Excerpt from California ELA/ELD Framework, Chapter 11

Biliterate Students

In California, biliteracy is valued, and the primary languages that ELs bring to school are considered important resources, valuable in their own right and as a base from which to develop English as an additional language. Also valued are the benefits to native speakers of English that in becoming bilingual and biliterate bring. While developmental bilingual programs provide means for ELs to become biliterate in their native language and English, two-way, or dual, immersion programs allow both ELs and native English speakers to become biliterate in each other’s languages.

ELs who are developing language and literacy in two languages simultaneously in the elementary grades and all students in two-way immersion programs require a curriculum based on carefully-designed scope and sequence that ensures steady progress in both languages. This scope and sequence includes ongoing formative assessment in both languages and careful analysis of assessment results in order to inform instructional decisions. Like all students, those in biliteracy programs should be well-prepared to independently engage with complex grade-level texts in English in the elementary grades and through secondary schooling.

Notes:

Excerpt from ELA/ELD Framework, Chapter 2

Promoting Bilingualism and Biliteracy

In recognition of the value of a biliterate and multiliterate citizenry for the benefit of the state, as well as the individual, in the global world of the 21st century, California’s Seal of Biliteracy is awarded to high school graduates who attain a high level of proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English. The majority of bilingual students in California are ELs whose primary language is a language other than English and who are also learning English as an additional language. However, bilingual students are also native English speakers enrolled in bilingual programs, heritage language programs, or world language programs.

Bilingual students are also students who are deaf or hard of hearing whose primary language is American Sign Language and whose other language is the written language of the hearing community (sometimes more than one language when students are from communities where English is not the dominant language).

Research evidence indicates that bilingual programs, in which biliteracy is the goal and bilingual instruction is sustained, promote literacy in English, as well as in the primary language (August and Shanahan 2006; CDE 2010a; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders and Christian 2006; Goldenberg 2008). The enhanced metalinguistic and metacognitive benefits of bilingualism have been demonstrated in multiple studies and include better working memory, abstract reasoning skills, attentional control, and problem solving skills (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, and Ungerleider 2010). An additional benefit of bilingualism is the delay of age-related cognitive decline (Bialystok, Craik, and Freedman 2007).

For all students, bilingualism is a cognitive and linguistic asset. Developing the language used by parents, grandparents, or other relatives also promotes healthy self-image, pride in one’s heritage, and greater connection with one’s community. This cultural awareness and appreciation for diversity is, in fact, critical for all students to develop as global-minded individuals.