Jim Cummins

Inclusion and Language Learning: Pedagogical Principles for Integrating Students from Marginalized Groups in the Mainstream Classroom

In this paper, I analyze patterns of school achievement among students who come from communities that have been socially marginalized in the wider society and suggest evidence-based directions for increasing these students' educational success. Although each social context is unique, some generalizations regarding patterns of achievement and causes of underachievement can be made based on the research evidence. Identification of causal factors, in turn, enables us to highlight instructional interventions that respond to these causal factors. Initially, I elaborate on the meaning of the construct of 'inclusion' and also discuss the notion of 'socially marginalized groups' and who fits into this category.

Definitions of 'Inclusion' and 'Social Marginalization'

Although the construct of 'inclusion' emerged initially in the area of special needs education with the intent of reducing or eliminating the segregation from mainstream classrooms of students with learning difficulties or physical handicaps, the scope of the construct has expanded in recent years to emphasize the importance of providing equitable educational environments to all students. This emphasis is evident in the definition proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

> Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. (UNESCO 2009a: 8–9)

The construct of 'social marginalization' is defined by UNESCO (2009b) as "a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities" (p. 1) and it includes (in many societies) "girls and women,

hard-to-reach groups such as indigenous people and ethnic minorities, poor households, people living in informal settlements, individuals with disabilities, rural populations, nomadic populations those affected by armed conflict and HIV and AIDS, and street and working children" (p. 1). The focus in this paper is on a subset of these marginalized groups, specifically indigenous and ethnic minorities, migration-background communities, and students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds. The central question concerns the pedagogical directions implied by an inclusive education approach to addressing the educational needs of students from these marginalized groups. UNESCO (2009b) provides a starting point for examining how an inclusive educational approach might respond to the acute and persistent disadvantage experienced by students from marginalized groups:

> Learning environment matters. Typically those who enter school carrying the weight of disadvantage receive the worst education. They are often taught by poorly trained teachers, sometimes in a language they do not understand. Textbooks are frequently unavailable or include material that depicts negative stereotypes. Governments can address these problems by creating an enabling learning environment, beginning with providing incentives for skilled teachers to work in marginalized areas. Supporting intercultural and bilingual education can strengthen achievement among disadvantaged ethnic minorities. (UNESCO 2009b: 4–5)

A Current Example of Educational and Social Marginalization

Throughout the history of formal education, societal power relations have operated to exclude socially marginalized groups from educational opportunities. In the North American context, this process is evident in the experiences of groups such as African Americans, Latino/a students, and indigenous students. The link between societal power relations and the school experiences of some minority group students has been succinctly expressed by Ladson-Billings (1995: 485) with respect to African-American students: "The problem that African-American students face is the constant devaluation of their culture both in school and in the larger society."

This process continues in both overt and covert forms in many western societies. In the European context, discrimination against Roma students is perhaps the most blatant. A recent Amnesty International (2015a) report on the exclusion of Roma students from meaningful education in the Czech

Republic found that systematic discrimination is the norm. The press release associated with this report expressed this reality in blunt terms:

Amnesty International found that Romani children are routinely placed into schools for pupils with 'mild mental disabilities' with reduced learning possibilities.

> Nearly a third of pupils in these so-called 'practical schools' are Roma, despite the Romani community making up less than 3% of the Czech Republic. […] Romani children also suffer from segregation in mainstream education, often ending up either in Roma-only schools or within mixed schools in a separate building or classroom. (Amnesty International 2015b)

An article in the *Toronto Star* quoted Salil Shetty, Amnesty International's secretary general, as follows: "The widespread segregation of Romani children is a horrifying example of systematic prejudice, with schools introducing children to bitter discrimination at an early age. […] Let's call this what it is: racism, pure and simple" (Associated Press 2015).

The experience of most migration-background communities in Europe and North America is, for the most part, very different from the overt discrimination and exclusion experienced by Roma communities. In most countries, national policies of equality of educational opportunity attempt to ensure that all children, regardless of socioeconomic, linguistic, religious or cultural background have access to schooling. However, despite the rhetoric of equality and inclusion, it is legitimate to inquire to what extent this societal commitment to equity is realized in practice. Certainly, inequality in educational outcomes exists for low-SES, migration-background, and other socially marginalized students. In the following section, the extent of inequality of educational outcomes for migration-background students is summarized, as revealed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA) studies. Then the causal factors underlying inequality of educational outcomes are examined and evidence-based responses to these causal factors designed to promote inclusion and equity of outcomes are proposed.

Inequality of Outcomes among Migration-Background Students

Three potential sources of educational disadvantage characterize the social situation of many migration-background communities: (a) home-school

language switch requiring students to learn academic content through a second language; (b) low-SES associated with low family income and/or low levels of parental education; (c) marginalized group status deriving from social discrimination and/or racism in the wider society. Some communities in different countries are characterized by all three risk factors (e.g., many Spanish-speaking students in the United States, many Turkish-speaking students in different European countries). In other cases, only one risk factor may be operating (e.g., middle-class African-American students in the United States, middle-class Romanian-speaking students attending school in Germany). Although these three social conditions constitute risk factors for students' academic success, they become realized as educational disadvantage only when the school fails to respond appropriately or reinforces the negative impact of the broader social factors. For example, as documented above, the social discrimination that Roma students experience throughout Europe has been educationally reinforced in some countries by educators who label them as intellectually handicapped and place them in segregated classes for intellectually handicapped students.

The reading performance of 15-year-old first- and second-generation immigrant-background students from several countries on the OECD's PISA project is shown in Table 1. Students tend to perform better in countries such as Canada and Australia that have encouraged immigration during the past 40 years and that have a coherent infrastructure designed to integrate immigrants into the society (e.g. free adult language classes, language support services for students in schools, rapid qualification for full citizenship, etc.). Additionally, both Canada and Australia have explicitly endorsed multicultural philosophies at the national level aimed at promoting respect across communities and expediting the integration of newcomers into the broader society. In Canada (2003 assessment) and Australia (2006 assessment), second-generation students (born in the host country) performed slightly *better* academically than native speakers of the school language. Some of the positive results for Australia and Canada can be attributed to selective immigration that favours immigrants with strong educational qualifications. In both countries, the educational attainments of adult immigrants are as high, on average, as those of the general population.

Table 1: PISA Reading Scores 2003 and 2006 (based on data presented in Christensen and Steglitz 2008; Gen 1 = first generation students born outside the host country, Gen 2 = second generation students born in the host country; negative scores indicate performance below country mean, positive scores indicate performance above country mean; overall mean is 500)

	PISA 2003 Gen 1	PISA 2003 Gen 2	PISA 2006 Gen 1	PISA 2006 Gen 2
Australia	–12	–4	+1	+7
Austria	–77	–73	–48	–79
Belgium	–117	–84	–102	–81
Canada	–19	+10	–19	0
Denmark	–42	–57	–79	–64
France	–79	–48	–45	–36
Germany	–86	–96	–70	–83
Netherlands	–61	–50	–65	–61
Norway	–68	–59	–63	–42
Sweden	–89	–20	–68	–29
Switzerland	–93	–53	–85	–48
United Kingdom			–44	–7
United States	–50	–22		

By contrast, second generation students tend to perform very poorly in countries that have been characterized by highly negative attitudes towards immigrants (e.g., Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany). The overall picture for many European countries that emerges from the PISA data is that second generation students who have experienced all their socialization in the host country do not perform much better than first generation students who may have had significantly less exposure to the host country language and culture. Clearly, despite full access to state-provided educational opportunities, many immigrant-background students are not succeeding academically.

Potential Causal Factors and Evidence-Based Educational Responses

In addition to documenting patterns of school achievement among migration-background students, the PISA studies have also identified the potentially causal role of several variables. For example, the OECD (2010a) reports

that the SES of individual students exerted a highly significant effect on achievement in the PISA studies: "On average across OECD countries, 14% of the differences in student reading performance within each country is associated with differences in students' socio-economic background" (OECD 2010a: 14). However, this report noted that the effect of the *school's* economic, social and cultural status on students' performance is much stronger than the effects of the individual student's socio-economic background. In other words, when students from low-SES backgrounds attend schools with a socio-economically advantaged intake, they tend to perform significantly better than when they attend schools with a socio-economically disadvantaged intake. This difference between the SES of individual students and the collective SES of students within particular schools highlights the effects of housing (and consequent educational) segregation on patterns of school achievement.

Another important finding that has emerged from several of the PISA studies concerns the role of reading engagement in determining reading achievement among 15-year olds. The 2000 PISA study (OECD 2004) reported that the level of a student's reading engagement was a better predictor of reading performance than his or her SES. In more recent PISA studies, the OECD (2010b) reported that approximately one-third of the association between reading performance and students' SES was mediated by reading engagement. The implication is that schools can potentially 'push back' about one-third of the negative effects of socioeconomic disadvantage by ensuring that students have access to a rich print environment and become actively engaged with literacy. The credibility of this inference is supported by considerable data showing that many low-SES students experience limited access to print in their homes, neighborhoods and schools (Duke 2000; Neuman & Celano 2001). The *causal* link between print access/literacy engagement and reading attainment has been demonstrated in numerous research studies (e.g., Elley & Mangubhai 1983; Lindsay 2010; Mol & Bus 2011; Sullivan & Brown 2013).

Table 2 elaborates on the potential educational disadvantages associated with a home-school language switch, low-SES, and marginalized group status and also specifies the evidence-based educational responses that are likely to have the highest impact in addressing these sources of potential disadvantage.

Table 2: High-Impact Instructional Responses to Sources of Potential Academic Disadvantage

Student Background	Linguistically Diverse	Low-SES	Marginalized Status
Sources of potential disadvantage	– Failure to understand instruction due to home-school language differences;	– Inadequate healthcare and/or nutrition; – Housing segregation; – Lack of cultural and material resources in the home due to poverty; – Inadequate access to print in home and school	– Societal discrimination; – Low teacher expectations; – Stereotype threat; – Identity devaluation
Evidence-based instructional response	– Scaffold comprehension and production of language across the curriculum; – Engage students' multilingual repertoires; – Reinforce academic language across the curriculum	– Maximize print access and literacy engagement – Reinforce academic language across the curriculum	– Connect instruction to students' lives; – Affirm student identities in association with literacy engagement

Home-School Language Differences

Two issues are relevant to the interpretation of data relating to the effects of a home-school language switch: (a) To what extent does the simple fact of speaking a language other than the school language (L2) at home constitute a cause of underachievement? (b) What instructional programs or initiatives are most effective in helping students learn the L2?

Home language use and achievement. The PISA data (OECD 2012; Stanat & Christensen 2006), at first sight, appear to show a negative relationship between language spoken at home and academic achievement. In both mathematics and reading, first and second generation immigrant-background students who spoke their L1 at home were significantly behind their peers who spoke the school language at home. Christensen and Stanat

(2007) conclude: "These large differences in performance suggest that students have insufficient opportunities to learn the language of instruction" (p. 3). German sociologist Hartmut Esser (2006) similarly argues on the basis of PISA data that "the use of the native language in the family context has a (clearly) negative effect" (p. 64). He further argues that retention of the home language by immigrant children will reduce both motivation and success in learning the host country language (2006: 34).

These interpretations of the data do not stand up to critical scrutiny. In the first place, the PISA authors (OECD 2012; Stanat & Christensen 2006) consistently interpret the relationships observed between home use of L1 and school achievement in causal terms despite the fact that the relationships observed are correlational rather than causal. In order to infer causality, contradictory data would have to be accounted for and the unique variance associated with language spoken at home would have to be identified and isolated from other mediating variables. Neither of these conditions is met in the PISA reports. Specifically, no relationship was found between home language use and achievement in the two countries where immigrant students were most successful (Australia and Canada) and the relationship disappeared for a large majority (10 out of 14) of OECD-member countries when SES and other background variables were controlled (Stanat & Christensen 2006, Table 3.5: 200–202). The disappearance of the relationship in a large majority of countries suggests that language spoken at home does not exert any independent effect on achievement but is rather a proxy for variables such as socioeconomic status and length of residence in the host country.

Beyond the PISA data, the argument that L1 use at home will exert a negative effect on achievement in L2 is refuted by the academic success of vast numbers of bilingual and multilingual students in countries around the world. Thus, parents who interact consistently with their children in L1 as a means of promoting bilingualism and biliteracy can do so with no concern that this will impede their children's acquisition of the school language.

Effective instructional responses. The international research data strongly supports the effectiveness of bilingual education for minority group students (e.g., Gogolin 2005). Several recent comprehensive research reviews on bilingual education for underachieving minority language students suggest that in contexts where bilingual education is feasible (e.g., high concentration

of particular groups), it represents a superior option to immersion in the language of the host country. In the North American context, for example, Francis, Lesaux and August (2006) report: "The meta-analytic results clearly suggest a positive effect for bilingual instruction that is moderate in size" (p. 397). Similarly, Lindholm-Leary and Borsato (2006) conclude that minority student achievement "is positively related to sustained instruction through the student's first language" (p. 201). Thus, bilingual education represents a legitimate and, in many cases, feasible option for educating immigrant and minority language students.

In cases where bilingual education is not feasible or is excluded from consideration for ideological reasons, instruction that engages students' multilingual repertoires represents an effective tool for teachers to scaffold meaning, connect to students' lives, affirm their identities, and enhance awareness of how academic language works (Celic & Selzer 2011). For example, newcomer students could write initially in their L1 and then work with peers, community volunteers, or technology programs such as Google Translate to translate their L1 writing to the school language. Google Translate will typically not provide a satisfactory translation by itself but it is usually sufficient to enable the teacher or peers to figure out what the newcomer student is trying to express and to work with him or her to come up with an accurate translation (Cummins 2001). Encouraging students to use their L1 as a cognitive tool is a form of *scaffolding*, a term commonly used to describe the temporary supports that teachers provide to enable learners to carry out academic tasks. These supports can be reduced gradually as the learner gains more expertise. They include strategies such as use of visuals and concrete experiences and demonstrations to increase comprehension.

Finally, there is a large degree of consensus among researchers and policy-makers that academic language is very different than the language we use in everyday conversational contexts. For example, academic language is characterized by low-frequency vocabulary and grammatical expressions (e.g., passive voice) that are seldom used in face-to-face conversational contexts. These differences represent a major reason why it typically takes considerably longer for immigrant students to catch up to their native-speaking peers in academic language (at least 5 years and sometimes considerably longer) than in conversational language (Collier 1987; Cummins 1981). The chal-

lenges newcomer students face in catching up academically imply that *all* teachers (not just language specialists) should know how to support students in acquiring academic skills in the school language.

Students from Low-SES Backgrounds

Christensen and Segeritz (2008) note that the impact of SES on achievement varies widely among countries. For example, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom exhibit high levels of student achievement in Science and a lower-than-average association between SES and Science performance. Norway also showed a low level of association between SES and Science (<10% variance explained), but overall performance was below average. These results show that despite the strong overall relationship between SES and academic performance, some countries do succeed in promoting both equity (low-SES students perform relatively well) and excellence (overall performance is strong). In fact, according to the OECD (2010a), the "best performing school systems manage to provide high-quality education to all students…regardless of their own background or the school they attend" (p. 13).

Countries also vary in the extent to which they provide universal healthcare and other social supports. Thus, in Table 2, the impact of variables such as inadequate healthcare and/or nutrition is likely to be greater in the United States context than in most European contexts for the simple reason that until recently many families living in poverty had very limited access to healthcare, including pre-natal care for pregnant mothers.

Effective instructional responses. Some of the sources of potential educational disadvantage associated with SES are beyond the capacity of individual schools to address (e.g., housing segregation) but the potential negative effects of other factors *can* be ameliorated by school policies and instructional practices. In this regard, the two sources of potential disadvantage that are most significant are the limited access to print that many low-SES students experience in their homes, neighborhoods and schools (Duke 2000; Neuman & Celano 2001) and the more limited range of language interaction that children may experience in some low-SES families as compared to more affluent families. For example, Hart and Risley (1995) in the United States documented large differences in the quantity of

language interaction experienced by children whose mothers were on social assistance (i.e., living in poverty) in comparison to middle-class children. Caution should obviously be exercised in generalizing this finding to all children living in poverty. The logical inference that derives from these differences is that schools serving low-SES students should (a) immerse them in a print-rich environment in order to promote literacy engagement across the curriculum and (b) focus in a sustained way on how academic language works and enable students to take ownership of academic language by using it for powerful (i.e., identity-affirming) purposes.

Guthrie (2004) notes that the construct of literacy engagement incorporates notions of time on task (reading extensively), affect (enthusiasm and enjoyment of literacy), depth of cognitive processing (strategies to deepen comprehension), and active pursuit of literacy activities (amount and diversity of literacy practices in and out of school). He points out that engaged readers are active and energized in reading and use their minds with an emphasis on either cognitive strategies or conceptual knowledge. Furthermore, he notes that engaged reading is often socially interactive insofar as engaged students are capable of discussion or sharing with friends despite the fact that much of their reading may be solitary. He cited the PISA data as showing that students

> whose family background was characterized by low income and low education, but who were highly engaged readers, substantially outscored students who came from backgrounds with higher education and higher income, but who themselves were less engaged readers. Based on a massive sample, this finding suggests the stunning conclusion that engaged reading can overcome traditional barriers to reading achievement, including gender, parental education, and income. (p. 5)

Students from Marginalized Communities

As noted in an earlier section, there is extensive research documenting the chronic underachievement of groups that have experienced systematic long-term discrimination in the wider society. This constant devaluation of culture is illustrated in the well-documented phenomenon of *stereotype threat* (Steele 1997). Stereotype threat refers to the deterioration of individuals' task performance in contexts where negative stereotypes about their social group are communicated to them. Schofield and Bangs (2006) summarized the implications of this phenomenon for marginalized group students: "stereotype threat […] can seriously undercut the achievement of

immigrant and minority students […] undermine the academic performance of children as young as 5 or 6 years of age, and its effects can be quite large" (p. 93). Thus, there is a clear link between societal power relations, identity negotiation, and task performance.

Among linguistically diverse students, the home language represents a very obvious marker of difference from dominant groups. Despite increasing evidence of the benefits of bilingualism for students' cognitive and academic growth and future economic success (e.g. Agirdag 2014; Barac & Bialystok 2011), schools in many contexts continue to prohibit students from using their L1 within the school, thereby communicating to students the inferior status of their home languages and devaluing the identities of speakers of these languages. This pattern is illustrated in a study of Turkish-background students in Flemish secondary schools carried out by Agirdag (2010). He concluded:

> [O]ur data show that Dutch monolingualism is strongly imposed in three different ways: teachers and school staff strongly encourage the exclusive use of Dutch, bilingual students are formally punished for speaking their mother tongue, and their home languages are excluded from the cultural repertoire of the school. At the same time, prestigious languages such as English and French are highly valued. (p. 317)

Effective instructional responses. How can schools counteract the negative effects of societal power relations that devalue minority group identities? Ladson-Billings (1994) expressed the essence of an effective instructional response: "When students are treated as competent they are likely to demonstrate competence" (1994: 123). In other words, educators, both individually and collectively, must challenge the devaluation of students' language, culture, and identity in the wider society by implementing instructional strategies that enable students to develop 'identities of competence' (Manyak 2004) in the school context. These instructional strategies will communicate high expectations to students regarding their ability to succeed academically and support them in meeting these academic demands by affirming their identities and connecting curriculum to their lives (see Cummins & Early 2011; Hélot, Sneddon & Daly 2015).

Among the overlapping instructional strategies reviewed by Cummins and Early (2015) that have been successfully implemented for affirming students' identities are (a) encouraging immigrant-background and socially

marginalized students to use their L1 as a cognitive tool for carrying out academic tasks; (b) promoting opportunities for students to develop literacy skills in their home languages; (c) enabling students to write and web-publish literary and multimodal creative work (e.g., stories, poems, videos, music); this work can be in the school language or (ideally) in multiple languages depending on the context and language skills of the students; and (d) implementing projects focused on inquiry and knowledge generation that encourage students to use both their L1 and L2, perhaps in partnership with a collaborating class in another location. These forms of pedagogy are aimed at enabling students to use language for powerful identity-affirming purposes and motivating them to engage academically.

Implications for Inclusion

The instructional implications of the analysis of potential sources of educational disadvantage and evidence-based educational responses (Table 2) has highlighted the fact that underachievement among immigrant-background students is *not* caused by home use of a language other than the school language. L1 use at home represents a potential source of educational disadvantage only when the school fails to provide appropriate support to enable students to develop academic skills in the school language. Furthermore, underachievement is observed predominantly among linguistically diverse students who are also experiencing the effects of low-SES and/or marginalized group status in the host country. Thus, instruction must also address the sources of potential disadvantage that characterize low-SES and marginalized group students. This will include maximizing students' engagement with literacy (ideally in both L1 and L2) and enabling them to use language powerfully in ways that enhance their academic and personal self-concept. The following instructional strategies designed to promote inclusion and equity of educational outcomes emerge from this analysis:

- Scaffold comprehension and production of language;
- Engage students' multilingual repertoires;
- Reinforce academic language across the curriculum;
- Maximize print access and literacy engagement;
- Connect instruction to students' lives;
- Affirm students' identities in association with literacy engagement.

How can schools generate policies and practices that will promote these instructional goals? Planned change in educational systems always involves *choice*. Administrators and policy-makers make choices at a broad system level, school principals make choices at the level of individual schools, and teachers make choices within their classrooms. Thus, individual educators always have the power to exercise agency—they are never powerless, although they frequently work in conditions that may constrain their creativity and agency. While they rarely have complete freedom, educators determine for themselves the social and educational goals they want to achieve with their students. They always have options with respect to their orientation to students' language and culture, the forms of parent and community participation they encourage, and in the ways they implement pedagogy and assessment (Cummins 2001).

The process of articulating pedagogical choices and engaging in a collaborative pedagogical inquiry at the level of the school might start with discussion of what image of the child is embedded in current instructional policies and practices. Among the questions that educators might explore are those in Table 3.

Table 3: Collaborative inquiry about the image of the child embedded in instruction

What image of the child are we sketching in our instruction:
• *Capable of becoming bilingual and biliterate?*
• *Capable of higher-order thinking and intellectual accomplishments?*
• *Capable of creative and imaginative thinking?*
• *Capable of creating literature and art?*
• *Capable of generating new knowledge?*
• *Capable of thinking about and finding solutions to social issues?*

A similar collaborative inquiry process can be instituted for the other instructional directions articulated above. The kinds of questions that might be pursued are illustrated with respect to literacy engagement (Table 4) and identity affirmation (Table 5). Examples from one highly diverse elementary school in the Toronto area are shown in Figures 1 and 2. Table 6 presents a Collaborative Inquiry template designed (a) to guide teachers and other educators in articulating the pedagogical choices that they are currently making in their classrooms and schools and (b) to consider alternative choices that might increase student engagement and instructional

effectiveness. The categories in the template are flexible, and thus teachers in any particular school can modify the issues for discussion according to their particular circumstances and priorities.

Table 4: Collaborative pedagogical inquiry: Literacy engagement

> **To what extent are students immersed in a literacy-rich environment in primary and secondary school?**
>
> - *Are they listening to and dramatizing stories from the earliest days of schooling?*
> - *Do they have access to a well-stocked classroom library and the opportunity to borrow books to take home to read either individually or with their parents?*
> - *Does the school library have books in the multiple languages represented by students in the school and/or dual language books?*
> - *Does the school library encourage parents to come in and check out books with their children (e.g., by staying open for some time after regular school hours to accommodate parents' schedules)?*
> - *Do students have opportunities within the classroom to discuss books they are reading?*
> - *Is technology being used in creative ways? For example, are students uploading group or individual book reviews to appropriate web sites? Are they videotaping dramatized scenes or adaptations from books they have read?*
> - *Has the school forged connections with the local public library to explore ways of promoting literacy engagement?*

Table 5: Collaborative pedagogical inquiry: Identity affirmation

> **To what extent is the school enabling students to connect academic work to their own developing identities with the result that students develop a sense of pride in their linguistic talents and intellectual and literary accomplishments?**
>
> - *To what extent do students and parents see signs and student work in multiple languages displayed at the school entrance and other public spaces (e.g., corridors) throughout the school?*
> - *To what extent are newcomer students encouraged to use their L1s for completion of academic work and creative writing?*
> - *To what extent are students' dual language books or projects displayed publicly (e.g., on a school web site) and showcased in a positive manner (e.g., on parents' nights etc.)?*
> - *To what extent are students enabled to engage in partner class projects with multilingual speakers from other countries or regions using multiple languages to carry out collaborative projects?*
> - *To what extent are students encouraged to compare their L1 with the school language in order to develop greater language awareness?*

Figure 1: Examples of multilingual signs and library books in Crescent Town elementary school in Toronto

Creating an Identity-Affirming School Environment

Validating Home Language and Culture

Figure 2: Showcasing students' intellectual inquiry projects in the school library (Crescent Town elementary school)
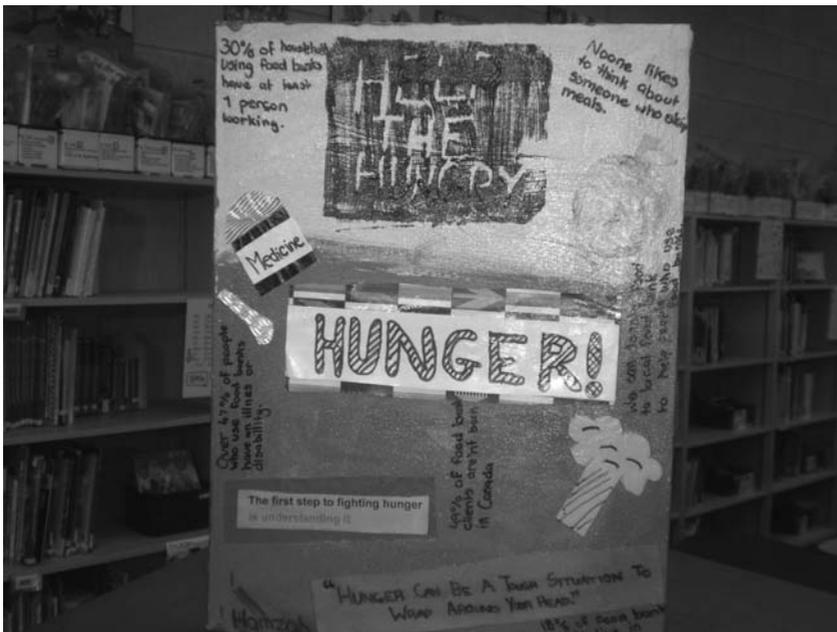
Table 6: School-based language and instructional planning

School-based Language and Instructional Planning: Articulating Choices and Taking Collective Action			
Instructional Options	**Current Realities Where Are We?**	**Vision for the Future Where Do We Want To Be?**	**Getting it Done How Do We Get There?**
Literacy Engagement How can we maximize students' interests in and engagement with reading, writing, and other forms of cultural expression?			
Content How do we adapt curriculum materials to link with students' existing knowledge and cultural background?			
Cognition How can we modify instruction to evoke higher-order thinking among low-income and culturally/linguistically diverse students?			
Tools How can we use tools such as computers, digitalcameras, camcorders, web pages, etc. to enhance academic engagement and achievement?			
Assessment How can we assess students' academic work in such a way that students themselves, parents, and administrators gain a clear picture of students' academic progress?			
Language/ Culture What messages are we giving students about the value of their languages and cultures?			
Parental Involvement How can we engage parents more effectively as co-educators in such a way that their cultural knowledge and experience can support their children's academic progress?			

Conclusion

Although policy-makers and educators in most countries accept that inclusion and equity are desirable goals in education, the PISA findings with respect to the academic performance of migration-background students suggest that these goals are far from being achieved. The argument in this paper is that a major reason for the disappointing educational outcomes documented by PISA is that research evidence on the causes of under-achievement has not been interpreted appropriately and, as a result, ineffective and largely evidence-free policies have been implemented. For example, policy-makers in many countries have chosen to ignore extensive empirical evidence suggesting the following: (a) factors associated with SES and broader patterns of societal power relations exert a major influence on educational outcomes; (b) literacy engagement is among the strongest predictors of reading performance and low-SES students have significantly less access to books and print than do higher-SES students; (c) students will engage academically only to the extent that classroom interactions and academic effort are identity-affirming.

The analysis in the present paper argues that school polices need to maximize print access and literacy engagement among low-SES and other marginalized group students. In addition, policies need to take account of the devaluation of student and community identities in both schools and the wider society and focus on enabling students to develop identities of competence (Manyak 2004) in association with academic engagement. In other words, schools focused on inclusion need to enable students to use language and literacy in ways that will affirm their identities and challenge the deficit orientation that is frequently built into programs and curricula for low-SES and bilingual learners of migration backgrounds.

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