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American classrooms are not what they were fifty years ago, or even ten years ago. Along with the imposition of external standards, federal demands for adequate yearly progress for all groups of students, and the pressure to use one-size-fits-all textbooks, the makeup of classroom populations has changed significantly. Long after the Supreme Court called for school desegregation in 1954, families were held in certain parts of the country and in certain types of communities by social class, race, and ethnicity. As recently as the 1990s, Hispanic populations were concentrated in California, Texas, Illinois, New York, and Florida, the traditional gateways for Hispanic immigration. Immigrants from Eastern Europe were also concentrated in the urban areas of the East and West coasts, through which they had entered this country. And refugees from oppressive regimes and wars in the Far East settled where their American benefactors lived and supported them.

Today, however, the patterns for most of these minority groups have changed, and in some cases the population scatterings do not
even constitute patterns at all. Hispanics, the largest immigrant population in the United States, make up at least five percent of the population in twenty-five of our states. Many Hispanic families no longer live in traditional ethnic neighborhoods, but in what were always white, working-class neighborhoods throughout the country and in rural areas where year-round agricultural and manufacturing jobs are available. Concentrations of European and Asian minorities are harder to pinpoint, but they, too, are moving out of cities and into suburban areas as their financial status improves and new ethnic communities are formed.

As a result of these population movements, midwestern, southeastern, mountain, and plains states, long accustomed to a homogeneous Caucasian population or a black-white mix, are experiencing an increasing influx of foreign-born families. For the first time, suburban and even rural schools throughout the country are absorbing varying numbers of children whose native language is not English, and in many places these newcomers bring not just one new language into a classroom but a variety of unrelated languages.

Moreover, some children who come from impoverished or war-torn countries have either never been enrolled in any school or attended school only irregularly. Although they are as physically and mentally capable as their American-born classmates, and of the right ages for upper-elementary or high school grades, they cannot yet read, write, or do math in any language.

Clearly, placing these children in classrooms where teachers are not prepared to teach them—or even communicate with them—is neither sound educational practice nor humane treatment. But that is what is happening. With money so tight as the result of increased federal demands for testing, tutoring, and transferring students to other schools, few public schools receiving English language learners for the first time are able to hire English as a second language teachers or translators to train classroom teachers. Nor can they provide small introductory classes for incoming students. Thus, English language learners are left to learn—or not learn—through full immersion in regular classrooms at all levels.

Not only are such situations bad for English language learners, but they are also bad for classroom teachers. These mostly monolingual teachers are expected to teach their new students to speak, read, and write English and to prepare them to take federally mandated tests in
content subjects, given in English, in their second year of attendance. Looking further into the difficulties of these new mixed-language classrooms, we may wonder if the English-speaking students are not also being harmed. With teachers overburdened, undersupported by their schools, and continually anxious about preserving their jobs and professional reputations, how high can the quality of instruction for everyone be?

The purpose of this book is to suggest a range of basic survival strategies, materials, and activities for English-only teachers and English language learners in mixed-language classrooms. Although government entities at all levels have abandoned their responsibilities to children and teachers, this book offers practical suggestions to help teachers fill the void. Through its eight brief, yet detailed chapters, this book addresses the problems of organizing a classroom and teaching for full participation of students whose native languages and cultures are different from those of English-speaking students born and raised in this country.

*English-Only Teachers in Mixed-Language Classrooms* begins with an overview of theory of second language learning and a set of practical guidelines for classroom teaching in Chapter 1. From there, Chapter 2 moves into the business of preparing the classroom and its English-speaking students for the arrival of students who may speak little or no English. Chapter 3 deals with welcoming such students, orienting them to the classroom and its ways, and helping them to get through their first rough days of severely limited communication. It also includes directions for training student guides to familiarize new students with the places, people, and ways of doing things in their new school.

Chapter 4 explicitly details beginning oral instruction for students who speak little or no English. It explains how other students can help newcomers and how teachers can most efficiently and effectively ready them to work with their English-speaking classmates on grade-level academics.

Chapter 5, dealing with teaching reading and writing, contains many suggestions for adapting the work English-speaking students are doing to fit the capabilities of English language learners.

Chapter 6 explores the range of whole-class work in the content areas at different grade levels, using the philosophy and techniques taught by teacher Marcia Brechtel of Fountain Valley, California, as
part of her Project GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design). All the teachers whom I observed in the writing of this book had received training in GLAD, and after only a few classroom visits, I decided to enroll in the training program as well.

Chapter 7 describes a variety of classroom grouping practices that allow English language learners to work with and learn from English-speaking students. It also discusses the need for teachers to instruct English language learners individually and in separate small groups at times in order to help those who are having problems and advance those who are making rapid progress.

Finally, Chapter 8 returns to the social and psychological concerns of English language learners and their families. It suggests ways for teachers to include and honor their native languages and cultures in the classroom and to encourage them to feel pride in their origins. This chapter also discusses how teachers can form relationships with parents, drawing them into the classroom and enlisting them as partners in their children’s education.

Throughout the book I have taken the liberty of shortening the term *English language learners* to *ELLs* in order not to have to repeat the long form in nearly every sentence. This practice certainly should not confuse the reader, and I sincerely hope that it does not offend anyone either. More important, I have taken a perspective that could be characterized as envisioning worst-case scenarios. In describing various classroom situations for teachers and students to deal with, I deliberately made them as difficult as possible. I posited teachers who do not know even a few words of another language, large classes with several English language learners in them, new students who know little or no English, a dribbling in of newcomers over the course of the school year, and a variety of native languages and cultures in a classroom. By taking this extreme perspective, I was able to describe maximum support strategies and cover most contingencies. If the situation in your classroom turns out to be not nearly as challenging as the ones described, not only will you feel fortunate, but you will also have more than enough information and creative ideas to teach all students effectively.
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