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Room for Talk: Teaching and Learning in a Multilingual Kindergarten, by Rebekah Fassler

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current problems of teachers and schools,” and found that he “could identify with a newcomer’s struggle to define herself as a teacher” (p. 114).

Through this collaborative professional partnership, Trubowitz and Robins demonstrate ways first-year teachers can interact with their colleagues, parents, and the community. As a part of the appendix of the book, both authors include useful checklists for mentoring and suggestions for improvement and future learning. Their successful mentorship experience can encourage veteran teachers to participate as mentors, passing on their valuable years of expertise and experience.

Pat Bronsard is the Associate Superintendent for the Diocese of St. Augustine, Florida.

ROOM FOR TALK: TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A MULTILINGUAL KINDERGARTEN

REBEKAH FASSLER
TEACHERS COLLEGE PRESS, 2003
\$18.95, 117 pages

Reviewed by Diana Hankins

All across America, educators are becoming aware of a change in the mixture of linguistic backgrounds of students. As more and more children are coming to our schools with little or no English language development, educators must find a way to meet the challenges that this situation presents to American education. There are two prevalent models used today to address this challenge. One includes placing children with a home language other than English into a classroom with English-speaking students and teacher. The other is to group children with common home languages with a teacher who is bilingual and incorporates instruction in both English and the native language, to move the students toward English proficiency. In the book *Room for Talk: Teaching and Learning in a Multilingual Kindergarten*, Rebekah Fassler presents a third option for an English as a Second Language

(ESL) classroom. In the Acknowledgments section the author shares an interest in young English language learners that has spanned many years and has its roots in dissertation research. Fassler has published research on oral communication and emergent literacy in multilingual early childhood classrooms in journals such as the *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *Language Arts*, and *Childhood Education*.

This book presents an unusual program in Mrs. Barker's (pseudonym) school that places only English language learners (ELLs) in an ESL classroom. The author states that this type of classroom does not in theory represent an ideal learning environment for ELLs. Fassler presents this as a model that can address three growing trends that present challenges to American early childhood teachers: (a) an increasing number of classrooms have children from home language backgrounds other than English; (b) the ratio of English language learners to native English speakers in those classrooms is increasing; (c) an increasing number of those classrooms have ELLs from a variety of home language backgrounds rather than from a single language background.

Room for Talk: Teaching and Learning in a Multilingual Kindergarten presents a case study completed by the author that focuses on six of the students within Mrs. Barker's classroom. Concrete examples are presented throughout the book that reinforce the findings of the author based on behaviors observed of the case study children. Fassler presents these conclusions as possible solutions to challenges identified in current research on multilingual classrooms where the teacher is monolingual. The book presents three challenges faced by monolingual teachers in multilingual classrooms. One is to discover a balance between teacher-fronted and peer-mediated activities that will best support children's use of English. The second challenge is to establish intersubjectivity. The author defines this term as a shared focus of attention and a knowledge that communicating partners look upon the communicative situation the same way. Fassler uses previous research completed by Wells in a study on language development. Particularly in an ESL classroom, but true in all classrooms, the goal of exposure to teacher talk or instruction during teacher-directed whole group activities and in one-on-one teacher-child interactions is to establish intersubjectivity. The final key challenge presented deals with interactions between peers. The author presents data that support the importance of peer interaction in the learning process, but sees no conclusive agreement on the benefits. Instead the results are many and varied depending upon the exact situation or format used for the ESL learning environment. In the overview of the book, it is pointed out that not enough is known about the possible peer support that ELLs are able to offer each other in classrooms such as Mrs. Barker's. What makes her classroom different from both bilingual and immersion settings is that the lan-

guage backgrounds of the students are heterogeneous.

The information presented in *Room for Talk: Teaching and Learning in a Multilingual Kindergarten* has implications for both administrators and early childhood teachers who wish to structure their learning environments so that everyone can take ownership of language. The format of the book is presented in such a way that lends authenticity to the conclusions presented by the author. Great effort is taken to outline the study so that the reader understands the process of collecting the data from which conclusions about the effectiveness of Mrs. Barker's classroom were based. Fassler explains how the role of researcher was established from the very first day of school, distinguishing the author as an adult who belonged in the classroom, but not as a teacher. A qualitative method of research was used, taking extensive field notes on oral communication in the classroom as it naturally occurred during activities, events, and social situations during the school day. These notes were supplemented by selective audio taping during the study and frequent informal interviews with the teacher. The author took the situations observed and collected and labeled these episodes, which became the basic units of analysis in the study. By placing together the same type of episodes, the author was able to discern patterns of participation and expectations for participation in different types of events. This procedure helped to delineate the range of opportunities for communication in the classroom. Fassler selected 6 children from the 31 student classroom for a more in-depth study in order to explore the unique ways individual children addressed the communicative challenges of their multilingual classroom. One aspect that was not made clear in the explanation of the study is the method used to select these six children. By comparing episodes from different times, the author was able to trace some evolution of the study group's efforts to make sense of classroom talk and of kindergarten tasks:

Through this comparative analysis, I could detect patterns in the communicative behaviors that case study children used to negotiate shared meanings with the teacher and each other, and to interact in English in new situations with a wider circle of children. (p. 10)

The remainder of the book describes concrete episodes that are given as the basis for the conclusions that the author lays out in the final chapter of the book which support this framework for ESL classrooms. The author suggests that the strategies Mrs. Barker used made her language accessible to the children in her classroom in terms of their receptive skills and expressive skills. The implication is made that the documentation presented from the study supports the conclusion that English language learners can progress as learners when teachers use the strategies reported in the book. Though mak-

ing this conclusion is a logical step, it is not clear that the evidence presented justifies the outcome. The author does a precise job of presenting a study that has some implications to the way the American school system meets the needs of English language learners. Both administrators and early childhood teachers would benefit from reading this book.

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THE THREADS OF READING: STRATEGIES OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

KAREN TANKERSLEY
ASSOCIATION FOR CURRICULUM
AND SUPERVISION DEVELOPMENT, 2003
\$25.99, 184 pages

Reviewed by Ted Wallach

In *The Threads of Reading: Strategies of Literacy Development*, Karen Tankersley uses the image of a tapestry to describe the components of reading, defining the individual components as six threads: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and higher-order thinking. The book begins each section with a detailed description of each thread of literacy development, using recent research throughout the text to support the techniques and ideas that are presented for each thread. Each section of the book offers numerous activities that, as the author states, have “been gathered from actual classroom practice” (Tankersley, 2003, p. 3). The activities are designed to add variety to and strengthen the classroom teaching of the six threads.

The activities cover a wide range of ability levels. Some activities are designed for early learners of reading and writing, while others are planned for higher skill students who are beyond the fourth or fifth grades. While there are activities designed for the lower grade classrooms, the book pro-