CollegeBoard
Advanced Placement
Program

AP®

Italian Language & Culture

2007–2008
Professional Development
Workshop Materials

Special Focus:
Scaffolding Student Interaction with
Authentic Materials

The College Board: Connecting Students to College Success

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,000 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT®, the PSAT/NMSQT®, and the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns.

For further information, visit www.collegeboard.com.

Special Focus: Scaffolding Student Interaction With Authentic Materials

Introduction

Keith Cothrun
College Board
New York, NY

One of the most challenging tasks for us as teachers of advanced language learners is to raise the achievement level of our students in reading comprehension. In this Special Focus we look to our colleagues from Teaching English Language Learners for a collection of articles on Interpretive Communication: Reading.

Pauline Gibbons reminds us of the importance of background knowledge and helps us understand readers as code breakers, text participants, text users and texts analysts. She provides numerous examples of pre-reading, reading and post-reading activities for language learners along with insight into considerations when selecting reading materials for use in the classroom.

Farin Houk provides us with guidance in scaffolding language and learning with strategies for embedding language development in content learning, differentiating learning, and enhancing the comprehensibility of texts. Lastly, Gillian Lazar provides guidance in designing lessons and materials using short stories and novels.

8

Content Study

Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.   —Archimedes

Content study is the opportunity for teachers to move children's language from the basic playground language that comes so easily to them, to the more complex academic language that they will need in order to do well in school and to successfully navigate the world before them. For too long, educators have mistaken a mastery of conversational English for a command of academic English (Collier 1987, 1989; Cummins 1981); in this scenario, English language learners move through school less and less able to handle the ever more demanding curricular material. It is critical that we begin at the earliest level to give children sophisticated, academic language through the study of engaging content.

A Scenario: Walking to Swan Creek

"So, tomorrow we'll be walking over to Swan Creek to do some exploring and observing," informs the teacher.

"Swan Creek! Creek! I know that must be freshwater!" shouts one student proudly.

"That's right, it is a freshwater habitat. What kinds of creatures do you anticipate finding when we go to visit Swan Creek?"

"Dragonflies," says one.

"Water striders," offers another student, doing his impression of how a water strider balances on the surface of the water.

"Bullfrogs or maybe bullfrog tadpoles," suggests another boy.

"Maybe we'll see some red-headed woodpeckers or some jays, like maybe a blue jay," says another girl.

"We might see some turtles, but only the freshwater kind, not the kind that live in the ocean. Maybe a painted turtle or a snapping turtle. The snapping turtle has a pointy nose like a beak and goes 'SNAP!'"

"Wow, you know a lot of freshwater creatures to be looking for when we go to the creek tomorrow. What kinds of *predatory* animals might we encounter?" asks the teacher.

"They all predators, Ms. Cerna, they all EAT the other animals. Only the little tiny, tiny animals, they eat the plants," explains a student.

"Yeah, the bullfrogs eat the insects, and the spiders eat the insects too. YUK!"

"Maybe we see birds, they eat the worms."

"I bet we *will* see some birds, that's a good prediction. You've noticed that there are a lot of birds around here."

"Ms. Cerna, maybe we can fish and then we can be predators too!"

This conversation took place early last spring as a kindergarten class prepared to continue their study of habitats ("'habitat' is the place that has all the good things you need to live!" explained one student). They had recently embarked on a study of differences between freshwater and saltwater habitats, and were getting ready to visit a nearby freshwater habitat. Though many of them walked past the Swan Creek every day to get to school, they had only recently begun to look carefully at the details, to notice all of the wondrous plants and trees and animals and yucky bugs that lived there. They could hardly contain their excitement and pride as they became able to identify and name the inhabitants of this neighborhood ecosystem.

In this particular class, sixteen of the twenty students were English language learners, most still qualifying for ESL services. Many of them had had no experience with English before entering kindergarten; at home they spoke Russian, Ukrainian, Spanish, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Hmong. A few of them were all but silent for the first few months of class. But, snaking down the trail to the creek, listening to their shrieks of discovery, "oooh, smell that sticky sap!" and "look at that giant anthill! Millions of ants working in their tunnels!" their limitations faded away. Instead, they were explorers, tour guides, scientists, and discoverers. And were they muddy!

Language Helps Us Negotiate the World

As we prepare to teach our English language learners, it is important to keep in mind two general principles. First, we cannot teach language as a separate entity. Language must reflect our connection to the world, our experiences within it, our feelings about it. Language without meaning is nothing more than sterile strings of letters or even words. As we teach our children language, we must also teach them about the world and their relationship to it. Rather than language learning as an end in itself, language becomes a means to learn about the world, and language learning is the equally important, simultaneous outcome. Language learning *must* therefore be embedded in content: literature, science, math, social studies, health, art, and so on. So often, when we hear teachers frustrated at their students' reading or writing progress, they are perplexed when asked, "What are you reading about? What are you writing about? What are you learning about?" Literacy for its own sake is not literacy at all, it is simply busywork that children will show little interest in.

Secondly, and similarly, language must be perceived as purposeful. In order to learn as quickly and efficiently as possible, students must have a good sense that there is important reason to learn language. We've all seen students who whip through reading or writing assignments without any real learning (some of us have even done that ourselves!). When students don't see any purpose or need to communicate, either orally or through reading or writing, they just plain don't do it, and they don't learn. In order to facilitate English language proficiency, we've got to give children some incentive. Once students *want* to communicate, they will be motivated to learn how to speak, read, and write in English.

Learning Language Through Content, Content Through Language

Rather than being a one-way progression, which is usually seen as learning English and then learning content, it is essential to reconstruct this as a more fluid process, in which children learn through language and about language simultaneously. Pauline Gibbons (2002) discusses this in her book *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning*. She uses the hourglass shape to describe the learning process for all learners, and particularly English language learners (see Figure 8–1). While using language to construct knowledge within the different disciplines, the learning process is occasionally diverted to allow the language itself to become the focus of learning. In a social studies unit about peace and justice for example, first graders made a list of things that all people need, but often don't have. As they wrote "Some people don't have enough love. Some people don't have enough money. Some people
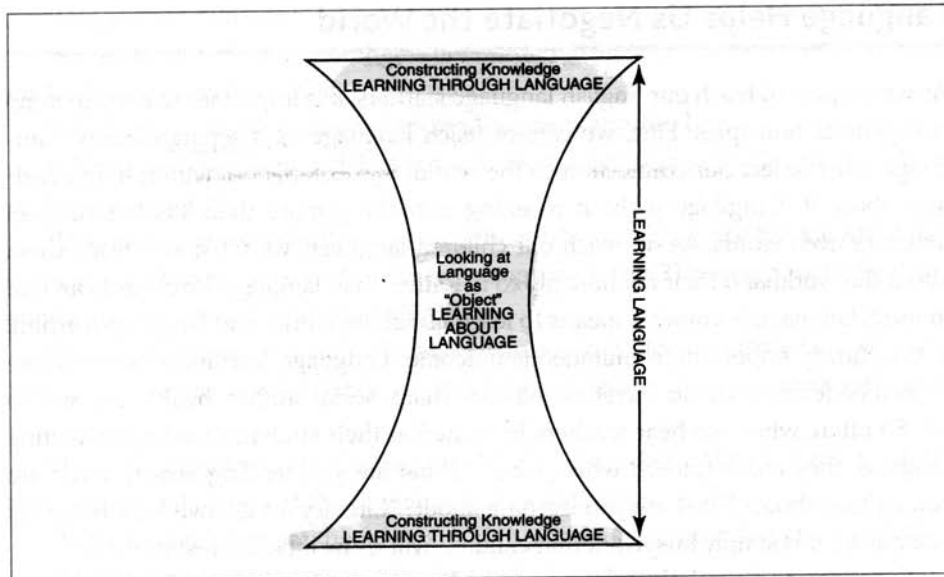
FIG. 8–1 Effective teachers weave language learning into content study.

don't have a place to live," several students noticed the word *don't* and wondered why it had an apostrophe in it. The teacher explained the concept of contractions briefly, the class brainstormed a few as the teacher charted them on paper, and the class returned to their list of "haves" and "don't haves."

Language Must Reflect Our Thinking

Jim Cummins (1981) also provides much of the theoretical framework for integrating content and language learning. Cummins asserts that language learning happens most effectively when language is learned through meaningful content activities. In the diagram in Figure 8–2, he describes teaching and learning activities in terms of their demands on the students. Tasks are either cognitively demanding or cognitively undemanding, and it is important to remember that this refers to the academic task, not the language task. Further, each task is either context-embedded, meaning that there are lots of clues to help the student understand and demonstrate proficiency, or context-reduced, meaning that there are few clues to help the student in understanding the concepts. Cummins insists that English language learners be taught at a developmentally appropriate, cognitively demanding level. That is to say, a fourth-grade English language learner should be learning

Cognitively Undemanding (BICS)

Context Embedded	A	C	Context Reduced

Initial levels ESL?T.P.R.
Following Directions
Face-to-Face Conversation
Getting Absence Excuse
Buying popcorn
Oral Presentations
Content Classes (Art, Music)

Telephone Conversation
Note on the Refrigerator
Written Directions, Instructions
(No diagrams or illustrations)

	B	D	

Demonstrations, Experiments
A-V Assisted Lessons
Basic Math Computations
Plane Geometry
Projects and Activities
Health Instruction
Social Studies
Science Experiments

Standardized Tests
CTBS, SAT 9, CAP
Reading / Writing
Math Concepts and Applications
Explanations of New Abstract
Concepts
Lecture with few Illustrations
Social Science Texts
Mainstream English Texts
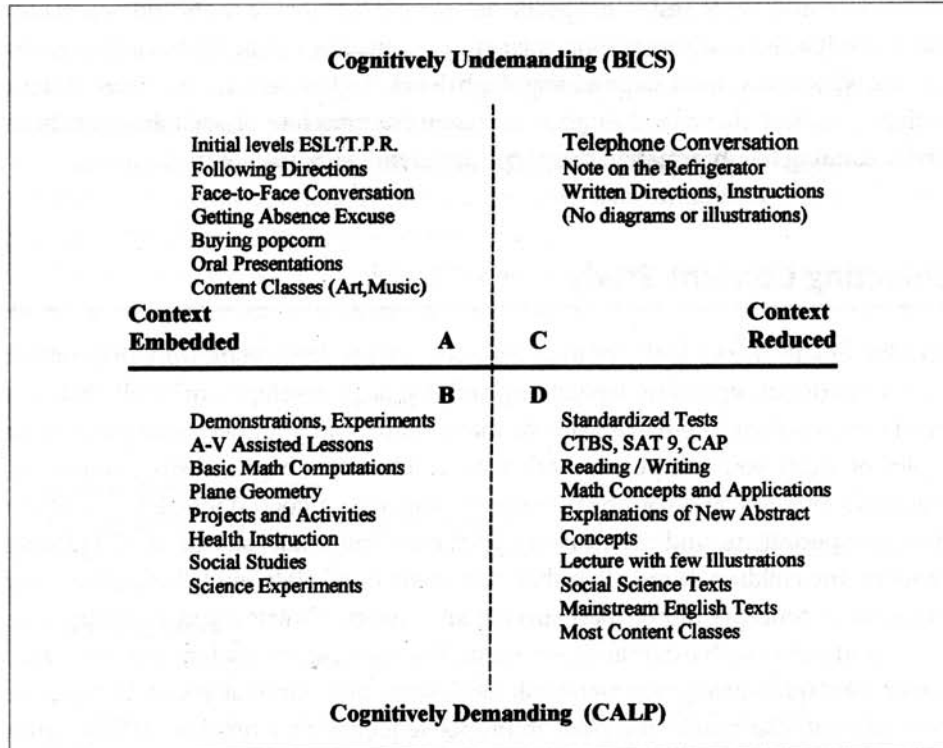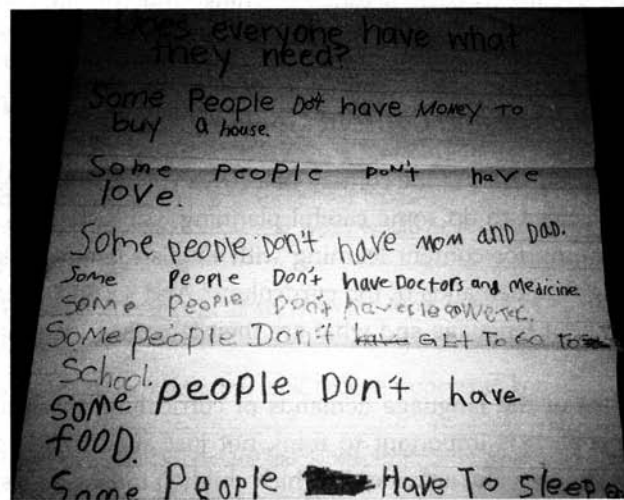Most Content Classes

Cognitively Demanding (CALP)

FIG. 8–2 ELLs need cognitively challenging instruction presented in a supportive, accessible context.

about state history alongside his peers, not sorting pictures of fruits and vegetables into piles. It is the teacher's responsibility to keep the student in the lower left quadrant of Cummins' model, providing high-level, high-interest academic content within a context that offers English language learners lots of scaffolding in both understanding the information presented and demonstrating comprehension.

Selecting Content Study

So what exactly does it look like to provide cognitively demanding work in a context that supports conceptual understanding and language development? Well, first, you need some content. There will likely be many sources for your decisions about what topics of study you will pursue with your children: textbooks, district standards, children's interests, and your own interests. Start with a good understanding of the district expectations, and then turn to your most important source of all teaching wisdom: the children. More often than not, district and state guidelines are written in terms of concepts rather than specific knowledge, allowing you to incorporate student interests with external expectations. For example, in Washington State, students are required to "group personal, local, state, and national events in terms of past, present, and future, and place in proper sequence on a timeline" (Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website). This objective, while it encourages particular skills, also allows us to put the experiences of our students to use in acquiring them. When you include the children when creating curriculum, you increase their motivation to participate, you give them space to employ their prior knowledge in furthering their future learning, and you improve the cultural relevancy of your teaching and your classroom.

Combining Language and Content Goals

Once you have a good sense of the content objectives you wish to explore with your students, you will need to do some careful planning. Gibbons cites two essential questions in planning for content learning with English language learners: First, what are the language demands of the curriculum? And second, what do children currently know about language and what are their language learning needs (Gibbons 2002)?

In thinking about the language demands of curriculum, think in terms of all aspects of language. It is important to think not just about reading and writing activities for the children, but activities in which children must listen, speak, discuss,

question, and otherwise explore the content *through* the language. The more varied opportunities you create for students to practice, the more you will maximize language development. As always, taking time to be conscious of the language you are using and the language tasks you are providing will mean enhanced language learning for all children, while ensuring language development and content access for English language learners. Figure 8–3 provides a set of questions to guide your thinking and planning through a content area.

Second, you will need to consider individual students' language abilities as you plan for the group. You will likely have information from many sources (language assessments, anecdotal observations, previous work samples, etc.). More information

---

Spoken Language Tasks
- What spoken language demands will there be?
- If there are currently not many opportunities for spoken language, where can oral tasks be included?

Listening Tasks
- What listening tasks will there be?
- What kind of listening do they involve: One-way? Two-way? Interpersonal? Transactional?
- If there are currently not many listening tasks, what specific listening activities could be included?

Reading Tasks
- What texts will students be reading?
- What are the possible linguistic and cultural barriers students may encounter?
- How can texts be made accessible to students?
- Do reading tasks aim to increase readers' reading strategies, and students' knowledge about language?
- If there are few reading texts, are there others that could be included?

Written Tasks
- What are the written text types that will occur, or what text types could be included?
- What is the schematic structure of text types?
- What kind of connectives occur in these text types?
- If there are few written tasks, what text types would be relevant and could be included?

Grammar Tasks
- What aspects of grammar (e.g., tense) does the topic require students to use?

Vocabulary Tasks
- What specific vocabulary does the topic require students to know?

FIG. 8–3 These questions guide us in providing appropriate, accessible language experiences within an area of content study.

about effective language assessment is provided in Chapter 11. Obviously, at the beginning of your work with a student, you will have less information about his or her language abilities. For that reason, you will want to build in as much flexibility as possible into your curriculum plans. A guiding question for any lesson in a class with English language learners should be, "In what ways are the instructional activities in the unit of study multilevel?" That may mean, for example, that you plan to begin with partnered or small-group activities, in which an English language learner could contribute at a level comfortable for him or her. Once you have worked with children for a while, you will begin to get a better picture of their language abilities and needs, and will be able to plan more precisely to meet them.

Thematic Units

Expanding content studies into broader, thematic units is one way to reinforce and maximize both language and concept learning (Enright and McCloskey 1988; Pappas, Kiefer, and Levstik 1990; Peregoy and Boyle 2001). Any area of content study can be expanded to include reading, writing, math, science, or social studies activities. When students develop a framework of content and language knowledge around a particular topic, they build up the means to support greater and greater learning in each of those areas. Ideas, concepts, vocabulary, and language structures are built and established on an increasing body of shared knowledge. Further, when concepts and vocabulary are presented in a variety of different ways for a variety of purposes, students have more opportunities to access and integrate that learning.
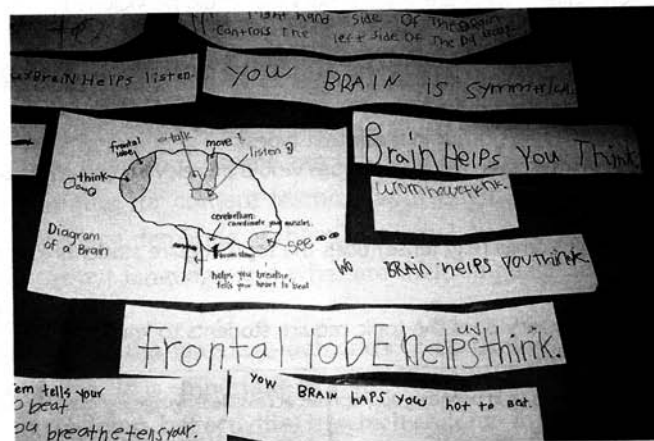
Strategies for Differentiating Language and Content Learning

As you plan your content exploration, there are many specific strategies that you can use in order to present the information to children and guide them in their understanding of it.

* *Experiment or demonstrate.* Begin a study of properties of water by allowing an ice cube to melt or by wiping the chalkboard with a wet cloth and watching the moisture evaporate.
* *Have children demonstrate a concept.* In a discussion about attributes, the teacher divides the class into two groups, one with shoelaces and the other without shoelaces.
* *Have children role-play.* Act out the story of the *Tortoise and the Hare.*
* *Use small groups as teaching spaces.* Present a lesson in a smaller group in order to be more attuned to language issues that arise.
* *Conduct collaborative group work.* During a math lesson practice, ask one child to handle the manipulative while another interprets and records data.
* *Partner children to scaffold content and language learning.* Say, "Turn to your partner and tell them what you predict will happen next in the story."
* *Play games.* When children begin to break numbers apart play "On and Off" (from TERC's Investigations curriculum), in which they toss objects over a paper and count the number that land on and the number that land off of the paper.
* *Take field trips.* Learning about water? Take a walk through the neighborhood to discover the places that rain goes after it's fallen: gutters, puddles, storm drains, creeks, lawns, and so on.

Additional Aids to Comprehension

In addition to these specific strategies, there are a number of other tools that can and should be used in order to enhance content understanding for English language learners (and everyone else as well!).

* *Visuals.* Draw pictures of everything! (Don't worry, the kids will love your primitive scratches.) Even if you aren't an artist, it helps kids to associate some kind of symbol with a new vocabulary word or a new concept.
* *Hands-on materials.* As they study the ocean, kindergartners have the chance to try out their new words in the water table-turned-Pacific coast. Sand was packed into one half of the table and salt water filled it out. Shells, rocks,

sticks, shovels, and plastic sea animals gave children loads of opportunities to engage in plenty of ocean-talk.

✴ *Word banks.* These are only effective if they are generated by the class within the context of content learning.

✴ *Pictures.* Pictures are a great way to enhance understanding and get kids interested in a subject. Keep a picture file of good-quality, relevant pictures you find. A digital camera is also a fabulous investment for a classroom or school; that way you can take your own pictures relevant to classroom learning.

Experiencing the Content

The key is to put English language learners *into* the learning as much as possible. Rather than language being the only medium through which children are introduced to concepts, you want to create opportunities for children to see the concepts in action, to participate in them, to hear, feel, smell, taste, and touch the concepts being presented. As they *experience* the content, they will associate the accompanying language more quickly and meaningfully.

Still trying to figure out how it actually looks in a real classroom with real kids? Take a look at the following examples.

A Math Exploration: Learning About Ourselves

In a K–1 classroom, student are exploring the concepts of gathering, organizing, and interpreting data. They spend several days conducting whole-group surveys around different topics. One day, the question to be answered is "Are you bilingual?" Two clipboards hang on the wall, one labeled "Yes" and the other "Not yet." Each child has a clothespin with his or her name on it, to be placed on the appropriate clipboard. The teacher asks the group the question, and begins to match the concept of speaking more than one language to the word *bilingual.*

"Ngoc-Tran, your mommy speaks to you in Vietnamese. Do you speak to her in Vietnamese?"

"Yes," she says, nodding her head vigorously, "I talk Vietnam with my mommy."

"Wonderful! That means you are bilingual because you speak English and Vietnamese! You're going to select 'Yes.'" The teacher points to the corresponding clipboard and invites Ngoc-Tran to move her clothespin.

"Is there anyone else who speaks Vietnamese like Ngoc-Tran?"

Several children raise their hands, and Ngoc-Tran speaks to them in Vietnamese, encouraging them to respond.

"You mean you speak Vietnamese *and* English? You mean you are *bilingual*?" The children are nodding and smiling shyly. "Well you better come up and move your pins to the 'Yes' clipboard then!"

The teacher continues to invite children up to place their clothespins on the appropriate board, using her knowledge of the children's languages, and making the "bilingual" connection for them if the children don't. To a native English speaker, she says "Jeremiah, do you speak two languages? Are you bilingual?"

Jeremiah shakes his head. "I only talk English."

"Would you like to learn another language, Jeremiah?"

His eyes get big and he nods his head softly.

"Great! Then you can put your pin on the 'Not Yet' side, because you'd like to work on learning another language. Maybe Terrence will teach us how to count in Vietnamese during calendar tomorrow."

The students continue placing their pins, until all students have responded to the survey. When they finish, the teacher guides them in analyzing the data collected. She begins by asking the children what they notice.

"Dat is big one, teacher, and dat no big, teacher," one says, pointing to the respective clipboards.

"Yes, you've noticed that there are a lot of clothespins on the 'Yes' board, and not as many on the 'No' board. What a good observation. *More* students in our class are bilingual and *fewer* students are not bilingual yet. K–1 kids, share that observation with your neighbor. Explain to your neighbor what Tu just said: that there are *more* students who selected 'Yes' and *fewer* students who selected 'No.'"

The students turn to their neighbors and give them some version of what the teacher just explained. Some of them point to the clipboards and make "big" and "small" gestures with their hands.

The class continues to make and explain different observations, each time making use of the vocabulary that represents the key concepts: *more, less, how many, this group, that group, data, equal to,* and so on. The class counts and recounts the clothespins on each board, as many of the children are still learning to count or to use one-to-one correspondence.

The next day, the teacher reviews the observations that the children have made, asks the students to review them orally with each other, and then explains to them that now they will be responsible for making a representation of the data.

"That means that you're going to draw a *picture* with your partner so that someone else can know how many students in our class are bilingual and how many are

not yet bilingual. You want someone to be able to look at your representation and understand our data right away. Let me show you how . . ."

After she models a representation of the data, the teacher selects partners from a cup full of popsicle sticks. The names on the sticks are written in black, reflecting greater proficiency in oral and written language, or red, reflecting less English proficiency or less writing proficiency. That way, in a red–black partnership, the students can discuss and organize the task, and at least one of them will be able to complete the written task. For the next few days, the students expand on the concepts by conducting their own surveys of their classmates. They collect information, organize it, and present their representations to the class. They learn language, they learn about each other, and they learn about gathering, organizing, and analyzing data.

Seattle Neighborhoods: A Research Project

In a fourth–fifth-grade classroom, students eagerly dive into a study of Washington state history, via their own neighborhoods. The teacher elects to focus on the following concepts in the state guidelines for social studies and history:

* Students will observe and analyze the interaction between people, the environment, and the culture.
* Students will analyze how the environment and environmental changes affect people.
* Students will examine the influence of culture on Washington state history.
* Students will examine the contributions of people from various cultural groups to the development of local and Washington state history.

Alongside these central history and social studies concepts, the teacher identifies a host of other objectives relating to math, reading, writing, language development, and so on. For example:

* Students will conduct and record interviews with prominent local citizens.
* Students will compare demographics of neighborhoods and analyze demographic information.
* Students will create written analyses of information gathered in a variety of formats. (Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website)

The teacher begins by identifying neighborhoods where the children in the class live, and creates a list of eight neighborhoods to be studied in the unit. Students are able to create study groups of two or three students according to their own interests.

The class brainstorms about what kind of information they want to know in order to learn about each individual neighborhood, and in order to compare each one with others in the city.

From there, the teacher and students begin to gather research together. They invite community speakers into the classroom for interviews, they go to the library and gather primary source information from local archives, they analyze maps, they call on their own important knowledge of their neighborhoods, they conduct phone interviews with community members, they examine newspapers and news archives, they even take an extended tour through the city by bus in order to collect information. (See Figure 8–4.)

Throughout the unit, the class began to develop a common vocabulary that reflected the themes which were emerging in the large and small study groups: *asset, challenge, issue, demographics, landmarks, gentrification, diversity, culture, economic, intersection, civic, entrepreneur.*

Each neighborhood group was required to develop a portfolio that reflected their research and learning. The many different components of the portfolio allowed
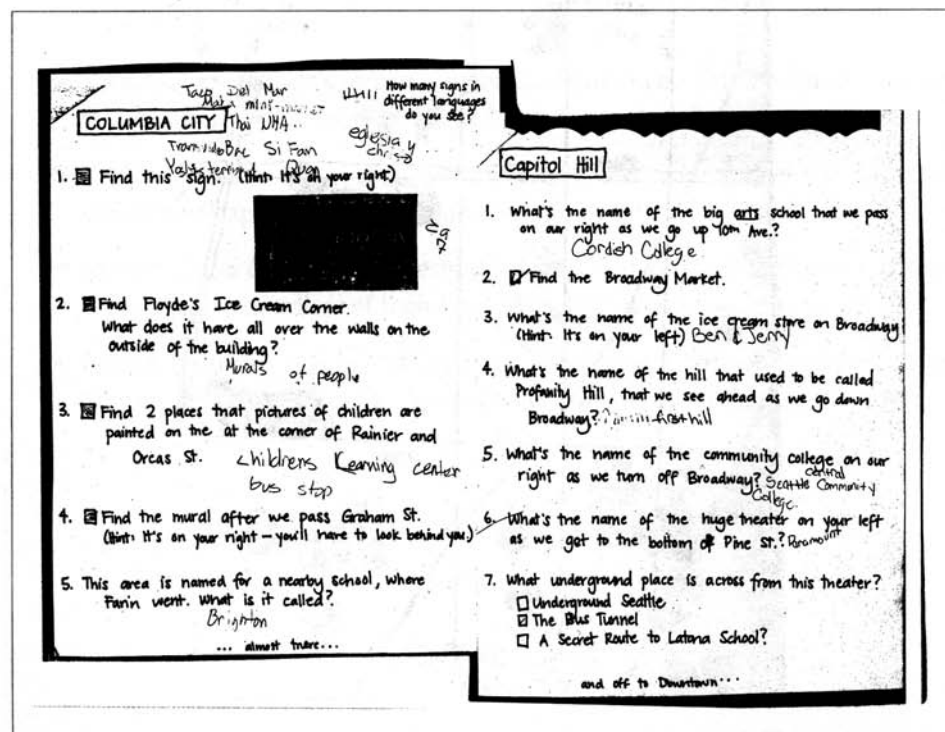

FIG. 8–4 During a Seattle history study, students traveled by bus around the city, taking in the information firsthand.

children to contribute according to their strengths and scaffold each other's learning. The students created timelines, A–Z lists, maps, a historical background, analyses of current issues, a tourist guide's description of the neighborhood, and a video clip presenting their neighborhood to the others. In their video presentations, students were encouraged to incorporate relevant art and music (the International District's group used old jazz recordings, reflecting that area's history as an early mecca for local and national jazz artists), and developed the format for presenting the information. Some students used a documentary-style, others used a news-broadcast format, and others created game shows in which contestants were quizzed on their knowledge of particular neighborhoods. (See Figure 8–5.)
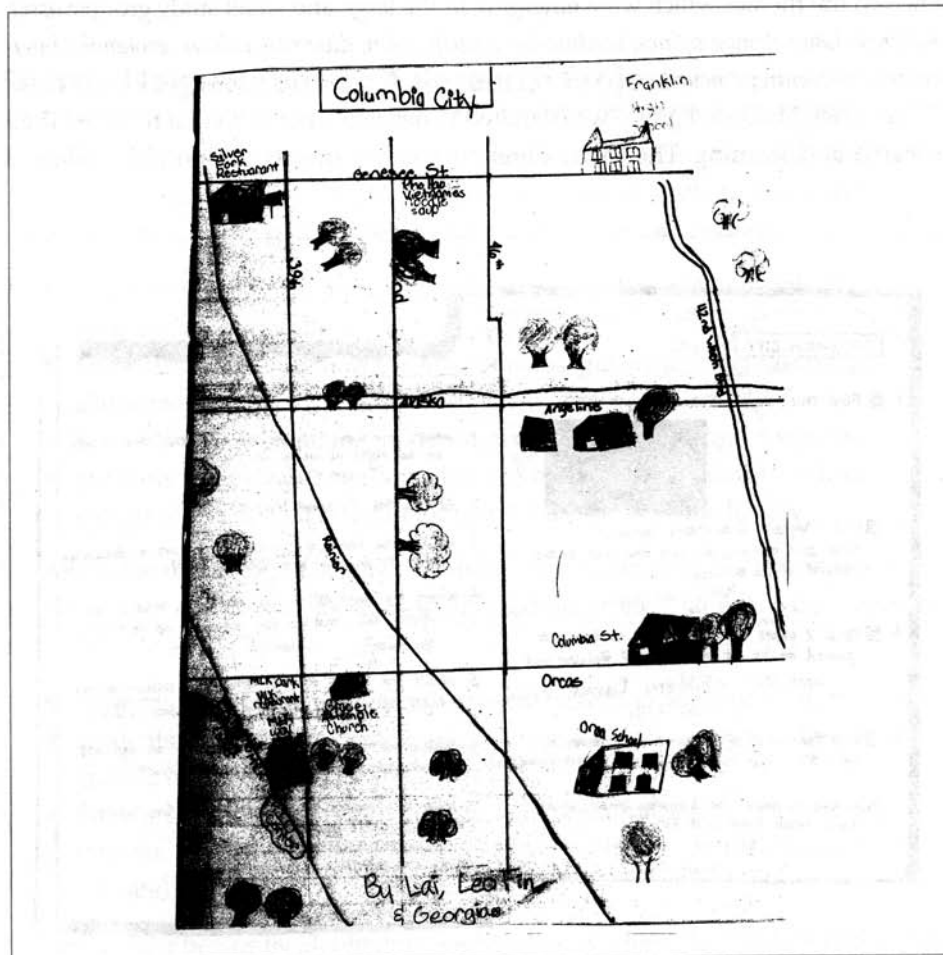

FIG. 8–5 In their research on Seattle history, students were required to produce a modern-day map, naming their own important landmarks.

As the class worked its way through the project, the students began to incorporate the concepts and vocabulary into their discussions and their class work. The classroom community had created a tangible body of knowledge that everyone had contributed to and felt ownership of. The many English language learners in this class pushed their language and literacy learning as they read, spoke, discussed, asked questions, interviewed, wrote, analyzed, interpreted, created scripts, and presented information to different groups. The language learning was enhanced for all students as they collaborated to acquire important, intriguing, and challenging content knowledge.

Key Ideas

* Language development must be embedded in content study.

* Children learn language when they have a purpose for using it. When we build language development into engaging, meaningful content study, children are motivated to push their own language use by their desire to have access to the content.

* Factoring in children's interests when deciding on curriculum content means that children will be more interested and engaged in the learning.

* Within a content study, it's important to plan for and engineer the ways that children will speak, listen, read, and write.

* In planning a content unit, design activities that children can access and be successful in regardless of their level of literacy or language proficiency.

* Provide as much experiential learning as possible. Children learn best while they are *inside* the learning, experiencing new concepts and ideas firsthand.