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## **Supporting Kindergarten Multilingual Learners During Morning Meeting**

Tamara Tripp

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Supporting Kindergarten Multilingual Learners During Morning Meeting

by

Tamara Tripp

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
Masters of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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"There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education."

[Lau v. Nichols \(1974\)](#)

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Background

Lining up to walk through the hall is always an adventure in a kindergarten classroom. However, even with well-practiced rituals and routines, students find themselves face to face with someone who can become an instant playmate in a moment's notice. One year this was made clear to me as the kindergarten teacher in a diverse classroom of students, a few new to speaking English. The class would line up in an orderly fashion. We would start walking down the hall in a relatively quiet fashion so as not to disturb the classes engaged in learning around us. When we'd get to a corner, a few students in the back, who were now out of my view, would proceed to run around and start a game of tickle and chase. With joyful grins they would forget their job of walking and instead focus on engaging with their classmates in a game that ended in giggles. I'd round everyone up, get them back into line, and we'd be off on our way again. This scenario was repeated in many different forms that year. I struggled to understand what I was doing wrong. I often wondered why my students were so unruly.

At that point in my career, I didn't recognize the unexpected, silly behaviors in the hallway to be young children communicating in the only language they shared in the moment. The language of laughter and fun doesn't require words. It is spoken with smiles and giggles. The child who stands out as participating in this type of unexpected behavior most often that year was a Multilingual Learner (ML). The child had just arrived in the United States from Venezuela a few days before school started. This student ended the year making exponential growth in her English language development over the course of

one school year. I often wonder how much more growth she and her classmates could have made if I had known how to support my MLs and their ability to make connections with their classmates. This wondering led me to my capstone question: *How can kindergarten classroom teachers support Multilingual Learners during Morning Meeting to improve their ability to engage and communicate with classmates?*

### **Context**

This chapter will introduce the concept of Morning Meeting and an introduction of why Morning Meeting can be difficult for MLs. In addition, I will share my experience with two MLs and their interactions with classmates during Morning Meeting. In doing so, I hope to establish the professional significance of this work. Lastly, I will preview the chapters to come.

Children enter a kindergarten classroom at the beginning of their formal education journey. Furthermore, many are experiencing for the first time a community where English is the only language spoken for most of the day. The communicative skills and repertoires learned at home or in the community may not match the new school setting for many students. Even with a multitude of diverse backgrounds and language differences, students entering kindergarten have a desire to make friends and communicate with their peers.

### **Morning Meeting**

I believe all students come to school with not only a desire to make connections with others but also an eagerness to learn. This core belief led me to find ways to build community in my classroom. I started my community building journey 25 years ago when I learned about Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1958). Maslow helped me

understand that when students' basic needs are met, they are able to focus on learning. To meet Maslow's need for love and belonging, I incorporated circle time into my morning routine every day. I received Responsive Classroom training ten years ago. This is when I learned of the purposefully structured circle time called Morning Meeting.

Every morning in my classroom we begin the school day with Morning Meeting. This is a sacred time when we all come together, sitting in a circle, and spend time getting to know each other. In a Responsive Classroom Morning Meeting (Kriete, 2017) there are four equally important components. First is the greeting when everyone hears their name and a welcome to the start of the school day. Next is share time. The focus of share time is to learn about classmates. The third component is a community building game or activity. Lastly, we read our morning message and learn about our day. Morning Meeting is a time when students learn about each other and build community. Each individual learns that they are an important part of our community. For the purposes of this paper, when I refer to Morning Meeting I am referring to the Responsive Classroom format.

### ***Language Barriers***

Morning Meeting can be a difficult time for students who are new to English. MLs need to use all four domains of language during Morning Meeting. Students read and write when they interact with the morning message. Students must listen and speak in order to be active members of the greeting and sharing portion of Morning Meeting. Taking in language input from teachers and classmates can be a barrier to participation. Morning Meeting requires a ML to be able to listen and intake language from a teacher and classmates, process the information, and then output their own ideas. Speaking is often the biggest barrier for many MLs (Pachina, 2020). Speaking in front of a group can



give many students anxiety (Keramida, 2009). Moreover, add speaking in a new language to the mix and the task may be daunting to MLs.

### ***Student Examples***

Two students come to mind when I think about MLs and Morning Meeting. Both students were very new to the country and new to English when they joined my kindergarten classroom. One was lucky enough to have students in the class who shared a first language, Spanish. Additionally, I was able to support this student with my own broken Spanish. The other spoke Korean, a language in which I could only speak basic greetings.

The student who spoke Spanish would sit next to a friend who was bilingual. The bilingual friend would listen to the directions and then translate for her friend. Sometimes I would also share the directions in Spanish. This student would sit in our Morning Meeting circle and look at her classmates. For the first few weeks she would smile but not try to speak in English. By October, she would sometimes answer in Spanish and sometimes try to answer in English. She was willing to repeat words and phrases if I was able to translate her response from Spanish to English. This student was working on learning all four domains of English as well as learning how to be in a kindergarten classroom. She was socially motivated and desperately wanted to communicate with classmates.

The student who spoke Korean would often lay face down in our Morning Meeting circle. He was in the circle but did not make eye contact and did not engage with anyone in the circle. I believe he was listening but he was not willing to try to engage in our meeting. It took about a month before he was willing to sit and face his classmate and

even longer before he was willing to try and speak. He was a quieter, more reserved student who seemed to prefer taking in his surroundings before engaging. As the year progressed, a happy and engaging personality emerged as he gained confidence in his ability to communicate with peers.

### ***Social Connections***

When both of these students were in my classroom, I used all of the skills I knew to help them connect with their classmates. Yet, these skills were limited to the ones I used to support all of the new learners in my classroom. After completing my English Language licensure, I realized there were a multitude of ways I could support my MLs. I believe that all students deserve the opportunity to make connections and feel like they are part of a classroom community. When students feel connected they build trust in each other. Students who feel love and belonging at school are more willing to take academic risks (Chuter, 2020). Without professional development and training, it is difficult for classroom teachers to know how to support their MLs in order for them to make connections and be an active member of their classroom community.

### **Capstone Goal**

The goal of my capstone is to gather a deep understanding of how best to support ML students during Morning Meeting. My guiding question is: *How can kindergarten classroom teachers support Multilingual Learners during Morning Meeting to improve their ability to engage and communicate with classmates?* To answer this question, I will start by exploring the communication skills or communicative repertoire that students bring to the classroom. Then, I will learn about the levels of language that students who are new to English go through on their language journey. Lastly, I will do research to

show how academic success is fostered in a classroom with a trustworth community. The goal of my research is to create a guide for kindergarten classroom teachers to use during Morning Meeting. My guide will include scaffolds and activities that support a multilingual student's ability to engage during Morning Meeting.

### **Chapter Overviews**

This chapter set my purpose for creating a Morning Meeting guide for kindergarten classroom teachers. In chapter two, I will share the research that guided the design of my morning meeting guide. In chapter three, I will share my method and plan for creating my Morning Meeting guide. Finally, in chapter four I will share the conclusion of what I have learned on this capstone journey.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A Review of the Literature

#### Today's Kindergarten Classrooms

Today's classrooms are filled with diversity and each child's life experience is unique. It is the norm to have students with experiences that vary in home language, familial makeup, and cultural upbringing, to name only a few variants. The challenge for today's educators is learning how to create a classroom environment where all children feel like they bring value and add worth to their educational community. This chapter seeks to make connections between a ML's personal repertoire of communication knowledge, their language development needs, and the importance of making connections with classmates. My guiding capstone question is: *How can kindergarten classroom teachers support Multilingual Learners during Morning Meeting to improve their ability to engage and communicate with classmates?*

#### Communicative Repertoire

Communicative repertoire is the collection of ways individuals use language and other means of communication (gestures, dress, posture, and accessories) to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate (Rymes, 2010). Both the child and the teacher play a part in building a classroom community by recognizing the repertoires that each brings to the classroom. The teacher provides a safe space and the classroom routine while the child brings their life's story and accumulated knowledge. As the year progresses, students' communicative repertoires become interconnected with both their peers and teacher as they build a shared space of learning. As Rymes (2010)

states “no one is giving in but both are gaining by occupying a third position in which collaboration across repertoires is possible” (p. 538). This collaboration in the third position is what allows a classroom community to grow.

Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) speak of linguistic and cultural historical repertoires. They define these as “the ways of engaging in activities stemming from observing and otherwise participating in cultural practices” (p. 22). Each person has their own unique experiences in life within their family and culture. All of a person’s experiences are what make them who they are and create their repertoires. Each student’s repertoire informs how they engage in the activities that happen around them. This repertoire allows the student to be flexible with their response to interactions and determine how to react to the circumstances they encounter (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Rymes (2014) built off of Gumperz’s definition of linguistic repertoire. She recognized the need to include all forms of communication that makes one unique and that one uses to communicate as part of that person’s communicative repertoire. She goes beyond Gutierrez and Rogoff’s linguistic and cultural historical repertoires to create a repertoire that includes all forms of communication.. Rymes (2014) describes the communicative repertoire as “the communicative resources we deploy daily but rarely think about” (p.1). Every student has a communicative repertoire that they use to make connections with those around them. Some students use words, others use smiles and gestures, and some use tickles and chasing.

Communication is a reciprocal activity. I do not communicate at you, I communicate with you. Even as a young infant, humans strive to connect and communicate with those around them. “Sociocultural theorists posit that we are social

beings; from birth, mediated social interactions shape the development of our thought and language” (Moll, 1989; Wertsch, 1991 as cited in Brock et al., 1998, p.176). Students come to school with a desire to make connections with their peers.

### ***Communicative Repertoire In the Classroom***

Children in kindergarten settings bring a desire to connect to their classroom. Even when they do not have a shared language, they have a shared need for learning through play and connecting with those around them. Rymes (2014) recognized this need for connecting with others. She believed that if we develop a sense of shared belonging, we allow our personal repertoires to overlap and connect. We are communicating and understanding each other through a shared experience. When we bring this understanding of communication as a shared experience into our classrooms, we can allow for more connections to occur.

Schools are a shared learning space. Teachers need to acknowledge the need for personal repertoires to overlap to allow students in their classroom to connect. Nieto (as cited in Rymes, 2010) states “Students accommodate to school routines and repertoires but teachers accommodate to students’ repertoires as well. Students learn how to be successful in a school setting while teachers find value in each child’s native repertoire” (p.538). Rymes (2010) believes teachers need to look for the similarities between themselves and their students instead of focusing on differences. She then asks teachers to go a step further and not think of students in terms of a stereotype representation of their home culture. Instead, they must view them as a storehouse of knowledge and an important addition to a diverse classroom.

Brock et al., (1998) argue that second language learners need to have “meaningful interactions in authentic contexts where they can rely on gestures and nuances of voice tones and inflection as they learn to become proficient in English” (p.178). Having students learn together in an inclusive setting allows all students to learn from peers who might have a different life experience than their own. They speak of children belonging to a shared ‘classroom discourse community’ because of this shared experience. When students are allowed to experience learning together in a classroom community, they are allowing for collaboration across repertoires. This allows MLs to learn from peers and peers to learn from MLs. Both gain from the experience.

### ***Summary***

Students bring their own lived experience regardless of first language in the form of communicative repertoires to the classroom. They use their repertoires to fulfill their need to connect with others. Teachers can use their students’ communicative repertoires to learn how to support and build upon each child’s communication skills. These forms of communication can be replicated during Morning Meeting activities and new ones can be introduced and practiced. As repertoires interconnect during Morning Meeting and throughout the school day, the class creates a shared space where all students can feel comfortable taking risks and learning.

### **English Learners as Multilingual Learners**

This section now turns to literature on English Learners (ELs). First I will define ELs, define Multilingual Learners (MLs), then the stages of language acquisition will be discussed. Because the focus is on kindergarten students, this paper will not spend time introducing the highest levels of second language acquisition. Because academic learning

is new to kindergarten-aged students, the highest level of language acquisition for MLs is what all students would be learning in a kindergarten classroom. In order to support an MLs' ability to engage with others, teachers must understand where the student is at in their language acquisition journey.

In simple terms, an English Learner (EL) is defined by the State of Minnesota as a school aged student whose first language is not English (Definitions, 2021). The student's inability to read, write, speak, and understand English will deny the child the ability to successfully achieve in the classroom. According to WIDA's Minnesota English Language Learner Identification and Placement Guidance Document (2022), the requirements for identifying EL students in the state of Minnesota include a language survey that is completed before a student begins their formal education. Districts use the information from the language survey to identify students who need to be tested for language proficiency on an age appropriate screener. Students must show a need in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills to be considered an English Learner.

Multilingual learners (MLs) is a term that is being used in many schools across the country. This label more appropriately identifies students who are simultaneously learning English as they gain skills in one or more other languages. The National Science Teaching Foundation (2022) defines MLs as students who are developing proficiency in multiple languages.

As reported by the National Center of Education Statistics (2017), approximately 15.0 percent of kindergarten students nationwide are English language learners. A public school survey completed by the United States Department of Education (2022), found that of teachers who have ELs in their classroom, less than half had taken a course on



how to teach ELs . Many teachers are on their own figuring out how to best serve the needs of their MLs who are learning English. To no fault of their own, many classroom teachers aren't prepared to understand the unique needs of the MLs in their classrooms.

Multilingual learners bring a diverse background of knowledge with them into the classroom. Yoon (2007) found that teachers who celebrated the diversity of the students in their classroom, drawing them into classroom discussions to share their lived experience, were more accepted by peers and were more actively engaged in classroom learning. MLs have developed their first language (L1) since birth. Ford (2019), believes a child's literacy strengths in their L1 should be viewed as an asset that will support their learning of a new language. They have lived experiences that build a foundation for the academic learning they will experience in the classroom. These strengths should be used as springboards for new learning.

Every ML in a classroom is unique. They bring their own personal communicative repertoire that will intertwine with the peers around them to create a classroom community. Yip and Matthews (2007) state that even though every bi(multi)lingual child's cultural, linguistic, and developmental profiles are unique, there is a common process that all go through when acquiring a second language. As students and teachers work together to build a community, there are still individual students that a teacher must support emotionally and educationally. Teachers are taxed with the role of celebrating diversity while bringing students together to support the whole.

### **Stages of Language Acquisition**

Bloomfield (1933) stated that the acquisition of language "is doubtless the greatest intellectual feat any one of us is ever required to perform" (p. 29). Grosjean

(1989) declared that students learning an additional language are not learning it in isolation but as an integrated whole along with the L1. Each language supports the other in the child's language acquisition journey.

Multilingual learners enter the classroom at different stages on their language learning path. Some are new to the country and have little experience with English. These students are referred to as Newcomers. Other students were born in the U.S. to immigrant families who learn their parents' native language as their first language, referred to as a child's L1. There are also students who were born in a different country who learned some English in a formal setting and now are entering the American school system. These are only a few examples of the students who are in the classrooms of today.

Robertson and Ford (2019) state that typical language acquisition is universal; when children are learning their L1, they all go through a similar process of acquiring linguistic skills. Babies first listen to the sounds around them, they imitate sounds, and then the sounds turn into words. Within a few years, children are having conversations. When a child begins learning an additional language referred to as L2, there is also a common trajectory that is followed. In its simplest form, first students listen, then copy language, and last construct meaning from words (Robertson and Ford, 2019).

When we are educating a child, we need to understand more than the simplest form of language acquisition by our MLs. Educators who understand the stages of L2 language acquisition can better equip themselves with tools to support their MLs. Tabors (2008) conducted a survey of existing research on L2 language acquisition and discovered that all children learning a new language had a consistent period where they did not speak at all in an educational setting. Tabors referred to this period as 'nonverbal'

(p. 12). Krashen (1985) referred to this period as the silent period. Robertson and Ford (2019) called this time the ‘pre-production’ period. Tabors (2008) learned that the length of the silent period varied with age. The younger the child, the longer the stage. Each of these researchers agree that students are actively engaged in language learning even though they may have no productive output.

In the kindergarten classroom, the nonverbal period can be problematic. Tabors (2008) found that students who could not use language to communicate were often treated as infants or ignored by their peers. When doing ethnographic research in a classroom of four year olds, Tabors observed a nonverbal student who joined the class in the spring. The child’s only method of connecting with classmates was to join in a tickle and chase game in the classroom. The teacher took pictures of the students during play. When she put the pictures up on the screen, students would call out the names of the students except for the nonverbal student. Nobody ever stated the nonverbal student’s name even though he was in the pictures and his name was heard every day in the classroom. It was truly as though he was invisible to his classmates.

The next stage of language acquisition is described by Roberts and Ford (2019) as ‘Early Production’. This stage mirrors a toddlers’ single word and short phrase stage. Students learn the most important words and phrases they need to communicate with their peers. Students are still spending most of their time listening to the language around them but start to try to use words to communicate their needs.

After Early Production is the ‘Speech Emergent’ stage. Roberts and Ford (2019) describe this stage as a time of speech production that relies on the familiar. Students are

able to form phrases and sentences about things that are familiar. Students rely heavily on context clues during this stage .

The last stage kindergarten teachers need to have knowledge of is Beginning Fluency. Beginning Fluency is when MLs are fluent in social settings with peers. During this stage, MLs will continue to need support using language for academic purposes (Roberts and Ford, 2019).

In summary, MLs are in almost every class in the United States, yet a majority of teachers lack training that supports their understanding of how to best support MLs. In order for teachers to educate the students in their classes, they must understand the basics of language acquisition. In the last section of research, I will discuss the importance of social connections for the academic success of MLs.

### **The Importance of Community Social Emotional Learning**

The question guiding my research is: *How can kindergarten classroom teachers support multilingual learners during Morning Meeting to improve their ability to engage and communicate with classmates?* In this last theme of research, I will define Social Emotional Learning (SEL), followed by the connection between SEL and academic success. Lastly, I will investigate why it is imperative that all teachers learn ways to support EL's ability to engage and communicate during Morning Meeting.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a leader in the field of Social Emotional Learning (SEL). According to CASEL (2022), "SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and

maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (para 1).

At the classroom level, SEL is the glue that holds together a classroom community. When students can access internal and external support for their emotional needs, their bodies are more likely to be ready to learn.

### ***Social Emotional Learning and Achievement***

There is growing empirical evidence that Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs have a positive impact on education. Not only does research show that SEL supports academic achievement, but teachers believe so too. Hozepfel (2019) surveyed teachers and found that 79% of teachers across 15 different countries believed that positive emotions are critical to academic success.

In the book, *Games We Should Play at School*, Aycox (1985) believes that social emotional skills are the building blocks of academic learning. When students have the skills to self-regulate their own bodies and communicate with others, they are able to spend more time focused on learning. SEL has been found to improve academic achievement by an average of 11 percentile points; moreover, it also increases prosocial behaviors, improves a student's attitudes about school, and reduces feelings of depression and stress among students (Durlak et al., 2011).

### ***Social Emotional Learning and Equity***

Pentón Herrera (2020) believes SEL has an important place in teaching multilingual learners because “students cannot learn successfully when they are afraid, hungry, scared, excluded, discriminated, invisible, unsupported, depressed, homeless, fearing family separation or deportation; the list can go on” (pg. 6). When students’ basic physical and mental health needs are being met, their mind can focus on learning.

Returning to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, research shows that when a student's basic needs are met, their mind can focus on academic tasks (Maslow, 1958).

### ***Social Emotional Learning and Morning Meeting***

Kriete and Davis (2017) establish that Morning Meeting is designed to create space to engage in social emotional learning in the classroom. During Morning Meeting everyone is meant to feel a sense of belonging and significance. It is a time for all in class to find joy together. Every child in your classroom is recognized for their unique gifts and innate desire to learn. Wood (2002) stated that teachers need to take the time to create a "trustworthy space for learning before learning can occur" (pg. 7).

Social Emotional Learning is the core of Responsive Classroom (RC) and Morning Meeting is one of the core practices of a RC classroom. Morning Meeting is a daily meeting that "builds community, honors identity, and promotes belonging, significance, and fun" (p. 2). During this time together students learn about their peers while building a strong sense of community with their peers.

### ***Social Emotional Learning and Multilingual Learners***

Social Emotional Learning is the backbone that holds up academic learning for students. MLs who are new to English need access to SEL learning just like their English first speaking peers. The social and emotional well being of MLs needs to be at the forefront of a teacher's mind in order to help each MLs succeed socially and academically in today's classroom. Morning Meeting is one way teachers can support the SEL growth of every ML in their classroom.

## Conclusion

Multilingual Learners enter the classroom with their own personal communicative repertoire that supports their innate desire to make connections with classmates. Just like the story that started this paper, MLs who might appear to be misbehaving or unengaged in a classroom may simply be communicating in the only way that allows them to connect with their classmates. This understanding will help teachers better understand behaviors that MLs are exhibiting.

Multilingual learners need teachers to understand where they are on their language acquisition journey. After studying these levels, one can understand that the MLs in today's class may not be understanding all of the language that is happening around them throughout a school day. Teachers need more professional development to learn ways to support the MLs in their classrooms.

Research consistently demonstrates that students' gain both socially and academically from social emotional learning. One way a teacher can support a multilingual child's SEL development is to incorporate Morning Meeting into their daily routine. This is a time of day that will allow MLs to learn about their English speaking peers. It will also allow their English speaking peers to learn about the students in the class who may be new to learning English. Morning Meeting is a time that teachers can support an ML's ability to engage and communicate with all of their peers. All students deserve to feel seen and heard in the classroom.

The question that is guiding my research is: *How can kindergarten classroom teachers support Multilingual Learners during Morning Meeting to improve their ability to engage and communicate with classmates?* I have reviewed the importance of

engaging MLs during Morning Meeting to support their engagement with classmates. In the next chapter, I will share how I plan to create a guide for kindergarten classroom teachers that will enhance their ability to support the MLs in their classroom during Morning Meeting.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Project Description

#### Background

Many kindergarten teachers start their day with Morning Meeting. Morning Meeting supports the building of a community through active participation of all students in activities designed to help students to get to know their classmates. However, many MLs have not developed the English language skills to fully participate in all of the Morning Meeting activities. This disconnect keeps MLs from being able to feel fully connected to their classroom community.

English learners are in kindergarten classrooms throughout the United States. They are starting their education journey learning how to do school at the same time that they are learning English. Research has shown that classroom teachers are not well equipped to support all of the diverse levels of MLs that enter their classroom (Mitchell, 2019).

The question that guided my research is: *How can kindergarten classroom teachers support Multilingual Learners during Morning Meeting to improve their ability to engage and communicate with classmates?* In this chapter I will share my Morning Meeting guide for kindergarten teachers. The guide helps teachers develop a deeper understanding of the academic and social needs of their MLs. Additionally, the guide helps teachers understand the different levels of language acquisition that students go through as they are learning English. It provides ideas for how to enhance, scaffold, and modify current Morning Meeting activities to support active engagement of multilingual learners.

**Rationale**

My purpose in creating this guide for teachers is the hope that more MLs will have the opportunity to feel the joy of learning in a safe and welcoming classroom. I am a classroom teacher. Before completing my English Language licensure, I felt like I was on my own in learning how to support the MLs in my classroom. This guide gives teachers an understanding of the levels of language acquisition of their MLs while also providing concrete ways to support their MLs during Morning Meeting.

I have used a daily meeting in my classroom for 17 years. Even on days when my schedule is mixed up due to an unforeseen event, I always make time for Morning meeting. Morning Meeting to me is a sacred time every day when everyone can connect with each other. This grounding at the beginning of the day helps set my students up for success for the rest of their day. I am confident in saying that all students come to school with the desire to learn and make connections with their peers. The ritual of Morning Meeting is one way I support my students so they know they can take the risks needed to learn and grow.

**Development of Curriculum**

When designing the Morning Meeting guide, two frameworks were used simultaneously. The WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework and the Understanding by Design framework (Wiggins and McTighe, 2011) were used together to create the guide.

When designing the Morning Meeting guide for teachers, there was a need to think both about the learning of the classroom teacher and the learning of the MLs who would be doing the Morning Meeting activities. Wiggins and McTighe (2011) begin

their design process with backward planning. Backward planning involves analyzing long term goals, next determining acceptable outcomes, and last planning experiences accordingly.

One focus of the backward design process is transfer of knowledge. When students demonstrate a transfer of knowledge, they are able to show an understanding of newly acquired knowledge in multiple settings. This concept is key to creating activities that will allow MLs to engage and communicate with their classmates. Communication skills will be practiced during Morning Meeting but ultimately the goal is that the skills are displayed throughout the day.

Using the Understanding by Design framework encourages teachers to take on the role of a coach of learning (Wiggins and McTighe, 2011). Instead of just focusing on teaching a set content, the teacher will focus on helping MLs improve their ability to communicate, offering a variety of support and encouragement throughout the learning process.

To enhance the Understanding by Design framework to best meet the needs of MLs, the WIDA Framework was also consulted. WIDA describes their framework as “educational experiences that are student-centered, culturally and linguistically sustaining, and responsive to multilingual learners’ strengths and needs” (p.17). WIDA has four big ideas that are interwoven into their framework. Purposeful use of language to develop language and the belief that equity of access is essential for MLs (p. 10) are the two big ideas that were consulted for my guide. This mindset helped in the design of a guide that is asset based and child-centered.

## **Morning Meeting Guide**

The Morning Meeting guide contains six sections. Section one is an informational resource for teachers to reference to support their understanding of the MLs in their classrooms. Section two focuses on best practice scaffolds and strategies to use to teach ML students. There are individual sections for the morning meeting components of greetings, sharing, and activities. Each of these sections contain scaffolds and modifications that support a ML's ability to engage and communicate along with their peers. The last section of the guide contains a glossary and reference page. All together the guide is designed to provide support to classroom teachers so they can create a morning meeting where multilingual learners can actively participate in community building activities alongside their peers

### ***Timeline and Audience***

The idea for collecting scaffolds that will support kindergarten aged MLs during Morning Meeting has been on my mind for a few years. The Morning Meeting Guide was created in the Fall of 2022. The Guide will be shared with teachers and district leaders in my current district as well as former districts. I would like to make the Guide available to anyone with interest. The audience for my Guide will be kindergarten classroom teachers. I plan to explore ways to not only distribute this in my current school district but also make it available online for anyone with interest.

### **Positionality as a Researcher**

Throughout the process of this project, I have considered my biases as a white, middle class educator. I lack the life experiences of my multilingual learners. I have not experienced life as an immigrant, a refugee, or of living in a country where English is

not the language of the majority. I am also a parent to three children who attended a school where Responsive Classroom was a core tenant of the school. This experience was positive for our family and influenced my belief in the benefits of Morning Meeting. As an educator, I have taught in primary classrooms for 20 years. I have both a kindergarten endorsement and an English Language License. This specialized training guided my desire to create a project specific to multilingual learners in a kindergarten setting.

### **Conclusion**

The question that guided my research is: *How can kindergarten classroom teachers support Multilingual Learners during Morning Meeting to improve their ability to engage and communicate with classmates?* This chapter explained the need for MLs to engage and participate in all Morning Meeting activities along with their peers. It talked about the rationale for providing teachers with more guidance for teaching the MLs in their classrooms. Next the chapter discussed how the Understanding by Design framework along with the WIDA English Language Development Standards framework was used together to create a Morning Meeting guide for kindergarten teachers. In the next chapter I will share the Morning Meeting guide that I created.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

I have spent most of my career as a classroom educator for primary aged children. The past few years I have spent obtaining my English Language license and have experience as an EL teacher in an elementary and middle school setting. These dual teaching experiences steered me to my guiding question: *How can kindergarten classroom teachers support Multilingual Learners during Morning Meeting to improve their ability to engage and communicate with classmates.* To answer this question, I created a Morning Meeting guide for kindergarten teachers. Inside the guide there are sections that provide information about the acquisition levels of young MLs. There is a section that provides ideas on best practices for scaffolding and supporting MLs depending on their language level. Lastly, there are sections on how to support MLs during the greeting, sharing, and activity portions of Morning Meeting.

As a kindergarten classroom teacher, I remember searching for resources that would provide ideas on how to support the multilingual learners in my classroom. As I was completing my EL license, I wanted to create a project that could be a resource for classroom teachers. My desire to focus on Morning Meeting stems from my core belief that students who feel connected to their classmates are more willing to take risks when learning. This core belief led me to create a guide that gives teachers ideas on how to best support their MLs during Morning Meeting.

This concluding chapter of my capstone project will revisit my major learning and takeaways from the research I shared in my literature review in chapter two. The next sections will share the limitations of the project and the underrepresented topics that could drive future research. In the following sections, I will share what I learned through completing my project and how I believe it will benefit educators. I will conclude the chapter by discussing how I plan to share my project along with some final thoughts on my capstone experience.

### **Major Learnings**

Completing this capstone project has empowered me as a learner and educator. Through my graduate studies, my educational experiences pushed me toward this end goal of completing a capstone that will support my peers, which in turn will allow them to support MLs in their classrooms.

The task of writing has always been a laborious process for me. My early courses at Hamline required research papers focusing on one area. These shorter writing assignments bolstered my belief in my writing abilities. Most importantly, the smaller research projects helped shape my capstone question.

As I learned how to best serve ML students during my graduate classes, I thought of ways I could scaffold and support the learning of the individual MLs in my own classroom. As I tried these new ideas in my classroom, I quickly discovered that what was good for MLs was good for all students.

The most rewarding part of my capstone process was sharing my learning with peers in the schools where I taught. When teachers were struggling to support MLs in

their classroom, I was able to share the ideas I had researched and learned about in the process of completing my capstone. I believe I am more professionally equipped to participate in conversations about ML learners and their needs with parents and peers as a result of working on my capstone.

I have learned and grown as a person throughout the process of completing my capstone project. The research that was conducted to complete my capstone paper was one of the influential drivers that shaped the educator I am today. In the next section of this chapter, I will revisit the research that I found most influential.

### **Revisiting the Literature Review**

Earlier I stated how my own experience helped shape my research question about how classroom teachers can support ML learners during Morning Meeting. After completing my Literature Review, my belief in the need for a guide was solidified. I will revisit the three areas of research that most influenced this belief in the following section of this chapter.

### ***Communicative Repertoire***

The first piece of research that helped shape my capstone project was discovered during my first year as a graduate student. I was introduced to the idea of each individual student bringing their own communicative repertoire to the classroom. This new learning is what sparked my interest in ways to support and understand the MLs in the classroom. The finding by Rhymes and revisited by Nieto (2010) that a joint community repertoire is created when students accommodate to the school routines, while at the same time the teacher accommodates to the repertoire that the child brings to the classroom, connected to my belief in the importance of a strong classroom community. This newly created,



shared repertoire is the backbone of a classroom community. Students and teachers work together to create a shared space where all can learn and grow. My project is meant to support classroom teachers so all students can feel that they are a valued member who is helping shape their classroom community.

### ***Social Emotional Learning***

The second area of research that influenced my capstone project was the belief that there is a need for social emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom. Every student that enters a classroom has the right to feel safe and loved. Researcher Herrera (2020) believed that SEL was extra important for our MLs who may feel excluded or have background trauma that influences their ability to learn. Aycox (1997) believed that SEL was the building block for academic success. The guide I created is meant to support the SEL learning of MLs in the classroom. When our MLs feel safe and loved in the classroom, they can focus their energy on growing and learning.

### ***Multilingual Learners in Today's Classroom***

As a classroom teacher, I know that teachers are pressured to do more and more with the limited time they are given. A teacher's time is quickly filled with many differing priorities that will support the unique learners in their classroom. The findings in my research about the increasing number of ML entering classrooms where teachers lack training solidified my desire to create a guide for teachers. My hope in creating the guide is that teachers can quickly gain access to ideas that will help them support the MLs in their classroom.

## **Implications**

The research compiled during this study points to the importance of SEL learning in the classroom. This is especially important in the kindergarten classroom. Kindergarten is often the first experience in a formal education setting for young learners. Young multilingual learners may find themselves in an English speaking environment for the first time. For teachers who lack training in how to teach MLs, the dual job of teaching how to be in school along with supporting students new to English can be a daunting task. The goal of my guide is to support kindergarten teachers with ideas on how to scaffold their Morning Meeting activities for their MLs.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

While I am hopeful that the guide I created will support teachers in their classroom, I know there are limitations that could be addressed by future research and projects. Supporting MLs is an important task that I am hopeful more graduate students will take on.

One of the main limitations of the guide is the narrow focus of the intended audience of kindergarten classroom teachers. There are teachers at every grade level who are teaching MLs with limited training. More accessible support with ideas on how to scaffold and support MLs in the classroom is needed at all age levels.

Another limitation of my guide is its restricted focus on one small part of a student's day. Morning Meeting is important because it sets the tone for the day, but there is important learning that happens all day long. It would be helpful to have a guide that kindergarten teachers could use for the entirety of their day to support their MLs.

In the area of additional research, I struggled to find research that addressed the dual role that kindergarten MLs take on when they enter their first formal educational experience. Not only are they new to the kindergarten experience but many are also new to being in a space where their L1 is not the language of the majority. How does this dual role influence learning in kindergarten and how can teachers best support our youngest MLs would be two questions that would be well served by future research.

### **Communication of Results**

While completing my guide, I often asked my kindergarten colleagues for advice and ideas. Overwhelmingly, all that learned about my capstone project were excited about the topic and wanted to see my guide once it was completed. Now that the guide is complete I am excited to share it!

I will present my guide during a SEL staff development meeting at my school. I will also share the guide with the district SEL and multilingual departments in my current and former districts. Ultimately, my plan is to provide open access to my guide. My hope is that it will be freely shared to as many teachers as possible.

I will begin by sharing my guide with peers at Hamline University. Many peers provided me with support along my capstone journey. I am hopeful they can find useful information that inspires their teaching of MLs. The guide will then be available online as part of the Digital Commons through Hamline University's Bush Library . This will allow future graduate students access to my guide as a springboard for their own learning just as I have used the students who came before me.

### **Benefit to the Profession**

I think my guide provides important information that will allow classroom teachers to support the young MLs in their classrooms. The intention of my guide is for classroom teachers to learn about their MLs, learn the levels of language acquisition, and learn how to support MLs when conducting a Morning Meeting in their classroom. My guide is a way to support teachers so that all students can participate and feel connected to their classmates.

### **Conclusion**

My capstone journey began when I struggled to understand the need for connection between young children running and playing in the hallway. I initially thought of the behavior as a misbehavior instead of children connecting in the only language they shared, laughter. That same year, I can remember not knowing if what I was doing during Morning Meeting was supporting my MLs. As I learned more about MLs in my graduate classes, I was able to reflect on how ill prepared I was to support my MLs and their learning. I realized there was a need to create a product that would support classroom teachers thus the idea for my Morning Meeting guide took shape.

In this final chapter I have shared the learning and growth I have experienced while conducting research to answer the question of: *How kindergarten classroom teachers can support multilingual learners during Morning Meeting to improve their ability to engage and communicate with classmates.* I revisited the research that influenced my decision to create a Morning Meeting Guide that focused on ways to support MLs in kindergarten classrooms. I shared limitations and the need for future research to support MLs in the classroom. It is my aspiration that my guide will provide

classroom teachers with meaningful and useful ideas they can use in their classrooms to support all MLs during Morning Meeting. When our youngest learners are entering kindergarten classrooms to start their educational journey, it is my hope that every one of them feels that they are a valued member of a classroom community where they can learn and grow into the person they are meant to become.

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