Reversing Underachievement:
Whole School Instructional Strategies for Equity and Inclusion

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My Background and Influences

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Overview

- Highlight important findings and insights from (some of) Thursday's presentations;

- There IS a knowledge base regarding essential components of teaching multilingual students effectively – why are most teachers, school leaders, and education policy-makers unaware of this evidence?

- Illustrate the knowledge base with a classroom example of dual language book creation and publication;

- What are potential causes of underachievement and how can schools respond to these causal factors?

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Some Findings and Insights

Edward Melhuish
- Persuasive demonstration of the massive return on investment that ECEC potentially represents through its impact on reducing the negative effects of social disadvantage on language/academic development and broader social outcomes;
- However, investment in ECEC remains a 'hard-sell' in many contexts due to the short-term (and ethically vacuous) orientation of many politicians;

Paul Leseman
- Provided a rich description of the multidimensional nature of the ISOTIS project; the project design enabled the voices of teachers, parents, and children to be expressed and heard;
- Inequalities emerge very early (even in first year of life) and get greater throughout schooling;
- Tendency of some teachers and parents to adopt a zero-sum (balance-effect) either/or orientation to children's languages – promotion and/or use of HL seen to be in competition with commitment to develop the NL.
- Importance of **belonging** -- School environments should be recognized as spaces that are co-owned by children;

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Some Findings and Insights

Paul Leseman (continued)

- Need to create safe multicultural spaces in our ECEC and school systems: ECEC centers and schools should be inclusive spaces where cultural and religious preferences are respected and embraced;

- Children pointed to the possibilities of integrating multiple languages into their everyday activities and projects—use of posters, pictures, symbols and signs,as well as lists of key words and their translations in different languages to support communication;

- Older children also highlighted the potentially counterproductive effects on children's sense of belonging of excluding children's home languages from the school; instead use children's linguistic and cultural capital as resources for learning;

- A strong emphasis by the school on assimilation of the national language and culture, to the exclusion of the HL, places parents in a situation where they have to make an unnecessary binary choice between the NL and the HL;

- Implicit throughout the presentation was the fact that a 'both/and' orientation to the NL and HL is more appropriate (and evidence-based) than an 'either/or' orientation.

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Some Findings and Insights

Maurice Crul

- Very rich data from multiple contexts highlighting the fact that 2nd generation children from similar low-SES backgrounds perform very differently according to the institutional policies and school organization operating in different national contexts (e.g., very low university attendance rate for Turkish-background students in Germany versus much higher rate in Sweden);

- Second language arrangements should always be studied in relation to educational institutional arrangements;

- Get children into school as early as possible and delay selection for as long as possible.

- School outcomes for migrant and refugee children are determined to a large extent by educational systems and policies; underachievement is caused primarily by our educational institutions not being prepared and flexible enough to incorporate children that deviate from the imagined 'typical' child for which these systems have been designed.

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Reflections on These Findings and Insights

- High-quality preschool investments have the potential to dramatically promote school attainment and life chances among low-SES multilingual migrant-background children;

- But what constitutes a 'high quality' preschool in a highly diverse multilingual context? Are there *specific* indices of 'high quality' that might apply to low-SES immigrant-background children's ECEC?

- Is it OK to view children as though they were monolingual speakers of the NL? Does the fact that these children are emerging multilinguals carry any implications for what early childhood and primary school teachers should know and do?

- Might NL-only preschool programs have the effect of discouraging children's development of HL proficiency, thereby undermining communication between parents and children in the home?

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Reflections on These Findings and Insights

- The ISOTIS project pointed to uncertainty and wide variation in parents' and teachers' orientation to the NL and HL – an 'either/or' orientation seemed to be as prevalent as a 'both/and' orientation.

- The findings also pointed to the importance of creating a safe environment and a sense of belonging (identity affirmation) among children from HL backgrounds;

- Is there a knowledge base that teachers and school leaders should be aware of that could guide their policies, instruction, and interaction with parents?

- With respect to the variation in outcomes identified in the research conducted by Maurice Crul and colleagues, what is the knowledge base that should guide our educational institutions in becoming prepared and flexible enough to teach all children effectively?

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The Challenge of Institutional Change as Illustrated in the Canadian Experience 1970-2019

- Extensive (mostly positive) rhetoric about **multiculturalism** in society and about **capacity-building** in schools;

- Predominant response was to add ESL teachers in schools but few, if any, changes were made to teacher education programs or to the criteria for appointing school leaders.

- The result has been that despite almost 40 years of rhetoric about the importance of capacity-building in schools, the vast majority of school leaders and 'mainstream' teachers (particularly at secondary level) have *not* developed the capacity to teach multilingual students;

- This has changed somewhat during the past 4 years with respect to teacher education (at least one mandatory course on teaching multilingual students is offered in several universities) but there is still no formal expectation that school principals should know **anything** about teaching multilingual students.

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The Knowledge Base

- Academic language is very different from everyday conversational language and requires a much longer catch-up trajectory (5+ years versus 1-2 years)

- Because of this 5+ catch-up trajectory, all teachers should have competence in scaffolding strategies to enable comprehension of content by multilingual students;

- All teachers (and school leaders) should also know how to reinforce students' knowledge of academic language across the curriculum.

- Students' home language (HL) represents a positive force in their acquisition of the NL and in their overall academic development;

- **Literacy engagement is central to students' academic success (e.g., PISA data)**

- **A focus on identity affirmation in schools is required to counteract the negative effects of identity devaluation in the wider society.**

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Kanta's Perspective

- And how it helped me was when I came here in grade 4 the teachers didn't know what I was capable of.

- I was given a pack of crayons and a colouring book and told to get on colouring with it. And after I felt so bad about that--I'm capable of doing much more than just that. I have my own inner skills to show the world than just coloring and I felt that those skills of mine are important also. So when we started writing the book [*The New Country*], I could actually show the world that I am something instead of just coloring.

- And that's how it helped me and it made me so proud of myself that I am actually capable of doing something, and here today [at the Ontario TESL conference] I *am* actually doing something. I'm not just a colouring person—I can show you that I am something.

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How Can Schools Reverse Underachievement?

- Which groups of students underachieve?

- Why do they underachieve – what causal factors are operating?

- What high-impact evidence-based educational interventions are available?
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- There are 3 overlapping but conceptually distinct groups that tend to experience disproportionate underachievement:

  (a) immigrant-background students who are learning the school language as L2;
  (b) Socially disadvantaged students;
  (c) students from socially marginalized groups who have been subject to racism and various forms of exclusion from educational and social opportunity, often over generations.

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Table 1. 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; -Decolonize curriculum and instruction; -Affirm student identities in association with literacy engagement;

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Linguistically Diverse Students

- **Source of potential disadvantage**

  Failure to understand instruction due to home-school language differences.

- **Evidence-based instructional responses**

  Scaffold comprehension and production of language across the curriculum;

  Engage students' multilingual repertoires;

  Reinforce academic language across the curriculum

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Scaffold Language

Scaffolding **refers to the provision of instructional supports that enable learners to carry out tasks and perform academically at a higher level than they would be capable of without these supports.**

- Graphic organizers
- Visuals in texts
- Demonstrations
- Hands-on experiences
- Collaborative group work
- Encouraging L1 use (e.g., writing) as a means of transferring knowledge and skills from L1 to L2
- Learning strategies (planning tasks, visualization, note taking/summarizing, questioning for clarification)
- Language clarification (explanation, dictionary use, etc.)

Scaffolding needs to happen across the curriculum – it's not just the job of the language specialist teacher

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Dual language book example:
Scaffold instruction by engaging students' multilingual repertoires;
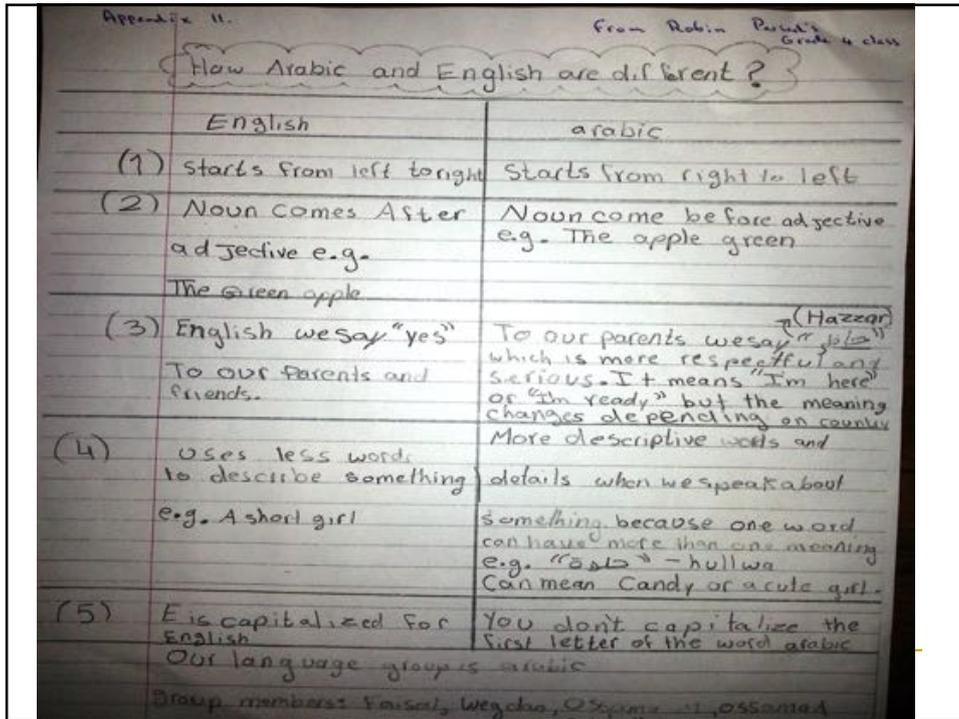Connect to students' lives;
Affirm student identities;
Reinforce academic language;
Expand literacy engagement

- I think using your first language is so helpful because when you don't understand something after you've just come here it is like beginning as a baby. You don't know English and you need to learn it all from the beginning; but if you already have it in another language then it is easier, you can translate it, and you can do it in your language too, then it is easier to understand the second language.

- The first time I couldn't understand what she [Lisa] was saying except the word Hebrew, but I think it's very smart that she said for us to do it in our language because we can't just sit on our hands doing nothing.

TOM GOES TO KENTUCKY

תום הולך לקנטקי

Written and Illustrated by:
Tomer Shahar

כתב וצייר: תומר שחר
ENGLISH & HEBREW
אנגלית ועברית

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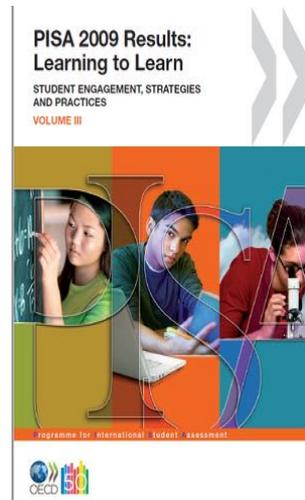## Students from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds

- The OECD PISA research has consistently demonstrated that students from low-SES backgrounds perform at significantly lower academic levels than those from higher-SES backgrounds both with respect to the SES of individual students and the collective SES of students within particular schools.

- **Sources of potential disadvantage**
  Multiple factors that will vary across contexts; for example, *housing/school segregation; overcrowding; nutritional/medical issues; lack of access to books and other forms of print etc.*

- **Evidence-based instructional responses**
  Immerse low-SES students in a print-rich pre-school and school environment;

  Reinforce academic language across the curriculum.

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Reading Engagement in the OECD's PISA Studies (2000- 2018)

- Data on the reading attainment of 15-year olds in 27 countries showed that "the level of a student's reading engagement is a better predictor of literacy performance than his or her socioeconomic background, indicating that cultivating a student's interest in reading can help overcome home disadvantages" (OECD, 2004, p. 8).

- OECD (2010) – about one-third of the negative impact of SES is mediated through reading engagement (or lack thereof). In other words, schools can significantly reduce the negative effects of low-SES by strongly promoting literacy engagement.

PISA 2009 Results: Learning to Learn
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES
VOLUME III

rogramme for international Student Assessment

OECD

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Creating an Identity-Affirming School Environment: Multilingual Books in the Library (Crescent Town School, Toronto)

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Creating an Identity-Affirming School Environment

Linking Literacy Engagement with Identity Affirmation
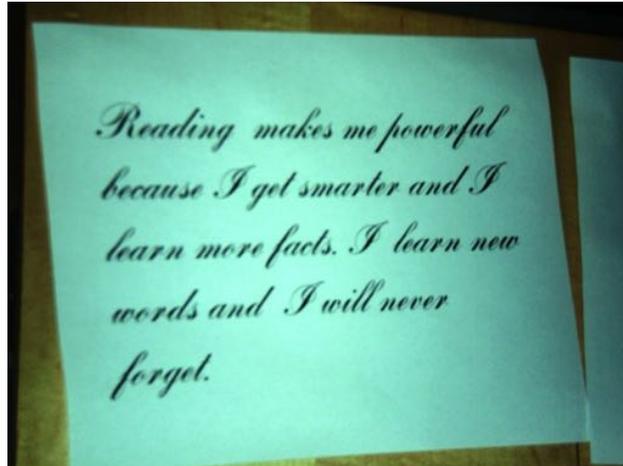
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Creating an Identity-Affirming School Environment

Linking Literacy Engagement with Identity Affirmation

Reading makes me powerful because…

> *When I grow up I can find a better job than people who can't read. Somebody can also trick you to do something that will get you in trouble.*
> *Reading gives you new words to learn. It gives my brain new ideas. It helps your vocabulary so when you need to write something you can use longer and harder words. In school you can get a better mark using more words.*
>
> *By Tasneem*

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Students from Socially Marginalized Communities

■ **Sources of potential disadvantage**

Societal discrimination;

Stereotype threat (students' task performance deteriorates when negative stereotypes are communicated to them);

Low teacher expectations;

= Devaluation of identity reflecting societal power relations.

Gloria Ladson-Billings:

"The problem that African-American students face is the constant devaluation of their culture both in school and in the larger society" (1995, p. 485).

■ **Evidence-based instructional responses**

--Connect instruction to students' lives;

-- Decolonize curriculum and instruction (e.g., Indigenous students)

-- Affirm students' identities in association with literacy development;

-- Enable students to use language (L1/L2) in powerful (identity-affirming) ways;

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Creating an Identity-Affirming School Environment

Validating Home Language and Culture

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- The school "developed whole new ways of teaching, making the classroom multilingual, encouraging pupils to bring their home languages to bear on their learning of English and Irish.
- And instead of creating the tower of Babel that is often feared, this policy simply made all the kids better at languages. They became a great resource for each other, adding insights from their own linguistic worlds. Imagine a classroom in which half a dozen children are retelling an Irish legend in half a dozen other languages, translating, inquiring, playing with the infinite diversity of words. What a fabulous educational experience that must be – working-class kids getting a daily course in applied linguistics that would be hard to match at university."

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Detailed Accounts of How to Implement Linguistically Sensitive Instruction at ECEC and Primary School Levels Have Been Published

Using Linguistically Appropriate Practice
A Guide for Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms
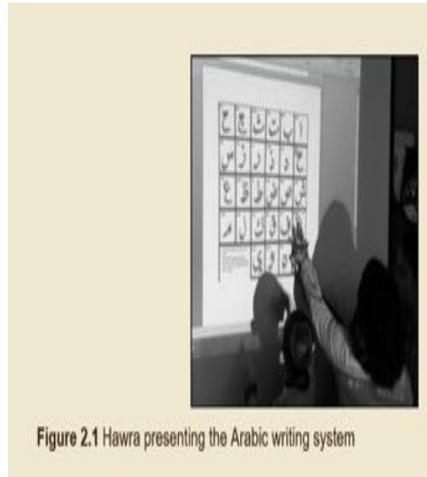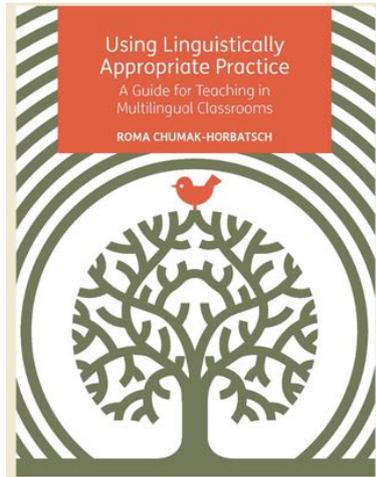ROMA CHUMAK-HORBATSCH

Figure 2.1 Hawra presenting the Arabic writing system

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The Transformative Power of Projects Focused on Identity

This experience gave me a gift of poetry. I started to develop a passion for poetry during this project. I didn't know I had this passion. Since this project I have written and shared many pieces of poetry. …

Participating in this project was like hearing a collective voice telling me: 'We are proud of you. We care about you. You have a future.'

Being able to express my thoughts about who I am as an Anishinaabekwe (an Ojibwe woman) made me feel like I belonged and was connected to a larger community. (Montero et al., 2013, p. 88)
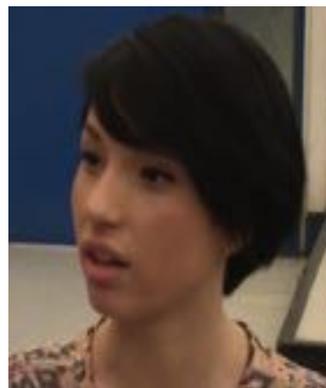
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Affirming Identity = Challenging the Legacy and Current Operation of Coercive Relations of Power

Take away identity and what do you have?

If you have a student that doesn't know who they are, do you think they care about what goes on in the classroom?

Cassandra Bice-Zaugg, Mississauga of the New Credit First Nations, Ontario

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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?

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Conclusions

- There is an evidence-based set of research findings and theoretical principles that ALL school leaders and teachers should be familiar with;

- Research has demonstrated clearly that the roots of underachievement go beyond simply language differences between home and school. Factors associated with socioeconomic status (SES) and historical and current patterns of discrimination and marginalization in both schools and the wider society also operate to limit students' educational progress;

- The effects of these *potential* causal factors can be at least partially reversed by evidence-based instructional strategies.

- Case studies of inspirational instructional practice at ECEC, primary, and secondary levels have been published and should be part of the knowledge base of policy-makers, school leaders, and teachers.

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No-Cost Directions for Genuine Capacity-Building
(a) School Leaders

- *How to build the capacity of school leaders to provide effective leadership in multilingual schools?*

School authorities responsible for making appointments simply insert a requirement into the job description that school leaders should possess the basic knowledge and expertise necessary to provide effective instructional leadership in schools characterized by diversity;

- **This knowledge base would include**

(a) trajectories of school language acquisition among newcomer students,

(b) the positive role of students' L1 in facilitating L2 development,

(c) instructional strategies (e.g., scaffolding) required to teach academic content effectively to multilingual students.

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No-Cost Directions for Genuine Capacity-Building
(b) Teachers

How to build the capacity of all teachers to teach multilingual students

- If education of immigrant-background students is the responsibility of the entire school, then *all* teachers (not just language specialist teachers) need to have the knowledge and expertise to teach these students effectively;

- Municipalities could make clear that priority in hiring new teachers will be given to those who can demonstrate knowledge and expertise in teaching multilingual students, regardless of whether their major qualification is in teaching science, mathematics, or other content areas.

- Simply publicizing the fact that teacher candidates who apply for positions will be asked questions about these issues in interviews will put pressure on faculties of education to ensure that new teachers have the opportunity to develop this knowledge and expertise.

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