

Chapter 8

New Teacher Spotlight: Establishing a Community of Writers

What does it take for teachers to nurture and support the classroom writing community and their emergent bilingual students? Here are some considerations for new teachers as they set up their writing communities.

- Consider community-building strategies that lead to the development of trust, safety, and respect. This is particularly important for emergent bilinguals and begins with a deep understanding that as teachers, establishing the tone for bilingualism and multilingualism is critical. Talk with your class and make sure that all your students understand that having more than one language represented in the classroom is a strength that you value deeply. Make sure that your emergent bilingual students have opportunities every day to use their entire linguistic repertoire.
- Writing and reading have power. Students grow into more confident writers and readers by writing and reading every day for authentic purposes.
- Children need to write daily and they thrive with a routine, predictable schedule. Ideally, writing is scheduled at the same time every day.
- Writing rituals provide a predictable routine that help children thrive; for example, the class begins by sitting in a circle. The children greet each other as authors and then share with a partner something about their lives (understanding that we write best when we write from what we know). A few partners share with the class. Encourage students to listen deeply to each other. Create an intentional space for emergent bilinguals to talk about their writing (perhaps partnering children by language). Recap what happened the previous day during writing time and provide a mini-lesson about an aspect of the writing process you know students can use. Then encourage the children to try it out. Make sure children know how to access their writing tools and that they understand the routines and rhythms of writing time.
- Emergent bilingual children need to feel their entire linguistic repertoire is welcomed as they write. Talking about how writers translanguage is critical (with you, with each other, and with other authors who translanguage like them).
- Bilingualism/multilingualism is seen as an asset and the children's identities as writers are affirmed as such—they feel safe expressing themselves using the full range of their linguistic abilities.
- Children have opportunities to draw on their funds of knowledge as writers.
- Children know the teacher as a writer, too, who values translanguageing in writing.