
The Ethnic-Educator Philosophy

Chapter 1 introduces the ethnic-educator philosophy and pedagogical principles endorsing advocacy and moral responsibility in teachers acting as liaisons and cultural bridges between the mainstream school culture and young, diverse children and their families. The central idea in the ethnic-educator philosophy is that the teacher's personality is the most important tool for the assessment and instruction of low-socioeconomic-status (SES), young, diverse children. Based on the ethnic-educator philosophy and some research evidence (see Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez, Brusca-Vega, & Yawkey, 1997; Gonzalez & Yawkey, 1993; Gonzalez, Yawkey, & Minaya-Rowe, 2006), I believe there are multiple factors embedded in teachers' personalities (i.e., attitudes, expectations, cultural beliefs and values, knowledge level, and level of familiarity of diverse languages and cultures) that affect their teaching. It is important to note that *all* teachers can assume an ethnic-educator philosophy, regardless of their personal ethnic, racial, cultural, and language backgrounds. That is, mainstream and minority teachers can assume a commitment for respecting and celebrating diversity among their students. This chapter engages *all* teachers in reflecting about how much high-quality education for low-SES, young, diverse children depends on teachers acting as committed mentors who value and celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset and who nurture and believe in young, diverse children's learning potential. Endorsing an ethnic-educator philosophy, this book proposes that once teachers become committed mentors and advocates, they need to become knowledgeable about pedagogical models and strategies that meet the diverse educational needs of young children.

The Bilingual Preschool Development Center (BPDC), which I organized in collaboration with public schools, a regional Head Start center, a community organization, and my university, is used as a real-life laboratory where the ethnic-educator approach was tested and implemented for serving young, diverse children and their families. Throughout this book, excerpts from reflections of student teachers acting as BPDC lead teachers will be used as illustrations of the ethnic-educator philosophy and principles in action. The creation of the BPDC consortium and the real-life story behind this book is told in the Preface, as a letter to the reader.

The ethnic-educator philosophy and principles discussed in this chapter are also embedded throughout the book because *diversity* is approached as a broad term encompassing ethnicity, minority cultures and languages, and low-SES backgrounds. The young, diverse children whom this book refers to may come from *language-minority groups* (English-as-a-second-language [ESL] groups, such as Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders), from *sociohistorical minority groups* (i.e., African Americans), or from *mainstream* groups in terms of ethnicity but *low-SES* backgrounds (i.e., Appalachian and other white children living in poverty). The term low-SES is preferred in this book, rather than poverty, because it encompasses many social factors associated with low income and economic disadvantages that negatively impact development and learning in young children. For instance, among the most important factors, SES encompasses (1) occupation of parents and the associated levels of education and literacy in parents and, especially, caregivers, such as mothers, grandparents, or siblings; (2) resources present at home—from books and computers to basic needs, such as food and clothing; (3) physical and mental health of parents—related to emotional availability of parents, resilience, resourcefulness to identify social services, and the quality of the parent-child relationship; (4) cultural adaptation of parents and siblings—related to level of English-language proficiency in minority and immigrant families; and (5) number of siblings and birth order—older siblings have a higher risk of underachievement.

Philosophical principles are defined in this book as theoretical frameworks and perspectives that the author endorses as a vision for educating young, diverse children. Pedagogical principles are defined as general instructional approaches supported by research-based studies and theoretical paradigms. Together the four central *philosophical principles* and the embedded *pedagogical principles*, as listed and fully described later in this chapter, form the ethnic-educator philosophy presented in this book. Table 1.1 lists the ethnic-educator philosophical and pedagogical principles with a brief description.

- *Philosophical Principle 1: Developmental and Humanistic View of Learning*

Philosophical Principle 1 describes a *developmental* and *humanistic* view of learning and academic achievement in low-SES, young, diverse students. Teaching as a social and affective experience is emphasized throughout the chapters of this book, stimulating teachers to develop advocacy, commitment, empathy, and rapport for assuming social and moral responsibility when serving young, diverse children.

- *Pedagogical Principle 1: Socioemotional Nature of Learning and Teaching Processes*

Pedagogical Principle 1 represents the *socioemotional nature of learning and teaching processes* in nurturing classroom or home environments in which educators and parents are able to establish a trusting friendship with mutual respect for individual, cultural, and linguistic differences and a personal connection with the child (i.e., bonding or *rapport*). This rapport stimulates children's learning potential, the

4 Ethnic-Educator Philosophical and Theoretical Framework

Table 1.1 The Ethnic-Educator Philosophical and Pedagogical Principles

<i>Philosophical Principles</i>	<i>Pedagogical Principles</i>
<p><i>Principle 1</i> <i>Developmental and Humanistic View of Socioemotional Nature of Teaching and Learning</i></p>	<p><i>Learning Processes</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A holistic developmental perspective for learning across cognitive, linguistic, and socioemotional developmental and academic areas (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental and humanistic view of learning processes and academic achievement • The <i>socioemotional nature of learning and teaching processes</i> in nurturing classroom or home environments, in which educators and parents are able to establish a trusting friendship with mutual respect of individual, cultural, and linguistic differences, and a personal connection with the child (bonding or <i>rapport</i>)
<p><i>Principle 2</i> <i>Holistic View of Learning and the Curriculum</i></p>	<p><i>Internal and External Factors Affect Resilience and At-Risk Conditions</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socioconstructivistic theoretical perspective with the interaction of internal and external factors in developmental and learning processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and developmental processes are affected by the interaction of internal factors (maturational, psychological, and biological) and external factors (cultural, social, schooling, and family settings) • Internal and external factors affecting low-socioeconomic-status (SES), diverse, young children can support or hinder their <i>academic achievement</i> (becoming resilient or at risk of underachievement)
<p><i>Principle 3</i> <i>Pluralistic and Transcultural Perspectives</i></p>	<p><i>Culture and Language Represented in Assessment and Instruction</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pluralistic pedagogical approach because it celebrates cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset, enriching the development and learning potential of young, diverse children into multicultural and multilingual minds and spirits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language is a conceptual tool for learning and representing sociocultural, affective, and emotional processes (i.e., cultural and bicultural identity)

<p><i>Principle 4</i> <i>Teachers as Advocates and Cultural Mediators</i></p>	<p><i>Teachers as Advocates and Cultural Mediators</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy position that calls teachers to raise their cultural awareness and develop <i>personal connections</i> between their family history and their students' sociohistorical backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers need to develop <i>nurturing learning communities</i> in which diverse, young children can collaborate, participate actively, and have a sense of belonging and intrinsic motivation • Teachers act as <i>cultural bridges/mediators</i> between the mainstream school culture and minority families • Teachers need to act as <i>mentors</i> for developing <i>rapport</i> with diverse children and <i>partnerships</i> with parents to establish mutual trust, respect for cultural, linguistic diversity, and idiosyncratic differences

negotiation of cultural and linguistic meanings with teachers and parents (or peers and siblings), and socioemotional learning processes (i.e., related to their individual differences and personality characteristics, such as temperament, motivation, interests, attitudes, cultural identity, cultural adaptation processes, cultural values and beliefs, identification and internalization of role models, imitation, self-concept, and self-esteem). Thus, stimulating learning in young, diverse students goes beyond the creation of an academic context, but requires a caring and committed teacher who can offer praise, encouragement, celebration, and reassurance of the value of minority linguistic and cultural identities.

- *Philosophical Principle 2: Holistic View of Learning and the Curriculum*

Philosophical Principle 2 describes a *socioconstructivistic* theoretical perspective with a *holistic* view of development (i.e., with interaction across cognition, language, and socioemotional areas) and the curriculum (with interaction across content areas—language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies). This holistic view of education acknowledges the interaction of internal and external factors in development and learning in young, diverse children. Assessment also has a holistic approach in which alternative or qualitative measures need to be used with process and problem-solving tasks. The ethnic-educator philosophy endorses the development of verbal and nonverbal concepts as mental tools for thinking and learning and high-level critical-thinking skills and problem-solving strategies that can actualize young children's potential for learning into academic excellence. It is considered that children's learning potential continues to develop across their life span, from lower- to higher-developmental levels.

6 Ethnic-Educator Philosophical and Theoretical Framework

- *Pedagogical Principle 2: Internal and External Factors Affect Resilience and At-Risk Conditions*

Pedagogical Principle 2 states that *internal* (i.e., developmental and psychological characteristics) and *external factors* (i.e., school and family environments) *interact*, resulting in resilience or at-risk conditions for underachievement in young, diverse children. A developmental perspective considers that young, diverse children are unique individuals with idiosyncratic differences that are the product of the interaction between internal and external factors. That is, development is dynamically influenced by individuals' unlimited potential for learning that is actualized and expressed differently across cultural and linguistic environments. Young, diverse students need to be respected and valued by teachers as individuals with rich heritages and cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

- *Philosophical Principle 3: Pluralistic and Transcultural Perspectives*

Philosophical Principle 3 describes a *pluralistic* pedagogical approach because teachers must celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset that can enrich the developmental and learning potential of young, diverse children into multicultural and multilingual minds and spirits. A pluralistic approach endorses *transculturation*, not assimilation, to use education as an enrichment tool that nurtures, maintains, and develops young children's culturally and linguistically diverse identities. Transculturation allows diverse children to move freely between their minority and mainstream personalities, enjoying the freedom provided by a truly democratic classroom and schooling process. In this way, the American Dream pursued by diverse families will become a reality for their children.

- *Pedagogical Principle 3: Culture and Language Represented in Assessment and Instruction*

Pedagogical Principle 3 states that teachers need to understand how to represent cultural and linguistic backgrounds of diverse children in assessment and instruction, through classroom-based assessments with instructional purposes. A battery of alternative assessments across developmental and content areas needs to be used to evaluate the individual child (i.e., readiness to learn across first and second languages [L1, L2] and nonverbal developmentally appropriate abilities), the social learning contexts in the school (school readiness), and family diverse settings. Assessment as an inseparable element for high-quality teaching requires the use of instruments that have demonstrated validity or accuracy for a particular use and population, as well as highly trained educators who can evaluate young, diverse students' learning and development through classroom-based assessments.

- *Philosophical Principle 4: Teachers as Advocates and Cultural Mediators*

Philosophical Principle 4 states that teachers need to take an *advocacy* position to raise their *cultural awareness* and develop *personal connections* between their family history and their students' sociohistorical backgrounds. Many teachers may have diverse ancestors, because about one-third of U.S. citizens today come from diverse ethnic, cultural, and/or linguistic backgrounds. By finding a personal connection

through family history, educators can build rapport that fosters high-quality pedagogy and success for young students' learning and academic achievement.

- *Pedagogical Principle 4: Teachers as Advocates and Cultural Mediators*

Pedagogical Principle 4 states that teachers need to reach out to diverse parents to become collaborative partners, mentors, cultural mediators (or liaisons), and committed advocates in the successful schooling process of young, diverse students. Moreover, educators need to generate emotional or social bridges between home and school by creating an integrated curriculum and a school environment that authentically resembles students' real-life experiences of language and culture in their natural home environment.

Thus, the ethnic-educator philosophy stimulates teachers to engage in a reflection about central philosophical and pedagogical principles affecting low-SES, young, diverse students' learning, development, and academic achievement. Research evidence and educational implications of how these central philosophical and pedagogical principles lead to high-quality teaching for young, diverse learners are presented throughout the book. Case studies of classroom implementations as well as teachers' personal reflections are used to illustrate the implementation of these central philosophical and pedagogical principles in classroom practice through the BPDC project.

Now that all four central philosophical and pedagogical principles have been summarized, I will discuss each one in light of some examples from the BPDC experience.

EXAMPLES OF PRINCIPLE 1

The Developmental and Humanistic

Views of the Socioemotional Nature of Learning

Consider the following examples regarding the first philosophical principle of a developmental and humanistic view of learning and its derived first pedagogical principle of the socioemotional nature of learning and teaching processes. For instance, depending on the social and *cultural distance* between the young, diverse children and the target language and culture, they may experience some socioemotional processes such as *cultural adaptation* and its expressions through *culture shock* and *language shock*. Cultural distance is defined as the degree of similarities or differences that exist between two cultural behaviors and products (e.g., child rearing cultural practices, food habits, dress code, cultural styles of thinking and using language, and communication patterns). In the BPDC, we observed that the Hispanic preschoolers experienced culture shock because of the cultural distance of differences in food habits and child rearing practices for feeding between the school and home environments. Young, Hispanic children wanted to sit on the lap of their teachers, and they expected to be cuddled and fed liked their mothers did at home. In fact, many Hispanic youngsters called their teachers "mama" (mother), and their mothers sent their bottles to school for the children to drink their milk from.

Obviously, teachers and parents' cultural expectations for child rearing acceptable behaviors for three- and four-year-olds were very different. There was a big cultural distance or gap between the Hispanic home culture of dependence of children on adults and the mainstream school culture of independence of children and mastery of self-help skills at young ages.

Another example of cultural distance observed in the BPDC was the difference in dress codes between the mainstream school culture and the Hispanic parents. At the beginning of the school year, most Hispanic children (especially girls) were sent to school in their best Sunday clothes, with uncomfortable shoes and accessories that did not allow children to play in the gym and on the playground or to go to the restroom on their own. Some children also expressed some fear of messing up their best clothes while playing because their parents had explicitly told them "don't get messy" (no te ensucies). Teachers had to explain to Hispanic parents that children needed to be dressed in more simple and comfortable clothing that could be washed.

Cultural adaptation processes are complex and require immigrant, diverse children and their families to undergo some stages that take *developmental time* (from a few months to as many as eight years, depending on individual and contextual factors). Teachers need to be aware of the characteristics of these *cultural adaptation stages*, the socioemotional cost for the individual, the impact on L2 proficiency levels, and necessary developmental time for young, diverse children. According to Adler (1975), *cultural adjustment* requires the immigrant child to go through a progressive sequence of three maturational stages of personality changes and coping skills, including (1) *identifying self in relation to the home culture* behaviors and values, (2) *identifying self during the transition between the home and the host culture* and experiencing some conflicts in cultural values and behaviors and feelings of "living between two cultural worlds" (culture shock and language shock can occur at this stage), and (3) *identifying self in relation to the host culture* in which individuals compare and contrast similarities and differences between cultures and becoming aware of cultural meanings in their host culture, allowing for intercultural communication.

Culture shock is an expression of the second adaptation stage, in which the minority child experiences anxiety, fear, disorientation, and confusion when previous adaptation or coping strategies used successfully in the native home or culture do not work for solving problems in the second culture or environment (i.e., the school classroom). The minority child experiences a transitional phase in which new adaptation strategies need to be learned (i.e., reorganize values and beliefs, change behaviors, and ultimately change personality characteristics based on new cultural experiences) to become *transcultural* or *bicultural*. Individuals need to negotiate how to integrate home-country values with new host-country values and behaviors, with conflicts arising when cultures are in opposition or do not complement each other. This process takes developmental time and a nurturing environment with the presence of caring teachers and parents who can serve as role models for the new adaptation strategy.

A particular Guatemalan girl, Paula, comes to mind as an example from the BPDC illustrating the second cultural adaptation stage of transition and conflict between cultural values. Paula was three years old and monolingual-Spanish when she came to us, and she was delayed in her oral-language proficiency.

After about six months in the BPDC, Paula strongly identified with her bilingual (Spanish/English) preschool teacher, she improved significantly in her Spanish proficiency, and she mastered a large number of phrases in English, which led to a beginning communicative-competence level. At this point, Paula started to express cultural value conflicts typical of a transitional second-cultural adaptation stage. Paula was becoming aware of her growing biculturalism and bilingualism, which was highly valued at school by her bilingual teacher, and by contrast, she articulated her preoccupation in the fact that her mother could only speak Spanish at home. As part of the parental involvement emphasis of Head Start, we had also started a parents' English program, so Paula's mother was starting to learn a few English phrases to use at home. Paula was overjoyed one morning when she shared with her bilingual teacher that her mom, for the first time, spoke to her in English at home. Her mom said, "Paula, go to bed." That simple phrase had finally solved Paula's cultural conflict of the value of being bilingual at school. Now, she could identify with bilingualism through her most important role models—her mother and her teacher. Culture shock was observed in the BPDC Hispanic children when they first experienced the school menu. Items like chicken nuggets and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were not part of their home experiences. Hispanic children first reacted with surprise and lack of interest in trying unfamiliar food. An effort was made to bring parents in to school to learn with their children, to stimulate independent behaviors at the table, and to learn to prepare and eat the typical foods of mainstream school menus. At the same time, an effort was made to incorporate familiar Hispanic household items in the school menu, such as tacos and beans. By the end of the school year, many Hispanic children enjoyed moving from typical American foods to their beloved Hispanic food, becoming transcultural, and transcending their initial cultural distance and culture shock. In fact, socioemotional learning and cultural adaptation are very much related to academic achievement in young, diverse children. Nurturing the integration of successful socioemotional development in both cultures supports young, diverse children and their families in adapting successfully to the school culture by becoming bicultural or transcultural.

Language shock involves an emotional stage of confusion and frustration that monolingual speakers of languages other than English experience when entering an environment where only English is used. It is related to the first stage or *silent period* of L2 learning, in which diverse children may start using their native language until they become frustrated and enter a silent period that may be short or long lasting. The second stage is the *nonverbal period*, in which gestures, body language, and symbolic behaviors (i.e., drawings, symbolic play, role-play, imitation) are used to communicate, while remaining active listeners trying to decipher meanings in the L2 based on contextual clues and formulaic speech that they will repeat and memorize.

An observation from a BPDC bilingual (English/Spanish) teacher, Sarah, very well illustrates these first and second stages of L2 learning with an interaction of socioemotional factors on an ESL child's *selective* silent period. Sarah was proud of her accomplishments as a teacher during the first few months of school, when she realized that she had very few anecdotal notes on one particular ESL Hispanic child, Pedro. As Sarah reflected about Pedro's behavior in the classroom, she began noticing a pattern of silence. This was not the typical silent period of ESL children that she

was noticing, for she had one nonverbal student who fit this typical pattern. The silence that Pedro was demonstrating was more of a selective silence. Sarah turned to Pedro's mother, then to her adviser and professor (i.e., the author of this book), and later to her books for answers, but could not find any easy solutions to this dilemma.

Pedro had been in the Head Start center for two years, but this was his first year in the bilingual classroom. Pedro had an older brother who was in third grade, but his mother reported that they only used Spanish at home. What confused Sarah was that she often had heard Pedro speaking with many of the monolingual-English children. So why did Sarah have no observational notes on Pedro's classroom interactions? In her reflections, Sarah noticed that she often tried to use Spanish with this child during play, but she received no response. Pedro often looked at Sarah over his glasses with a grin on his face. He was a very compliant, quiet child who did not cause any trouble. He was never the root of a tattle by another child. For the next week, Sarah tried to intentionally play and make conversation with him in Spanish. Sarah was only responded to with a look and a grin. The next week, Sarah tried speaking in English with him. This time Pedro responded, but only with "yes" and "no" answers. Judging from her observations, Sarah realized that Pedro had no language or intellectual impairments, but he just seemed to not want to speak—to her. She was dumbfounded.

Throughout the course of the year, Pedro eventually began speaking to Sarah and even began participating openly in circle time and offering his opinions during reading. He became an outgoing child who sometimes did cause trouble and, on occasion, screamed angrily. In her reflections written for her adviser, Sarah openly confessed that she did not know what changed. She never found one particular tactic that worked with Pedro. She tried using very specific targets, which she knew would interest him, to try to draw him out of his shell. Pedro would dabble with the objects Sarah was showing him, but he did not fully engage while she was around. Then, Sarah tried being nonchalant with Pedro's participation or conversation at meals, but he was equally or even more silent than before.

Pedro did not change in one day, but the good news is that he gradually, and over the course of months, starting coming out of his silence. He spoke of trips to Mexico to see his sister and of visits to jail to see his dad. This information opened Sarah's eyes and provided an answer for her queries: This child was preoccupied with *social and emotional experiences* that were difficult and traumatic for him and his family. The holistic developmental approach of *interaction between cognition and language, and social and emotional developmental areas* resonated as truthful in Pedro's case. It was only when Pedro could incorporate his real-life stories and journeys into his play and drawings that he was *developmentally ready* to speak to his teacher. As Pedro's nonverbal expressions through stories and drawings came to Sarah's attention, she was able to use Pedro's authentic expressions of his thoughts and emotions as assessments of his language, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Sarah, of course, had to use the mandated standardized tests, but she gained little more than his typical look and grin when administering them to Pedro. Sarah found that as Pedro developed, he showed her what he knew in the context and scope of the classroom. Extra props and measures were unnecessary, actually useless, and prompted Pedro to hide more in his shell, or selective silence. This is a wonderful

real-life story that helps teachers understand the powerful influence of socioemotional, real-life experiences on young, diverse children's learning processes.

The third stage is the *telegraphic and formulaic speech period*, in which children may use content words without function words or morphological markers. That is, instead of saying full sentences (e.g., "please give me a cookie"), children just use single words to convey meaning (e.g., "cookie"). Children may also memorize and appropriately use chunks of language, strings of words, or routine phrases. I will never forget a young Asian boy, Michael, at the BPDC whose first utterance in English in the classroom was used to assert his needs to another competing child. Michael exclaimed, "This book is mine!" This memorized phrase served a social-communication purpose and was appropriately used to express his feelings and needs. As this example clearly illustrates, the teacher had served as a role model to socialize the child to use language in an appropriate social manner. Michael was not really imitating his teacher but had internalized the phrase and used it meaningfully in a different but appropriate situation.

The fourth stage is the *productive language use period*, in which the children construct their own full sentences, following morphological and syntactic rules. These are newly produced combinations of language, which can show overgeneralizations and misuse of linguistic rules but are used in appropriate social contexts and are successful in conveying meaning. These four sequential developmental stages of L2 learning are supported by literature (McLaughlin, Blanchard, & Osanai, 1995; Saville-Troike, 1987; Tabors & Snow, 2001).

Thus, as illustrated by the examples from real-life children who attended the BPDC, the first pedagogical principle of the ethnic-educator approach highlights the socioemotional dimensions of teaching and learning processes among young, diverse children. Cognitive and language development interact with the cultural adaptation stages that diverse immigrant children go through. So it is important for educators to be aware of language shock and culture shock experiences, as well as stages of L2 learning when serving immigrant ESL children. It is also important for educators to endorse transculturation models that support maintaining ESL children's L1 and cultural heritage while learning the English culture and language. Transculturation results in *bicognitivism* (i.e., the ability to think and form concepts in both languages), *bilingualism* (i.e., the ability to articulate thoughts into two linguistic systems), and *biculturalism* (i.e., the maintenance of two cultural identities and cultural adaptation processes).

EXAMPLES OF PRINCIPLE 2

The Holistic View of Learning Considers Internal and External Factors in Resilience and At-Risk Conditions

Early childhood educators endorsing an ethnic-educator perspective need to stimulate young, diverse children to participate actively in learning activities so that they can develop their potential for learning and problem-solving abilities, such as concept formation. Then, as endorsed by the second philosophical and pedagogical principles, it becomes important for teachers to differentiate between external

and internal factors affecting development and learning in young, diverse children. That is, educators must fully understand the impact that low-SES factors and cultural and linguistic differences (all external factors) can have on intelligence, development, and learning (internal or psychological factors—including L1 and L2 learning). The impact of external factors may result in diverse, low-SES children needing extra developmental time and *individualized instruction*.

Thus, educators must understand similarities and differences between mainstream, middle-class students' learning and developmental needs and diverse students' unique educational needs. Some examples of unique educational needs of young, diverse children include extra developmental time needed for language learning (i.e., readiness for reading and writing, difference between social and academic English-language proficiency, the role of having L1 other than English in learning), cultural differences in learning styles, and curriculum and assessment accommodations for cultural and linguistic diversity. That is, bilingualism or speaking a minority variety of English per se does not put children at risk. But SES factors associated with poverty (common in minority groups, such as Hispanics and African Americans), place diverse children at risk of underachievement and developmental delays, hence the needed extra developmental time and curriculum accommodations. The problem arises when the same developmental standards and achievement expectations are applied to mainstream, middle-class, and low-SES minority children. Young, diverse children who are at risk for learning difficulties and developmental delays because of poverty need to be exposed starting in their preschool years (and even birth) to high-quality and nurturing classroom environments. Educators need to adopt a wait-and-see approach (providing them with extra developmental time), giving the benefit of the doubt to the child, while observing his or her *potential for learning* across time and providing high-quality and appropriate education.

Another example of differences between mainstream and young, diverse students' relates to cultural factors affecting children's language learning processes. Educators need to understand that a topic-centered academic language cannot be the only acceptable normative style in school for young, diverse learners. *Using language in diverse cultural ways for social and academic interactions needs to be validated in the classrooms for young, diverse children*. Young, diverse children bring to school the real-life language they have learned in their minority homes and social communities, which probably use more *topic association*, but it is also perfectly appropriate for expressing abstract academic concepts.

For instance, when I have observed diverse, preschool children from low-SES backgrounds in the BPDC, I have found that their concept formation is expressed through vocabulary commonly used in real life, which also conveys categories and abstract use of concepts and language. That is, diverse, low-SES preschool children may not be able to identify elephants as mammals that live in the Sahara desert and have a specific diet, as the typical response of middle-class, mainstream children would because they have been schooled and raised in a mainstream family. However, a diverse child can demonstrate abstract knowledge by engaging in analogical reasoning, as she can compare how the parts of an elephant relate

to familiar objects from different category domains (e.g., the elephant's ears are like giant leaves that are moved by the wind, like a rug because they are flat, and also like a tortilla because besides being flat they are also round). The diverse child can also demonstrate flexibility of thinking, creativity, awareness of real-world knowledge and ability to elaborate based on networks of prior knowledge, and the use of assimilation as a learning strategy. Based on this example, a teacher has the choice of focusing on the weak aspects of the diverse child's development, such as lack of academic vocabulary and topic knowledge according to age level, or on the child's strengths showing his or her potential for learning, such as the diverse child's strength for concept formation processes at or above age level when using real-life experiences.

Unfortunately, many teachers choose to have a single pedagogical register and purpose for educating all children, in an equal but unfair manner, with no respect for differences and unique educational needs, such as children who come from diverse language and cultural backgrounds (e.g., African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Appalachian). In such schools, the *standard* language is only English, representing a middle-class, mainstream school culture, and the curriculum is preplanned and prepackaged, in which minority languages and minority varieties of English have no value. The ideal school setting for diverse children needs to value children's genuine way of using language (whether minority or mainstream). In these ideal educational settings, diverse children are allowed to talk and express their different cultural identities, interests, and experiences with language, which do not fit the homogeneous curriculum of the mainstream school culture. For instance, child-centered, literature-based, real-life communication situations can be used by teachers of diverse children to talk, write, and read about real events and objects in culturally and linguistically familiar environments. Then, the use of play interaction in culturally appropriate ways and the cooperation of teachers and parents as social facilitators of learning are key for the academic success of young, diverse children.

By gaining cultural awareness, early childhood teachers can develop positive attitudes and intrinsic motivation for supporting their young, diverse students' learning, development, and academic achievement. As endorsed by the second philosophical and pedagogical principles, high-quality educational support requires teachers to take a holistic perspective to the instruction and assessment of young, diverse students. The ethnic-educator position endorsed in this book supports a holistic vision for young, diverse students' educational and teachers' professional development. Teachers need to educate the *whole* child, encompassing not only academics but also social and affective development, general mental and physical health and safety. Furthermore, this book endorses the position that the professional development of teachers needs to infuse in them a holistic vision of education that aims to develop cognitive, ethical, and moral abilities in ESL students. Curriculum areas (i.e., language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science) are integrated with all developmental areas (i.e., cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional) into a *spiral curriculum* to meet the educational needs of young, diverse children in a holistic manner.

The ethnic-educator approach defines a spiral curriculum as the integration of themes and topics that present concepts at different developmental levels throughout the school year with teachers modeling the application of critical-thinking and problem-solving skills across developmental and content areas. In this way, children are exposed to learning experiences that reinforce the same concepts but with different representations that transform their application to different content and levels. For instance, the kindergarten curriculum can use the concept of categorization in sorting leaves by colors in science and sorting words that rhyme in language arts. Content areas, themes, and topics can also represent cultural and linguistic concepts and products that validate the diversity of young children (such as cultural traditions to celebrate holidays—clothing, food, symbols, cards, and decorations). For instance, classroom discussions and storytelling can be centered on contrasting the celebration of the new year in different cultures represented in the classroom. Parents can be invited to share their cultural traditions with stories and bring objects symbolizing their culture in a show-and-tell scenario. Some parents can share how they celebrate the Chinese New Year, such as the colors and symbols associated with decorations, the food served, the presents offered, the family gatherings, and its cultural meaning.

Our experience at the BPDC can illustrate how teachers can have a holistic vision of education and their curriculum implementation when serving young, diverse children. Joyce's reflections about her teaching in the BPDC relate to the implementation of a wholistic curriculum. The first curriculum unit that Joyce implemented was called "All About Me," and it was focused on validating each child as an individual. The children brought in "me boxes" full of things that represented who they were. Some children brought in a favorite stuffed animal or book, while others brought in family pictures or a new backpack. Each child had a story to share and illustrated it using their objects, and everything was done in their home language. Joyce's teaching assistant, Becky, often repeated the children's story in English, making sure that she clarified the details with the same focus that the children had given to their story in their L1. Joyce and Becky felt that this was a good way to introduce the children's minority languages and their cultural and family backgrounds. Joyce and Becky focused on all children getting to know one another's names, both verbally and in print. They worked on developing strong self-concepts, and besides asserting the children's home cultures and languages, they also valued one another as individuals. Joyce, Becky, and their students looked at themselves in their imaginary mirrors every morning and said, "Hey, good looking! How are you doing today?" ("Hola, guapo! Como estas hoy dia?"). The children began imitating the praising behaviors with one another and began repeating some of the common phrases that they heard their teachers saying in both languages used in the classroom—Spanish and English. This was a fun activity that stimulated children's cognitive, language, and socioemotional development in a truly holistic curriculum.

The ethnic-educator curriculum also uses different instructional materials, such as verbal and nonverbal stimuli, for example, from children's exposure to actual real-life experiences (picking leaves in the park) to pictures of leaves, plastic leaves,

and words used to categorize leaves by color. In addition, different formats of delivery are used, stemming from individual teacher-child interactions and child-to-child interactions to small- and large-group interactions for discussing lived experiences and categorization activities. In this way, different forms of social interactions and active learning nurture the child's learning potential. Curriculums represent genuine cultural, linguistic, and social products that are used as socialization methods or tools for teaching concepts and stimulating young, diverse children's learning potentials. For instance, cognate words across languages (e.g., English and Romance languages such as Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese; *elephant* in English is *elefante* in Spanish) are used to reinforce concepts of animals and sorting and categorization skills and abilities. Another example is the use of family values as curriculum content when they share similarities with school culture, such as cooperation and sharing, and can be translated into useful teaching strategies, such as storytelling. In sum, the ethnic-educator curriculum uses integration as "massed" experiences across developmental and content areas, themes, topics, verbal and nonverbal instructional materials, and delivery formats. In this way, the individual differences in development (e.g., interests, maturational levels, and stages) and cultural and linguistic differences are respected and used as an enrichment strategy for the early childhood curriculum.

EXAMPLES OF PRINCIPLE 3

Pluralistic and Transcultural Perspectives Include Culture and Language in Assessment and Instruction

Developmental time needed sometimes is extensive, but should at least encompass six months to one year for conducting a performance-based assessment of progress in learning and *potential for learning* in a longitudinal manner. Educators also need to take into account that academic language proficiency takes from five to eight years in any child and is a dynamic and individual learning process that is highly influenced by external educational factors. That is, educators need to provide developmental time and different kinds of learning opportunities for young, diverse children to acquire concepts and content. Educators need to focus on what children *can do* and on gains made while high-quality educational opportunities have been provided for developing their potential for learning.

In an ethnic-educator approach, the objective for assessment is to value the unique characteristics of individuals and to respect their cultural and linguistic differences. Systematic records of performance-based assessment linked to instruction need to be collected across developmental (i.e., cognitive, language, and socioemotional) and content areas (i.e., language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science). I fully support the possibility for teachers to become advocates of young, diverse students by contributing to and collecting classroom-based authentic assessment evidence that documents classroom performance across content and developmental areas. Early childhood teachers assume an advocacy role for young, diverse children when they act as role models and

introduce change in the educational system by using alternative assessments and instructional practices.

Potential for learning refers to the child's ability to learn and relates to the maturational level at which the child can think and construct concepts related to sociocultural experiences. Then, potential for learning must be differentiated from the amount of knowledge acquired by children in a particular sociocultural setting. The point is that young, diverse children develop in different cultural, linguistic, and SES contexts and, therefore, actualize or develop their learning potential differently than mainstream counterparts. During assessment, the comparison of amounts of knowledge acquired between individuals (i.e., a focus on *products*) is not an interest of the ethnic-educator approach, but the priority is to identify the individual's developmental milestones and stages achieved (i.e., a focus on *process*).

Alternative assessments focus on measuring *learning processes*, such as the strategies students use for learning, their developmental stage, and particular expression of students' *learning potential* as a certain ability or skill level in a specific educational environment. Some examples of alternative assessments are developmental problem-solving tasks; unstructured observations of students across contexts; surveys, questionnaires, and interviews with parents and teachers; teacher-made, criterion-referenced measures, such as rating scales and rubrics; and portfolio assessments. Some standardized tests can also be used in an ethnic-educator perspective, but not with the objective of comparing between individuals (a product approach). Instead, standardized tests can be used to identify an individual's strengths and weaknesses to individualize instruction to meet the educational needs of young, diverse students.

Teachers in the BPDC program were very sensitive to representing children's individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity through a thematic curriculum. One BPDC teacher's account relates to her goal of adapting the curriculum to children's interests. As the beginning of the year unfolded, Allison realized that the children quickly let her know through their play what topics they were interested in. Based on the children's preferences, Allison selected some themes for the curriculum. Some of the curriculum units that Allison used were based on environmental factors, such as changes in the weather, seasons, and seasonal activities. Allison's curriculum went through such topics as "Camping" (complete with gear and a make-believe fire for cooking meals), "Harvest Time" (with a farmer's market and growing vegetables), and an "Arctic Zone" (with an ice-cream shop and balloons representing "ice" in the sensorial table). Each unit used thematic centers that had interrelated content and integrated developmental areas (from cognition, to language, to socioemotional skills). The children quickly noticed the similarities across content represented in themes and were soon making connections across their experiences in the classroom and in the outside world.

As the anecdote documents, Allison was thrilled to observe the power of *individualizing* a thematic curriculum to the children's interests in real-life topics. By *individualizing instruction*, the students' interests and motivation for learning can be validated, and the curriculum can be enriched. Individualization of instruction

also allows for nurturing the *whole* child, as all aspects of the student's personality can be stimulated including cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional areas. The student's strengths and weaknesses are identified to nurture their learning potentials and to stimulate the development of skills and abilities at higher levels.

EXAMPLES OF PRINCIPLE 4

Teachers as Advocates and Cultural Mediators

I have always been an advocate for the role of teachers as cultural mediators, resource people, and collaborators with parents and school personnel for developing mentor relationships with diverse students and their families. I perceive that the role of teachers as cultural mediators or liaisons is to help diverse children and their families adapt to the school and community cultural environment. In addition, committed teachers are advocates (as partners with parents) for the best interest of diverse children in three important ways: (1) they understand federal and state educational policies that apply to their children, (2) they learn about community resources for meeting the children's health needs, and (3) they refer students and parents to the appropriate community agencies or school personnel who can assist them further with their individual needs (e.g., application to the free-lunch programs, medical and dental care).

My experience with Hispanic parents is that, in some situations, school personnel had to help them find appropriate housing (e.g., moving from an unsafe neighborhood that had created anxiety and stress in their children as they witnessed robbery, assault, and other signs of violence), find clothing for cold weather (sometimes a new experience such as snow is not common in Latin American, Asian, and African subtropical and tropical regions), prepare to take the driver's license exams, fill out papers to register their children in school, learn how to use bank accounts, learn how to buy a car and apply for a loan, learn how to read bus route maps, and other similar tasks. In general, educators and school personnel become cultural mediators for helping their students and their families adapt to their new daily routines and school and cultural realities, which demand the development of new social knowledge and skills (e.g., learning a new language) for which they are ill prepared (e.g., their literacy levels may not be up-to-level to the reading skills necessary to take a driver's license exam even in their L1).

In addition, I believe that intervention strategies used by educators and parent-teacher liaisons, such as parent educators, need to take into consideration the diverse families' values and cultural patterns present in educational goals and child-care practices. Understanding the particular idiosyncratic characteristics of the community and family in which the child lives is necessary because minority groups vary widely between different cultures (e.g., Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans) but also in ethnic groups. For instance, some factors affecting ethnic diversity are as follows: (1) different countries of origin and regions make a difference in cultural heritage (e.g., Puerto Ricans have unique characteristics different

from Mexican Americans and other Central American and South American groups; Koreans are very different from Japanese and Chinese groups); (2) SES factors make a difference between and in minority groups (low-SES, immigrant, diverse children are at risk of underachievement but not middle- and upper-class, diverse children); (3) number of generation also makes a difference for cultural adaptation levels (e.g., degree of proficiency of the minority and the English language).

At the BPDC, we found that teachers reported that their experiences with diverse families were very rewarding. Minority parents were very willing to become involved, once given the opportunity. Trueba and Delgado-Gaitan (1988) reported the desire of immigrant families to be participants in their child's education, but as we found out by our experience in the BPDC, they often did not know how. Teachers at the BPDC often encounter families whose desire to participate in school activities was there, but they had a multitude of barriers to overcome (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). It was in these circumstances that BPDC teachers became the liaison between school, home, and community for better serving diverse families.

For instance, we had to arrange for mothers to come to the preschool by riding with their child on the school bus, as they lacked transportation and had no idea of how to use public bus routes. Reading a map was a new experience and a "foreign" concept for many diverse, low-SES parents. At the beginning of the school year, we also had to reach out to parents by making phone calls in their native language and inviting the whole family to come to open house activities at school. We found out, through experience, that if we only sent a flier home, even if it was written in their home language, parents would not respond. We learned that in many minority cultures personal contact through spoken language, such as a phone conversation, would make a big difference for establishing a trusting social relationship between parents and teachers. Some minority parents were socialized in oral-language traditional cultures in which social contact had to be established through informal conversations and gatherings. Another barrier was the low literacy level that many diverse, low-SES parents had in their native language. Once parents learned to trust the teachers, they would come back to participate in classroom activities.

Another central idea of the fourth principle, the need for teachers to become advocates for diverse children and their families, is that family and school provide social experiences and nurture the child's development of thinking and language. Interactions with adults and other children in family and school settings socialize the child's potential for learning into skills and abilities that are culturally and linguistically loaded. Social interactions provide nurturing opportunities for the child to observe, imitate, internalize, and transform creatively social experiences into images, symbols, and concepts that take a verbal and nonverbal form. For instance, social experiences provide the child with cultural immersion into language, religious values, habits, traditions, and, in general, with the social products of culture. That is, "Cultural and linguistic experiences are celebrated as diversity, through subject, actual experiences and activities, and learning about self" (Gonzalez et al., 1997, pp. 86-87). That is, this quote emphasizes that

instructional activities need to specifically celebrate the cultural identity of young, diverse learners.

A BPDC, bilingual, mainstream teacher, Joyce, relates her experience of collaboration with diverse parents. In her reflections about her teaching, Joyce explained that many times the BPDC children would request a book or story that was familiar to them. Joyce quickly requested the help of some parents to visit the classroom to tell stories from their own childhoods to increase parent involvement, as well as pull more authentic, diverse materials into the curriculum. Many of the immigrant parents brought in books that they had read as a child in their home country. Joyce was delighted when her Arabic families brought in Arabic folktales to share with the children. Because the BPDC children were so used to hearing other languages, they sat silently on the carpet as Arabic parents read stories during their weekly classroom visits. Once, some children giggled as a father read a story in Arabic, but all children were still able to listen and pay attention. After the Arabic father finished the story, he related its meaning in English. Joyce was sure to translate the story into Spanish and relate it to a familiar Mexican fairytale to help the Hispanic, monolingual-Spanish children understand the story. Joyce was grateful for the parents' willingness to share a piece of their culture with her class. Parents reported satisfaction at becoming useful to their children's teachers and had an opportunity to increase their understanding of the curriculum used for educating their children.

Thus, for educators to become committed advocates of diverse children and their families, they need to learn about the ethnic background of students and to develop a habit of sociocultural observation for understanding idiosyncratic cultural patterns and avoiding stereotypes and overgeneralizations. By attending community events, such as festivals or local ethnic restaurants, educators can understand firsthand their students' experiences as they occur in the genuine cultural and linguistic environments. The challenge for educators is to link the personal lives of their diverse students with their experiences at school. Thus, I believe that by becoming cultural mediators, educators become mentors who can offer meaningful interfaces between their diverse students' cultural identities associated with their home lives and their school experiences.