

PsychSpeak

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Bilingual Programs Story by Ann Vernon

Excitement – smiling faces – joyful learning! You will see all of this and more when you visit a bilingual classroom at Old Town Elementary. Interest in the bilingual program starts before the students enter school. The parents apply for the program and enter a lottery to determine who will be enrolled in the classroom. There is just one classroom per grade level at Old Town that offers this approach to learning. An informal kindergarten screening in which the children are assessed in English and Spanish is conducted by the school for potential candidates. If the parents desire to have their child in the program, they commit to keeping the child in the bilingual classes throughout their elementary years, kindergarten through 5th grade.

Starting in kindergarten children participate in bilingual instruction of academic materials and social skills. In the initial kindergarten year, the language presentation is predominately Spanish with some English introduced gradually, but for only approximately 10 percent of the program. Each year the per-

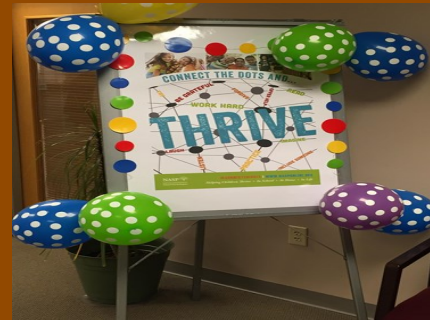
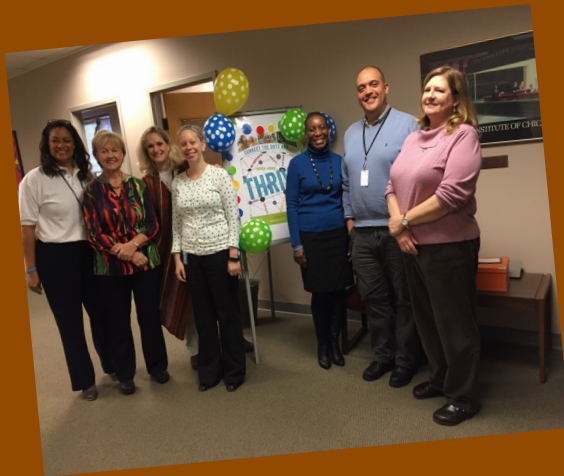
centage of English introduced increases until there is approximately an equal amount of Spanish and English utilized in the classroom setting. The goal is that by 5th grade, the students will be bilingual learners who are able to read and write in Spanish and English and are ready for middle school.

Bilingual learning has become more accepted in recent years as researchers have determined that a student needs to develop literacy in their native language. This, in turn, develops skills that students can transfer as they acquire English. Neuroscience researchers have learned that bilingual children often are more effective at multi-tasking. As they grow into adulthood, they are better at prioritizing information in complicated situations. Having the ability to utilize two language systems and vacillate between them helps to exercise the brain's executive functioning which may help with concentration, focusing, and problem solving.

It has been reported that the parents feel that one of the important aspects of the bilingual program is the maintenance of the Spanish-language culture. Learning in Spanish while acquiring English skills is a desirable educational approach for many Spanish-speaking families. It helps them to know that their culture and language is valued in a society and educational system where English is the primary language.

The offerings at Old Town are considered a Developmental Bilingual Program. It includes only native Spanish speakers. Similar programs are also at Easton, Diggs-Latham and Forest Park. A Dual Language Program including both native Spanish and native English speakers is offered at Ashley, Smith Farm, and Speas. A Transitional Bilingual Program for kindergarten through 2nd grade is available at Brunson. Plan to visit one of these sites and observe a different and exciting way to learn!

Celebrating SPAW 2015



Got Behavior?

Alison Sharp

As much as teaching curriculum is an important part of being an educator, knowing how to handle the behaviors that crop up in classrooms on a daily basis is equally important.

Many resources are readily available on-line to help with ideas for managing difficult situations, and for which premade materials and/or printable resources are provided as well. Two such valuable resources are interventioncentral.com and pbisworld.com.

Another excellent resource is available right here in our own district. The Exceptional Children's Department's Behavior Support Team (BST) has compiled a list of resources available to help with behavior, which can be accessed through their website: <http://wsfcs.k12.nc.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=97636>. This department also provides "Help Sessions" where special or general education teachers are welcome to come for consultation, resources and ideas. Check it out!

NCSPA CONFERENCE 2015



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Wellness Recovery Action Plan – WRAP

WRAP, a structured system developed by Mary Copeland, Ph.D., is a tool that is used by people dealing with all kinds of life and health changes. It is also widely used today in the mental health profession. WRAP helps you to identify the things you can do in your life that make you feel better and help you to stay well.

WRAP is built upon an organized format that is individualized and helps you create your own plan for wellness. Some of the steps include creating a wellness toolbox, identifying things you do on a daily basis to stay well, identifying triggers and warning signs, making of a lists of things to do, creating an action plan, and developing crisis and post-crisis plans.

In summary, WRAP is a popular and evidenced-based practice that guides people through the process of discovering personal resources, and using those resources to get well and stay healthy. This is a very helpful tool for improving personal health and developing a quality life over time. Mental health therapists can receive training for WRAP through local and state mental health agencies. Books, ideas and resources are available through: www.WRAPandRecoveryBooks.com.

HELP! All My Students Are “Red” In DIBELS!

By Liz Williams

Research states that the best approach to reading instruction is one that incorporates:

- Explicit instruction in phonemic awareness
- Systematic phonics instruction
- Methods to improve fluency
- Ways to enhance comprehension

How do we ensure that students are getting these important literacy skills? How do we measure this? And how does this relate to DIBELS?

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) were designed for use in identifying children who are experiencing difficulty in acquisition of basic early literacy skills in order to provide support early and prevent the occurrence of later reading difficulties.

What do I do with all of my students who are “red?” First, don’t freak out. DIBELS is a *screeners*, designed to be brief, efficient, and to identify students that are likely to need additional support. Now you know which of your students need extra support. So what do I do next? DIBELS measures are not diagnostic. They are indicators of larger skill areas. It is important to teach those skill areas broadly and not teach to the test. The DIBELS materials have been designed for assessment, not for instruction, and should not be practiced. A good, research-based core reading curriculum should include activities to teach the essential skill areas, and you can supplement those activities with other reading programs as needed. Just as a pediatrician measures a child’s temperature as a quick and efficient indicator of a child’s overall health, each DIBELS measure is a quick and efficient indicator of how well a child is doing in learning a particular early reading skill. If you gave a child Tylenol before taking his temperature, his temperature might not be a good indicator.

Consider, for example, Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF). A child’s ability to read nonsense words is an indicator that he or she has mastered the underlying skills that this particular assessment requires. Most importantly, being able to read nonsense words in isolation isn’t going to help a child become a more effective reader. This is why it’s important not to teach nonsense words. NWF is a measure that assesses alphabetic principle skills, an important component of becoming a proficient reader.

Alphabetic Principle is:

1. The ability to associate sounds with letters and use these sounds to form words. It is composed of two parts:
 - Alphabetic Understanding: Letters represent sounds in words.
 - Phonological Recoding (blending): Letter sounds can be blended together and knowledge of the systematic relationships between letters and phonemes (letter-sound correspondence can be used to read/decode words).
2. A prerequisite to word identification.

Since DIBELS measure broad skill areas, you may need to get more information about which skills your students have mastered and on which ones more explicit instruction is needed. For example, if a student does poorly on NWF, all we know is that they are struggling with some aspect of the Alphabetic Principle. We don’t know if they know their consonant and vowel sounds, how to blend, etc. A more diagnostic measure such as the CORE Phonics Survey could be useful in identifying specific areas in which the student is struggling.

In summary, DIBELS should be used as an identification tool and not an instructional tool. When used correctly, it’s just information for the teacher to use in identifying students who need additional support. It should not be used to develop targeted interventions.

For more information:

<https://dibels.org/bros/DIBELSBrochure.pdf>

<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/research/supported/Pages/nrp.aspx>