

SPANISH TO ENGLISH ASSOCIATE TEACHER CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

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Background/Motivation. Southwestern College sits near the boarder of Mexico just south of San Diego and serves approximately 21,000 students annually. In the late 1990s, the college’s Child Development Department recognized a need for a new approach to serving the many Spanish-speaking students seeking child development training required for work in preschools and daycares throughout their area. Child Development tapped their ESL counterparts to develop a strategy that would assist students in gaining the English language and literacy skills necessary for success in child development courses and beyond.

Program structure/organization. After several attempts, the departments settled on a learning community model now called the Spanish to English Associate Teacher Certificate. The program targets beginning or intermediate English language speakers and prepares participants to acquire an Associate Teacher Permit through the San Diego County Office of Education. Assessment is strongly encouraged but can not be required legally. Students enroll in a four-semester series of linked Child Development and ESL course work totaling 17 units, 12 of which from Child Development are fully transferable and transcribed. All courses are mandatory for certificate completion. Program participants range in age, work or seek employment in child care or preschool settings and are almost entirely women who have had little or no experience with higher education.

The program sequence is as follows:

| Semester | Child Development | ESL |
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| 1 | Principals of Child Development (CD) (3 units) | ESL For CD: Principals of CD (2) |
| 2 | Observation & Guidance for CD (3) | ESL for CD: Observation & Guidance (1) |
| 3 | Curriculum Planning for CD (3) | ESL for CD: Curriculum Planning (1) |
| 4 | Child, Family & Community (3) | ESL for CD: Child, Family & Community (1) |

Faculty roles and collaboration. Sandra Corona (Child Development) and Angelina “Angie” Stuart (ESL) helped initiate the program and continue teaching the certificate. The first time offering the series, Stuart

Model Type: learning community

Description: multi-semester program linking child development and ESL coursework that transitions students from full Spanish to English instruction

Target population: Spanish-speaking students seeking entry and/or advancement in an early childhood care setting

Requirements: ESL assessment (recommended), completion of program application, development of a Student Education Plan

Type of Assessment: college placement test

Length: four semesters

Credit/Noncredit: credit

Program status: in progress since 2003

took Corona's Child Development courses with the cohort because she did not have a child development background. Stuart recalls, "After Sandra's class, I would stand up and improvise the following ESL session; and then I would go home and write down the lesson and make the necessary support materials." She has now developed handbooks for all ESL courses involved.

While Child Development serves as the departmental "home" for the program, faculty from both departments note that the program is a "tandem job" and that they work together on all aspects of program implementation. At program conception, the interdepartmental team of Child Development and ESL faculty met intensively to develop a linked curriculum. The program has evolved to the point where the five to seven faculty involved can meet less frequently. Instructors continue to talk one to two times per week either in person or via email to share information on student progress and ensure curriculum alignment.

Key components of instruction. All ESL instruction uses the Child Development context to teach students introductory to intermediate English language skills. Through trial and error, Corona and Stuart settled on an approach to contextualizing the ESL curriculum that they find maximizes English language acquisition for their students. As they describe the process, Corona introduces a concept in the Child Development course and works with the students on that concept for a few class sessions. Stuart follows this introduction with the functions and structures of English that support their ability to discuss the topic in correct English as well as facilitate the acquisition and the application of that Child Development concept.

For example, Corona will introduce students to Sand and Water Play in the *Curriculum Planning* course. They do a series of activities with Corona to learn how sand and water play promotes development and learning, understand the equipment and material needed for activity implementation and the role of the teacher in guiding the students through this experience. Stuart then works with program participants to learn how, as a child care provider, they would describe this kind of play to students, how students might respond, how they would write a report about a student's sand and water play and how they would talk to a parent about the activity.

Stuart makes a point that, as an ESL instructor, she is not teaching Child Development, per se; her role, as she sees it, is to help her students focus on the strategies, vocabulary and acquisition of English. By the time they reach the related lesson in the ESL course, students have read about, discussed, practiced and applied the Child Development concept in the Child Development class. She explains that they then come to the ESL class to "put it into correct English." According to Stuart, students are the source of the child development knowledge; the ESL course serves to increase their English proficiency and literacy.

Likewise, Corona says Child Development coursework reinforces the English language and literacy development. While first semester coursework is delivered almost entirely in Spanish, Corona practices vocabulary in English with students from the start. With each semester, activities are gradually introduced and assignments increasingly completed in English. By the fourth semester, Child Development is conducted entirely in English. Both instructors remark that constant communication between Child Development and ESL faculty allows for customization of classroom lessons and activities to address specific grammar, pronunciation, comprehension or composition issues presented by each cohort.

Corona and Stuart describe their instruction as “student-centered” and “interactive” with students “engaging in lot of team work” throughout their courses. They say students are “empowered” to learn by themselves in groups, to do presentations, conduct research, share their learning with their peers and develop a portfolio of work for each course. To support their home-grown integrated curriculum, they utilize On Course strategies and resources designed to promote students’ active engagement in coursework as well as to help foster characteristics that ensure that the students are successful in both academic and personal goals.

Impact on/outcomes for students. When asked how they know the context of Child Development works to facilitate students learning, they refer to an increase in students’ reading, writing and oral comprehension, to students’ preparedness for additional college-level coursework and to their ease in securing employment and/or in continuing their education. Stuart notes that the context of child development is “deeply personal and motivating to them as women” and that the “theories and practices become part of them.” Corona states that participants need to learn English for their jobs and that the program is “not the same as when they take regular ESL classes. When they see what they are learning and can apply what they are learning [in work] the very next day...it’s very functional and workable for them. That becomes the key for them.”

Southwestern does not have an institutional research function, which makes tracking student outcomes quite challenging. According to data Corona collects, since 2005 when the first cohort graduated, 215 students have completed the certificate and four cohorts totaling 100 students are currently in progress. Instructors state they maintain close ties to their students and the community to gather anecdotal evidence of student outcomes; however, the program has no formal data collection system.

Challenges and supports. Corona and Stuart are clearly energized by their practice and experiencing what they describe as a transformation in their students’ knowledge, skills and abilities, self-esteem and motivation. They have never received additional funding or release time from the college for this work. When asked about conditions that support their practice, they note the importance of deep collaboration between Child Development and ESL faculty, leadership from their deans and assistance from the Instruction Office around scheduling their coursework together. They acknowledge the importance of the Curriculum Committee allowing Child Development to deliver coursework in Spanish and early concerns about “watering down the curriculum.” They also talk at length about the close partnerships the program maintains with several functions of the college that provide additional student support services.

Corona and Stuart are working to document the program to ensure long-term sustainability. They are training other Child Development and ESL faculty who are now also implementing the program. Stuart is currently creating answer keys for the assignments in the handbooks she’s written for all four ESL courses. They believe the model is replicable to other colleges and both are enthusiastic about other faculty trying what they have done. Corona says they are “not experts,” that they “learn something every day about the program” and that “they don’t see it as an end [but as a] beautiful and spiritually fulfilling journey.”