

Bilingualism: An asset for ALL students

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Questions to Consider

- Do we believe that all languages are equally valuable in supporting students' academic success?
- How can we build on the opportunities that linguistic and cultural diversity provide?

Underlying Assumptions

- The [mother tongue], developed in the context of social interaction, is fundamental to the thinking, learning, and identity of every individual.
- Students' first and second languages interact with one another. The instructional opportunities students receive in each language will play a critical role in determining their levels of bilingualism and academic achievement in any language

Underlying Assumptions

- Bilingualism is a cognitive, social, and economic asset for all people, and schools can play a significant role in helping students from [Finnish and non-Finnish] backgrounds develop full academic bilingualism.
- Individuals will need to function in a multicultural society. Students' knowledge of their own culture, as well as the culture of others, is important not only to their school performance but to their overall success.

From: Miramontes, Nadeau & Commins (2011) *Restructuring Schools for Linguistic Diversity: Linking Decision Making to Effective Programs*. Teachers College Press

Competing Realities

All languages are equally capable of helping students make sense of the world and fostering deep conceptual development.

Unfortunately, the **status** of particular languages and cultures in the larger society can affect how teachers respond to students from different backgrounds.

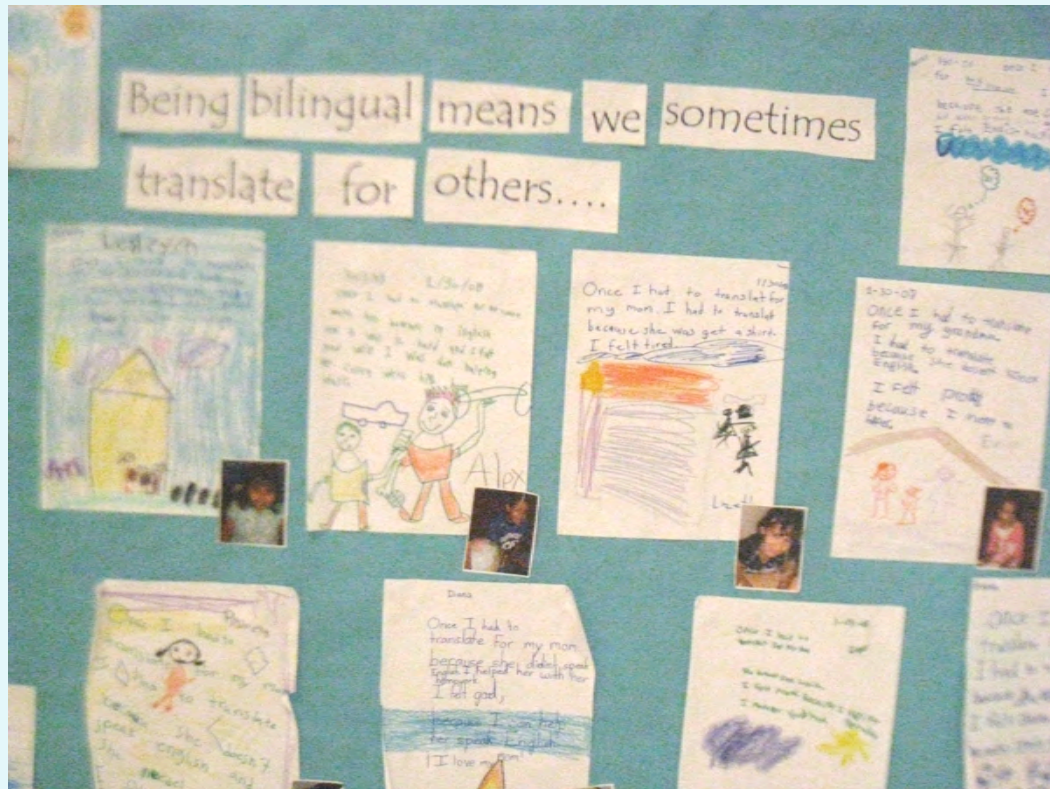
It is important to ask if learning a second language in school will add on to or replace the first language.

Relationship Between a Person's Mother Tongue and Additional Languages

- Additive vs. Subtractive Bilingualism
- Common Underlying Proficiency:
Conceptual Reservoir

Becoming Bilingual

As a person acquires a second language they will either maintain or lose their abilities in their mother tongue.



Subtractive Bilingualism

... occurs when the second language replaces the mother tongue as the only language available to the individual for communication.

The person, in essence, becomes monolingual in their second language.

This is a great loss.

Additive Bilingualism

.... occurs when the second language is added on to the mother tongue, thus expanding a person's linguistic abilities.

This is what educators should be seeking for all students

Additive bilinguals experience social, cognitive, and economic advantages.

Loss of Communication Between Generations

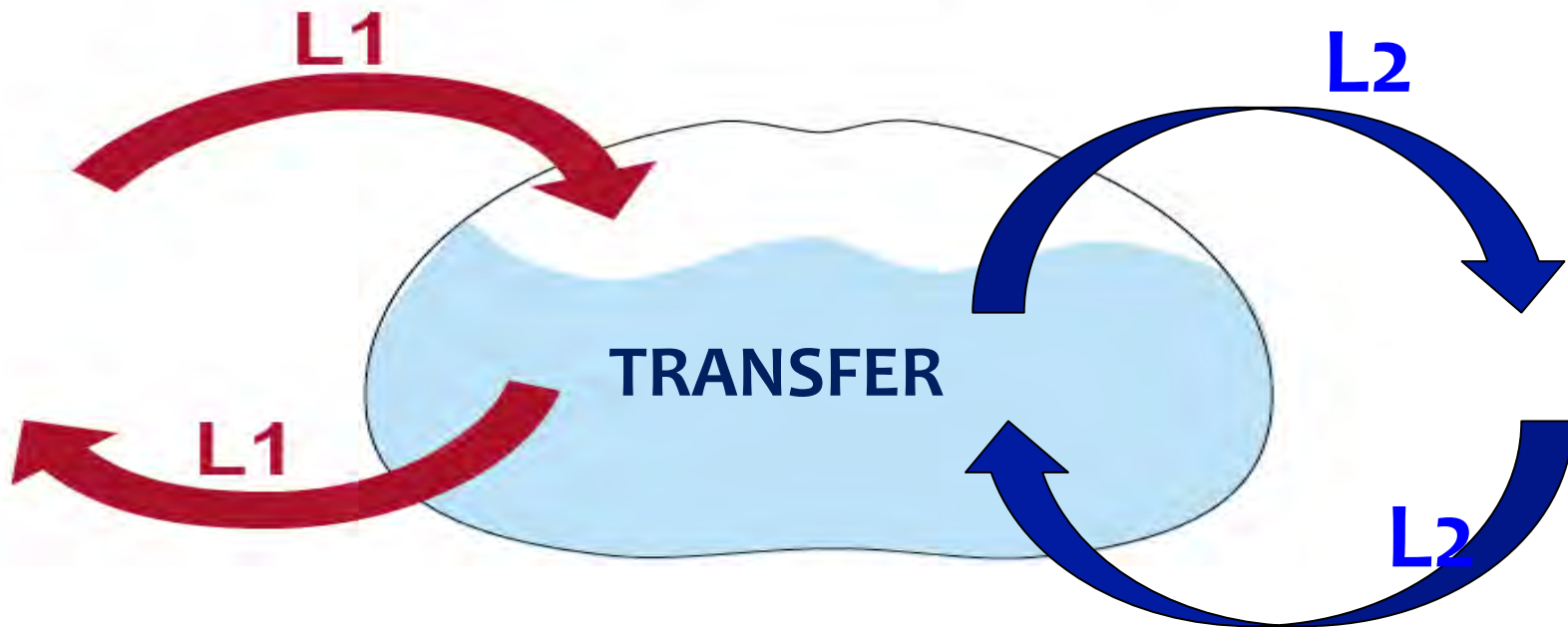
Without strong messages from schools and the larger community, immigrant children often

- abandon their first language
 - reject their home culture
 - lose the ability to communicate with their families.

This can weaken the family structure - which has long term consequences.

Bilingual Development Visualized

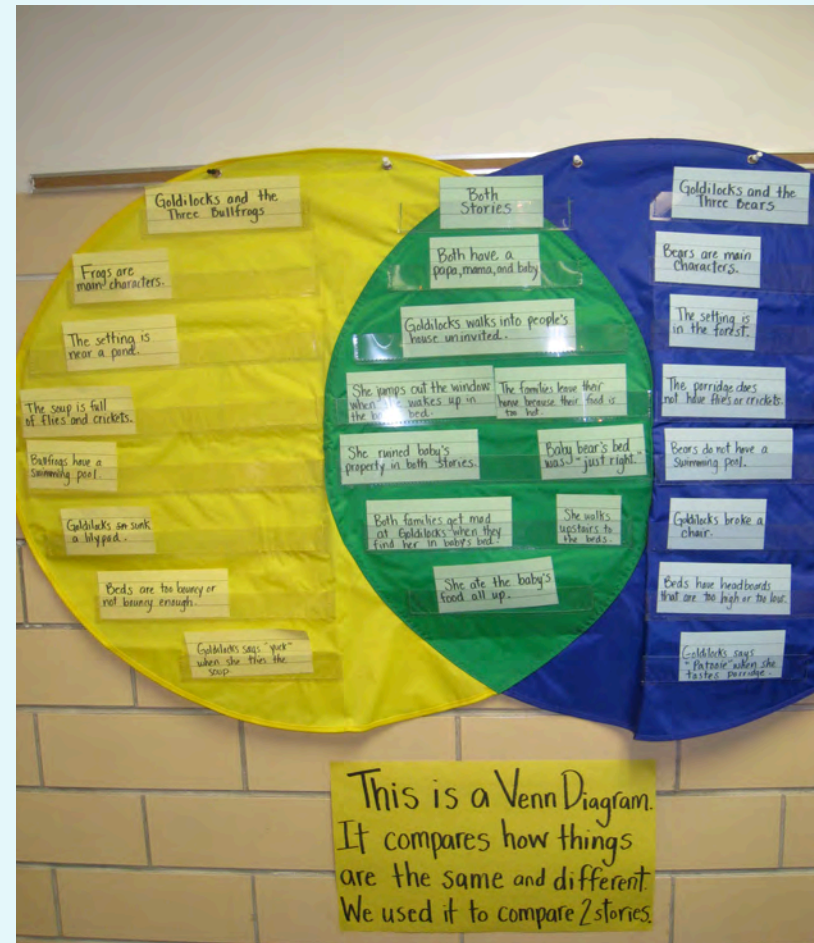
Conceptual Reservoir



The Job of Both Parents & Educators

Fill the reservoir as deeply as possible.

Assure that students are gaining concepts and knowledge and practicing higher order thinking skills – no matter the context or the language used to do so.



A Critical Implication for Instruction:

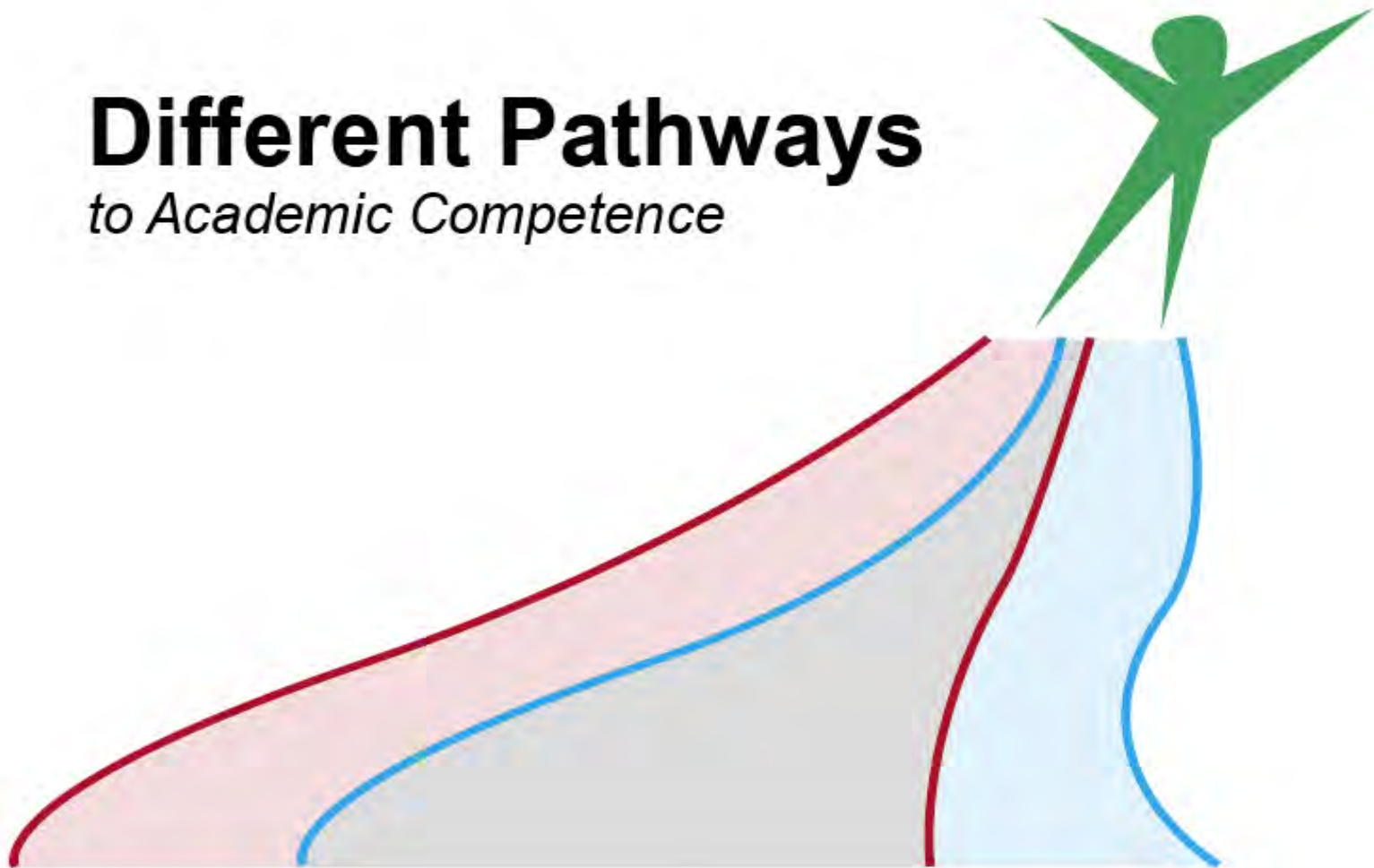
Students benefit when teachers work together to organize instruction to help them take what they know in one language and express it through the other.

This is enhanced by communication with parents and families



All students are headed to same place

Different Pathways *to Academic Competence*



Schools Can Take Steps to Foster Bilingualism



Assure that all students see themselves reflected in their surroundings and foster an acceptance of multiple cultural backgrounds.

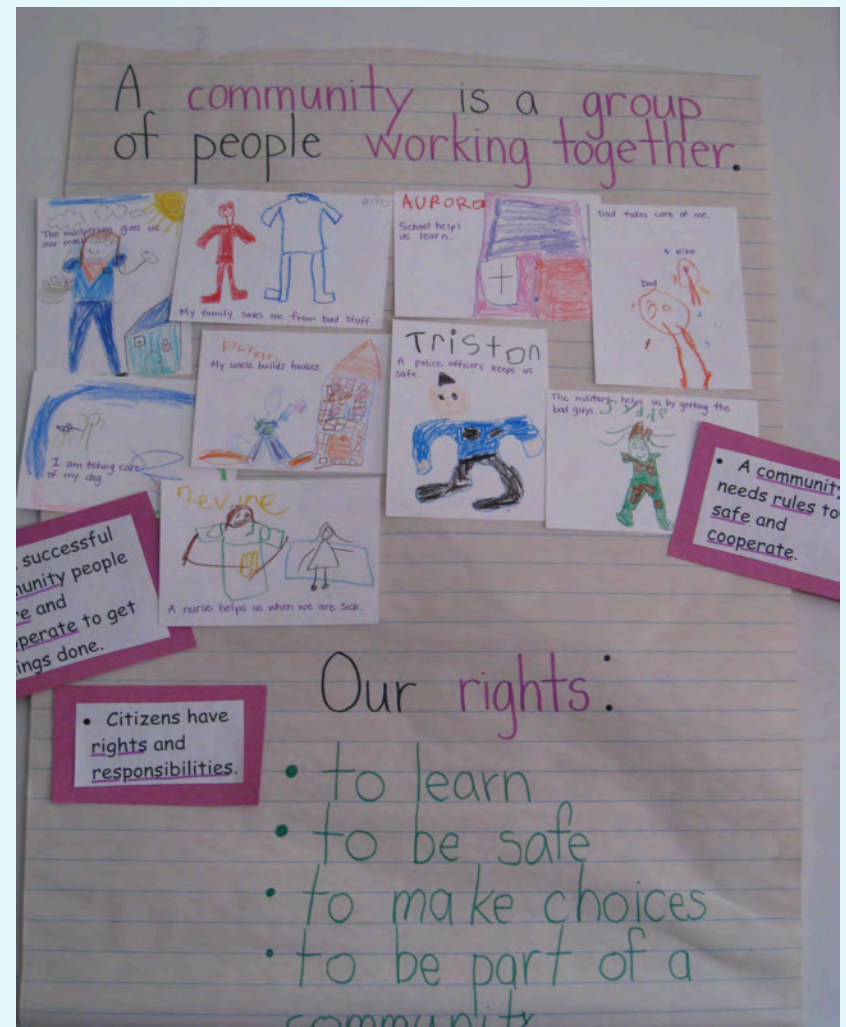
Send a unified message from the school encouraging immigrant parents and family members to interact and communicate with their children in their strongest language (usually not Finnish).

View the Presence of Immigrant Students as a GIFT



Key Understanding for Internationalisation

Having immigrant students in schools provides authentic opportunities for all students to gain needed skills for succeeding in a global economy. It is critical that bilingualism be seen as advantageous for ALL students, not just native Finnish speakers.



For the sake of the children,
it matters what we do!



KIITOS **Danke** Thank you شكراً

Merci **Gracias** շնորհակալեմ