbates adolescents' insecurities, fueling negative internal dialogue and internal conflicts. This leads to fearful, insecure, angry, and jealous behavior. Human beings are wired to seek belonging and survival, but not to endure persistent negative self-perceptions. Rejection or isolation triggers fear responses akin to physical danger, causing overreactions and emotional deregulation (Harding, 2019). Educators and parents must help students "change the channel" of their thoughts, using cognitive tasks to redirect and reframe their thinking.

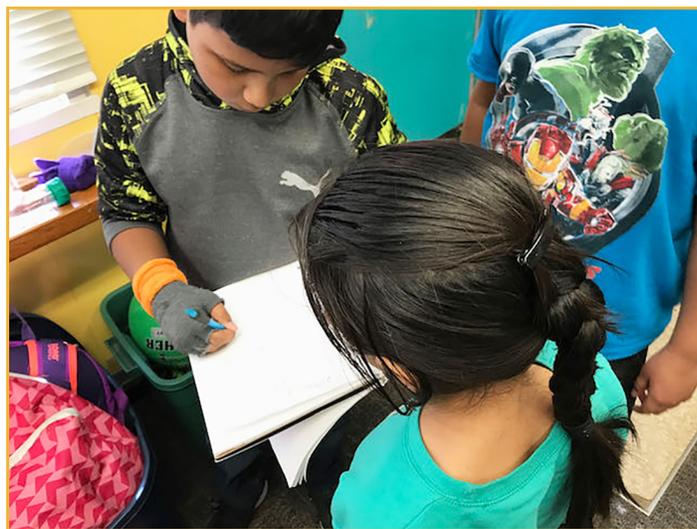
Multilingual learners, often among Gen Z and Gen Alpha students, face additional challenges due to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2007) defines perimigration trauma as the psychological distress experienced during four stages of migration:

1. **Pre-migration Events:** Many multilingual students come from regions affected by war, extreme poverty, or violence. These experiences leave deep psychological scars, impacting their ability to adapt to new environments.
2. **Migration Events:** Migration itself can involve traumatic separations from family, hunger, and the loss of loved ones. The

uncertainty and upheaval during this period further compound stress.

3. **Seeking Asylum:** Immigrant families often endure chronic deprivation of basic needs, rejection, and isolation while navigating the asylum process.
4. **Post-migration Survival:** Even after settling in a new country, challenges such as racism, substandard living conditions, and insufficient income persist. These struggles are amplified by social and emotional isolation, difficulties in building a stable identity, and limited support networks.

Multilingual learners also face unique academic challenges. Differences in educational systems, language barriers, and cultural adjustments create additional stress and anxiety. Many experience discrimination or prejudice, further complicating their sense of belonging. Balancing the maintenance of cultural heritage while assimilating into a new culture adds to the complexity of their experience (Forbes, 2023). These factors often lead to increased levels of anxiety and hinder their academic and social development.



Multilingual learners may face pre-migration trauma as well as academic challenges.

The shift from play-based to phone-based childhood has hindered communication and connection skills (Haight, 2021). Children now prefer digital spaces over face-to-face interactions, necessitating that educators prioritize activities that foster speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This approach is essential for all

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commitment to recognizing the cultural wealth students bring and addressing the historical marginalization embedded in educational systems (Arias, 2022; Lindsey et al; 2019). It requires more than just professional development sessions or surface-level policy adjustments. Cultural proficiency demands institutional introspection and sustained action (Lindsey et al., 2019).

A significant [perceived] barrier to cultural proficiency is the entrenched belief that academic success is a neutral endeavor, free from cultural influence and necessary equitable practices. This perception often manifests in resistance to adopting culturally responsive practices, particularly in predominantly monolingual school

THE CULTURAL PROFICIENCY CONTINUUM: DEPICTING UNHEALTHY AND HEALTHY PRACTICES					
Cultural DESTRUCTIVENESS	Cultural INCAPACITY	Cultural BLINDNESS	Cultural PRECOMPETENCE	Cultural COMPETENCE	Cultural PROFICIENCY
COMPLIANCE-BASED TOLERANCE FOR DIVERSITY			TRANSFORMATION FOR EQUITY		
Cultural destructiveness: Seeking to eliminate references to the culture of “others” in all aspects of the school and in relationship with their communities.	Cultural incapacity: Trivializing “other” communities and seeking to make them appear to be wrong.	Cultural blindness: Pretending not to see or acknowledge the status and culture of marginalized communities and choosing to ignore the experiences of such groups within the school and community.	Cultural precompetence: Increasingly aware of what you and the school don’t know about working with marginalized communities. It is at this key level of development that you and the school can move in a positive, constructive direction, or you can vacillate, stop, and possibly regress.	Cultural competence: Manifesting your personal values and behaviors and the school’s policies and practices in a manner that is inclusive with marginalized cultures and communities that are new or different from you and the school.	Cultural proficiency: Advocating for lifelong learning in order to be increasingly effective in serving the educational needs of the cultural groups served by the school. Holding the vision that you and the school are instruments for creating a socially just democracy.

Note: From www.learningforward.org “Build cultural proficiency to ensure equity,” by Lindsey, D., & Lindsey, R., 2016, *Journal of Staff Development*, 37(1), p. 53

For instance, while dual language programs are often cited as examples of culturally responsive education, they must be examined critically (Howard et al., 2019). Are they truly additive in their design, or do they still operate within deficit frameworks that prioritize dominant cultural norms? Dual language education, when implemented authentically alongside its stakeholders, has the potential to disrupt monocultural narratives by fostering environments where multilingualism and multiculturalism thrive. However, to reach this potential, schools must avoid treating these programs as isolated initiatives and instead integrate cultural responsiveness across all school functions with the goal of institutionalizing cultural knowledge (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2019).

settings. “Equity-based leaders pose questions to self and the school community in ways that open themselves and their colleagues to being curious about school-based factors that facilitate or hinder student access and achievement” (Lindsey et al, 2019, p. 175). Research underscores that deficit-based mindsets can result in lower expectations for students from historically marginalized backgrounds (Arias, 2022; Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016).

Both dual language and monolingual education settings have highlighted challenges related to systemic constraints, including insufficient professional development, limited representation of diverse faculty, and teacher recruitment concerns (Forbes, 2023; Howard et al, 2018).

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These barriers are not isolated but interconnected. Without intentional hiring practices that prioritize diversity and leadership pathways for multicultural/multilingual educators, schools risk reinforcing monocultural power dynamics. Additionally, professional development must go beyond training sessions—it must foster reflective dialogue that helps educators unpack their assumptions, biases, and ideologies about culture, language, and identity (Howard et al, 2018; Welborn, 2022).

Culturally proficient leadership is a cornerstone of effective school transformation and is a moral imperative as servant leaders (Lindsey et al, 2019; Welborn, 2022). Leaders set the tone for how cultural diversity is perceived and valued within their institutions. Yet, many educational leaders are not adequately equipped to navigate the complexities of cultural proficiency. As Lindsey and Lindsey (2016) suggest, cultural proficiency requires moving beyond policy compliance toward cultural self-awareness and systemic accountability.

A key step in this direction is the creation of inclusive leadership structures, such as equity councils that represent a diverse array of voices from students, families, educators, and community stakeholders (Howard et al, 2018). These councils should not merely function as advisory bodies but as collaborative teams that influence decision-making processes and resource allocation (Forbes, 2023). By centering diverse perspectives, schools can begin to dismantle systemic inequities and rebuild trust with historically underrepresented communities.

Culturally responsive pedagogy extends beyond curriculum adjustments—it involves reimagining the classroom as a dynamic space for cultural exploration and affirmation while celebrating cultural identities, traditions, and values. Educators, therefore, must shift from being transmitters of knowledge to facilitators who co-create learning experiences with students (Forbes, 2024). Effective dual language classrooms model this approach by integrating culturally sustaining pedagogical practices, embedding global perspectives, and fostering cross-cultural dialogue with and alongside students and families, as well as fellow educational professionals (Howard & Simpson, 2024).

However, culturally sustaining pedagogy must also be implemented in monolingual classrooms. The misconception that such pedagogy only benefits multicultural/multilingual learners ignores its universal potential to enhance critical thinking, empathy, global citizenship, global competence, and critical consciousness for all students. While simultaneously engaging families, schools can embed these practices through project-based learning that focuses on community histories, culturally relevant literature, and multilingual storytelling.

Authentic family involvement is a critical, yet often overlooked, element of cultural proficiency. Schools must create spaces where families feel welcomed and valued as partners in their children's education considering diverse families must be at least bicultural to participate in their educational settings (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016). After all, parents are our students' very first teachers. This acknowledgment requires moving beyond transactional interactions, such as parent-teacher conferences and Title Nights, to foster meaningful and intentional collaboration.

Effective family involvement requires providing language access services, creating culturally relevant school events, and co-developing policies with parent input (Howard et al., 2018). Additionally, partnerships with community organizations can expand the school's capacity to meet the diverse needs of families. In my research, schools that successfully implemented dual language programs often collaborated with local cultural centers, and community members at large, to provide enrichment opportunities that reinforced students' cultural identities while remaining connected to the community served.

Cultural proficiency must be embedded in educational policy to ensure sustainability and accountability. State and district-level policies should encourage culturally responsive professional development and require equity audits that assess disparities in achievement, resource distribution, and disciplinary practices (Howard et al, 20218). Furthermore, state and district policies should incentivize dual language program expansion, particularly in underserved

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communities (Steele et al., 2017).

Future research must continue to investigate how culturally proficient practices impact student outcomes, not only academically but also in terms of social-emotional development and civic engagement. Longitudinal studies could provide insight into how students in culturally proficient school environments navigate, explore, and influence higher education, the workforce, and acts of government. Additionally, research should explore how student voice and activism can influence the evolution of cultural proficiency frameworks.

Cultural proficiency is not a static achievement but an ongoing journey that requires intentionality, collaboration, and courage as the culturally proficient leader ensures that she will view educational practices through a different lens (Lindsey et al., 2019). Dual language education offers a compelling model for how schools can move beyond symbolic diversity to enact meaningful acts promoting equity and inclusion. However, achieving cultural proficiency requires a systemic commitment to rethinking leadership, pedagogy, and community engagement (Lindsey and Lindsey, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2019; Welborn, 2022).

As I reflect on my research and practice, I am reminded that cultural proficiency is not solely about improving academic outcomes—it is about affirming the humanity of every student and empowering them to see themselves as agents of change. By embracing this responsibility, educators and leaders can transform schools into spaces where *all* students, regardless of background, feel seen, heard, and valued.

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students and particularly beneficial for multilingual learners. Research suggests that when teachers shift to a facilitator role and encourage students to take ownership of their learning, test scores improve significantly within two months and sustain those gains over time (Hattie, 2009).

For multilingual students, classrooms must be inclusive spaces that celebrate diversity. Collaborative group activities can encourage peer-to-peer learning and foster communication skills. Teachers should use scaffolding techniques to support language development while encouraging participation. Incorporating students' cultural heritage into the curriculum can validate their identities and promote a sense of belonging.

Incorporating mindfulness into daily routines is critical. Even 60-second mindfulness exercises, such as walking without headphones, noticing three positive things, or focusing on physical sensations like wiggling toes, can help students recentralize and regulate emotions. Similarly, practicing gratitude—acknowledging even small positives amidst challenges—can shift perspectives and improve emotional resilience. These practices create a classroom environment where students feel safe, valued, and capable of success (Harding, 2019).

Ultimately, educators must focus on who they are teaching rather than merely what they are teaching. Kindness and empathy should be the foundation of all interactions, fostering an environment where children can thrive without fear or judgment. As Maya Angelou famously said, students may not remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel. By treating students with kindness and encouraging them to grow authentically, we empower the next generation to navigate their unique challenges with confidence and compassion.

Multilingual learners, like their peers, benefit from environments where they are celebrated for their strengths and supported through their challenges. A sense of belonging, cultural validation, and consistent encouragement can transform their educational experience, fostering resilience and success.

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Design Principle #4: Cultivate Humility Through Inquiry—Honoring Knowledge Within the Room

IMV's principle of Cultivate Humility Through Inquiry emphasizes the value of participants' knowledge, especially those often marginalized. This principle encourages "problem-finding" before "problem-solving," allowing educators to reflect deeply on challenges and share their insights.

In The Fellowship, educators explore challenges collaboratively rather than jumping to quick fixes, fostering a deeper understanding of educational equity. Participants report that sharing lived experiences brings value to PD in ways they hadn't previously experienced. One shared, "This program showed me that answers often lie within our own experiences." Our evaluation indicated that 98% of participants gained a deeper understanding of equity through these shared reflections.

Applying Cultivate Humility Through Inquiry to Your PD

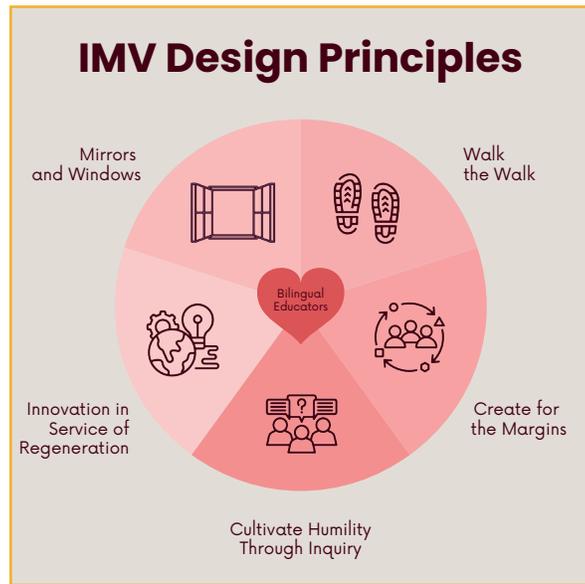
To apply this principle, you can:

- ◇ Start with Open-Ended Questions: Give participants space to articulate challenges before proposing solutions.
- ◇ Encourage Peer Sharing: Facilitate discussions that bring out diverse voices.
- ◇ Model Curiosity and Openness: Value perspectives that are often underrepresented, creating a space for all voices.

Design Principle #5: Innovation in Service of Regeneration—Adapting for Continuous Growth

For IMV, innovation is not just a trend but a path to ongoing, meaningful improvement. Innovation in Service of Regeneration means that PD must adapt to the evolving needs and feedback of educators, especially those facing barriers.

Feedback led to the asynchronous model of all of our programming, enabling educators to balance demanding schedules. This adjustment increased engagement, with 85% valuing flexibility as essential to their success. And for bilingual educators, providing content in Spanish and English furthered our commitment to serving everyone.



Instituto Mundo Verde's Design Principles ensure that their PD is grounded in a focus on bilingual educators.

Applying Innovation in Service of Regeneration to Your PD

To implement this principle:

- ◇ Gather Feedback Regularly: Use participant feedback to refine future sessions.
- ◇ Offer Flexible Formats: Include asynchronous or hybrid options.
- ◇ Focus on Practical Relevance: Update content to align with participants' real-world challenges.

Bilingual Teachers at the Heart of PD

At Instituto Mundo Verde, we understand that meaningful, equitable professional development doesn't happen by accident. It requires intentionality, care, and a deep commitment to the educators it's designed for. By embracing principles like Mirrors and Windows, Walk the Walk, Create for the Margins, Cultivate Humility Through Inquiry, and Innovation in Service of Regeneration, we're not just offering a framework—we're making a promise. A promise to see and value the work of bilingual educators, to honor the challenges they face, and to amplify the impact they have on their students every day. This is how we create PD that goes beyond filling gaps; it's about reigniting the passion and purpose that drives bilingual educators, empowering them to transform their classrooms, their communities, and their own sense of joy in teaching.

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providing a clear teaching and learning path for educators and students.

The AIM4S^{3™} training also led us to an important finding as our language and math coaches explored the Alabama Math Standards, which are based on the NAEP standards and NCTM math principles (<https://alabamastandards.org/0c01a9eb-4d20-4578-89fb-3876b435c3d4>). We discovered that it is possible to develop an approach to mathematics instruction focused on two key ideas: teaching mathematical principles and enhancing students' language skills. These principles will assist our departments in supporting teachers in establishing clear goals for mathematics and language learning.

As a WIDA state, Alabama follows the guidance provided by the WIDA standards framework. This framework emphasizes four key components,

with the WIDA key language uses, we created a tool to guide educators in developing powerful language goals for their multilingual learners. See the table below.

By providing a specific purpose for language in relation to each mathematical principle, our approach to teaching multilingual learners became more focused and intentional. While not all classroom language practices can be captured in a single approach, tools like this can serve as practical guides for weaving language into math instruction. Furthermore, such tools may spark innovative ideas to refine and strengthen strategies for teaching multilingual learners.

As educators, our mission extends beyond delivering content; we are shaping learners to think critically, solve problems, and communicate effectively. Integrating mathematical principles with purposeful language development equips English learners to overcome challenges, reach their academic potential, and thrive throughout their educational journeys.

Achieving this vision requires a collaborative and strategic effort to improve mathematics instruction for multilingual learners across our schools and states. By leveraging frameworks such as the Alabama Framework for English Learner Success, HQIA, AIM4S^{3™}, WIDA, and the NCTM mathematical principles, we can create meaningful connections between content and language instruction. This integration fosters an equitable learning environment, ensuring all students have the opportunity

NCTM Mathematical Principle	WIDA Key Language Use	Language Goal
Establish mathematics goals to focus learning	Recount, Discuss	Students express their learning goals and discuss why these goals are important to help them concentrate their efforts.
Implement tasks that promote reasoning/problem-solving	Explain	Students express their problem-solving strategies and provide justification for their reasoning.
Use and connect mathematical representations	Recount, Explain	Students describe steps and explain relationships between different representations.
Facilitate meaningful mathematical discourse	Discuss	Students engage in collaborative discussions to share and refine their mathematical ideas.
Pose purposeful questions	Explain, Discuss	Students respond to purposeful questions to articulate their reasoning and interact with their teacher and peers.
Build procedural fluency from conceptual understanding	Recount, Explain	Students describe steps and explain relationships between different representations.
Support productive struggle	Argue, Discuss	Productive struggle fosters argumentation and dialogue to refine reasoning and solutions.
Elicit and use evidence of student thinking	Recount, Explain, Argue	Students recount their process, explain reasoning, or argue solutions to show understanding.

two of which educators can use when combining language instruction with content instruction: integrating content and language and a functional approach to language development that includes key language use and a language goal that provides the students the opportunity to practice and use key language. By merging mathematical principles

to excel academically.

Resources

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AIM4S^{3™} Trainer Perspective: Collaboration Across Departments at the State Level is Possible

For this AIM4S^{3™} math training in Alabama, Maria Franco brought together the multilingual learner and math coaches from various state-level departments. This is the first time at Dual Language Education of New Mexico that our math team has seen this type of collaboration at the state level. During the training, these two groups shared theory and best practices in math and language learning. They observed classroom demonstrations that put theory into action and worked collaboratively to plan and teach lessons together.

During our six days together, the coaches had deep conversations tapping the expertise of all participants. They increased their understanding of the power of conceptual learning in mathematics and the challenges teachers face when teaching this content. The math coaches took a closer look at the complexity of English and how targeted

language development is key to developing students' math abilities. There also were some powerful conversations about how math can look different across the world. As an example, some of the language coaches shared their own experiences with division, noting that in some Latin American countries dividend and divisor are placed differently than in the U.S. standard division algorithm. Their point was that some students come with math knowledge that U.S. teachers don't recognize because the students' work differs from what teachers expect.

During the training, we often heard comments from the coaches about the need for ongoing collaboration between the departments in order to support teachers in delivering effective math instruction for multilingual learners in Alabama. This will be a challenge with the reality of day-to-day responsibilities and schedules, but we are excited to see how they continue to build bridges across their work. Content and language should not live in separate silos at our state departments when teachers need to be addressing both of these continually in their classrooms with students.

While Alabama may not have as large a concentration of multilingual learners as other states, they have developed powerful tools to guide their schools and districts in educating language learners. Many states with much higher numbers of English learners do not have cohesive frameworks that work across content and language to support the success of multilingual learners. These tools are well worth looking at by other states and organizations. Kudos to Alabama for the work they have done to increase the visibility of multilingual learners in their state.



Academic coaches from various state education departments participated in DLeNM's AIMS4S^{3™} training.

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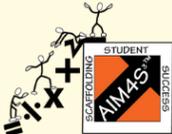


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