



Culturally Responsive Teaching Multilingual Learners

BCTELA Workshop, October 2025

Gather Around: Story as Resistance, Story as Hope

Presented by Leah Kitamura, Fiona Wong,
With Anna Kim, SWIS Worker

SD42

Introductions and Acknowledgements

- We humbly acknowledge that we are sharing this presentation on the unceded ancestral territories of the Kwantlen First Nations and Katzie First Nations.
- We are very grateful to learn, live and share educational experiences on these traditional territories.



Introduction and Acknowledgements

About Leah - I am a settler; my family has been in Canada for four generations. I have Japanese heritage. My great grandfather came to North America from Japan in 1893. He worked in the forest industry in Oregon in the winter and he fished in Steveston, BC, in the summer. As an immigrant, life was challenging. However, among the stories in our family are stories of kindness and generosity. We just published our family history.



About Fiona - I am a settler; my family has been here for two generations. I have Chinese heritage. I grew up in Vancouver and Burnaby. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family and going to different restaurants around the Lower Mainland. I enjoy baking, cooking and playing with my furbabies..

About Anna - I am originally from South Korea. I first visited Canada in 2011 and fell in love with Vancouver. In 2016, I decided to immigrate to Canada. During my settlement journey, I received a lot of support from teachers and settlement workers, which encouraged me to be with SUCCESS for the past 9 years helping newcomers adjust into their new community.



We would like to highlight some of the First People's Principles of Learning that we are focusing on in this workshop:

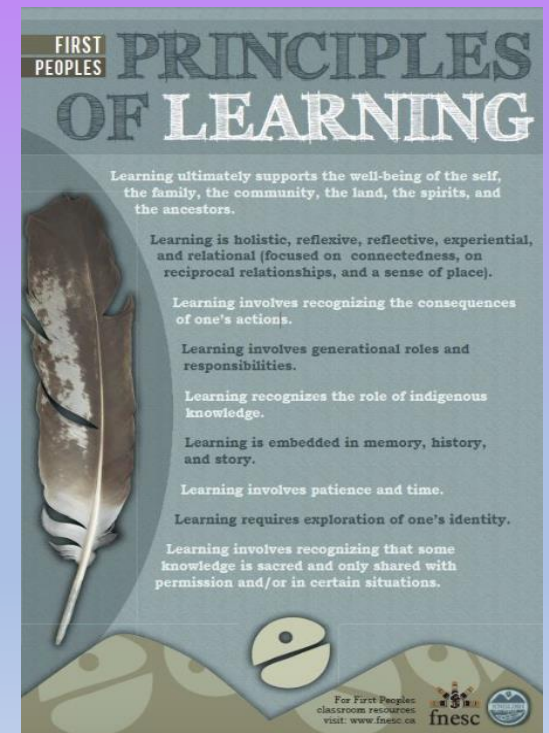
Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Learning involves patience and time.

Learning requires exploration of one's identity.



Shape of the Workshop

Part 1: Story Time

Part 2: Name Sharing

Part 3: A Lesson in Korean

Part 4: Sharing from Multilingual Learners

Part 5: Culturally Responsive Teaching Discussion and Resources

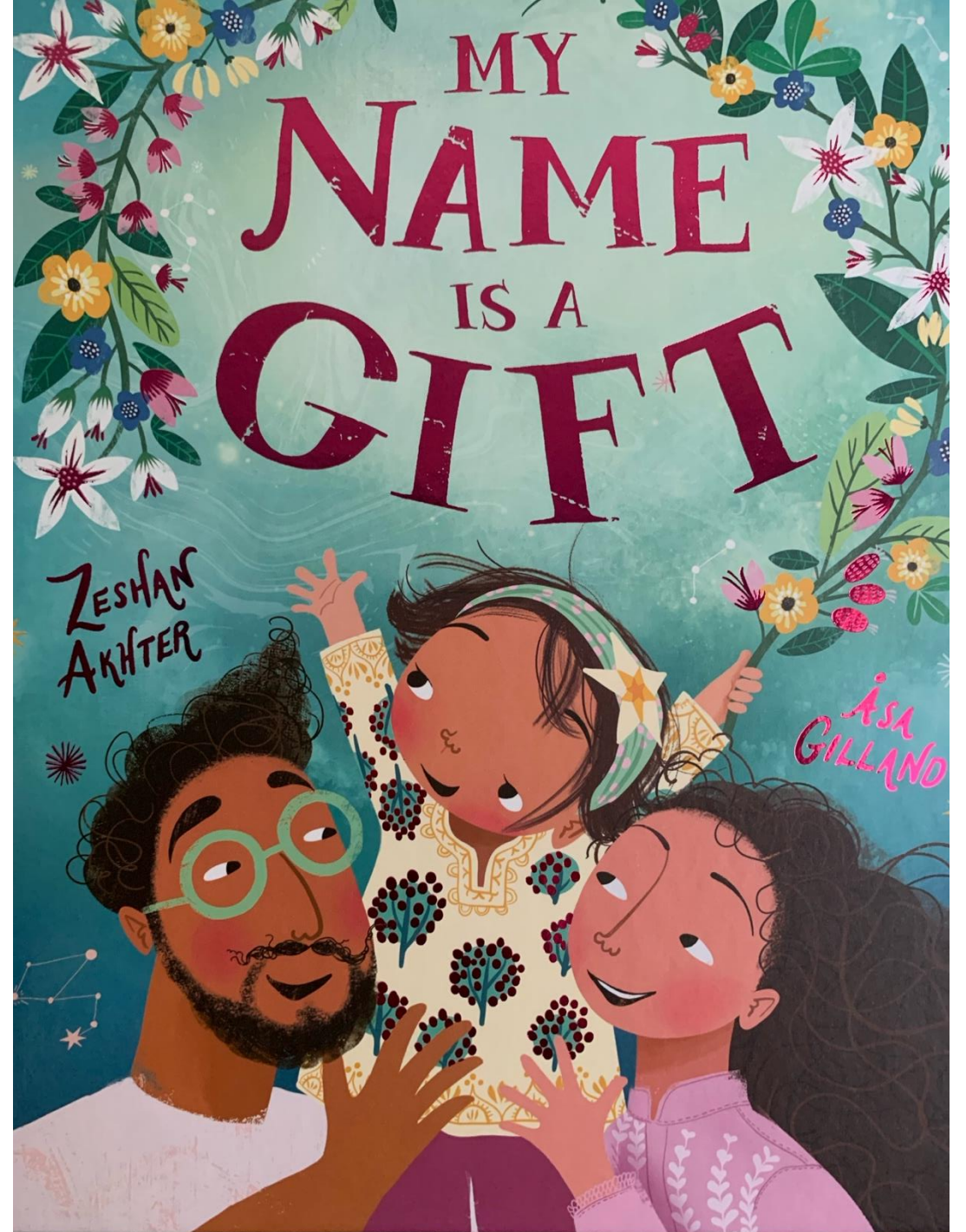
Part 6: A performance by Emma and Lucy

Five Guiding Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching:

- 1. Assets based
- 2. Supports and challenges students
- 3. Places students in the centre of learning
- 4. Leverages students linguistic and cultural background
- 5. Unites students' schools, families and communities

My Name is a Gift

By Zeshan Akhter and
Asa Gilland



Reflection



After listening to the reading, we invite you to fill out a copy of the last page of the book.

- In a moment, we will ask you to introduce yourself and share something about your name.

Name Activity

We invite you to introduce yourself and share something about your name.



KWL

Effective strategies in teaching ELL

Topic: _____ Name: _____		
K What I Know	W What I Wonder	L What I Learned

A Lesson in Korean

Take 1:



Please place a piece of paper in front of you. You will need a pen or pencil. Please follow Anna's instructions.

If you have any wonders or questions please jot them down.

책의 내용을 예상해보세요 ◦

1. 컵 ◦

2. 담요 ◦

3. 등 ◦

4. 꽃 ◦

Reflections? Thoughts?



A Lesson in Korean

Take 2:



Please place a piece of paper in front of you. You will need a pen or pencil. Please follow Anna's instructions.

Please also notice your thoughts, feelings and reflect as you go. If you have any observations of effective strategies, please jot them down.



내용을 추측해보세요



컵



담요



등



꽃



아래 단어들을 이용해서 문장을 만들어보아요

- 컵
- 담요
- 등
- 꽃



How did you do?
Reflections? Thoughts?



Let's listen to our student panel of experts on what strategies help them learn and feel supported in school.

Create a Safe Space

(Be culturally responsive and build relationships)



A classroom environment in which students thrive, is one in which students feel appreciated, safe and comfortable taking risks.

Students are most engaged when they feel a personal connection to the lesson.

Be aware that ELLs may have experienced significant disruption in their education or never have attended school before or they may be coping with culture shock / migration-based trauma.

What does it look like?

- *allow students embrace their culture and language
- *little things make a big difference (classroom decor with different cultural representations, signs or labels with visuals)
- *create a supportive environment (sitting next to a buddy, another student with the same home language, acknowledging special holidays observed by students in your class)

Ask yourself:

- *Does my curriculum and classroom environment reflect the lives of the students?
- *Does my class library reflect my students' diverse backgrounds and identities?

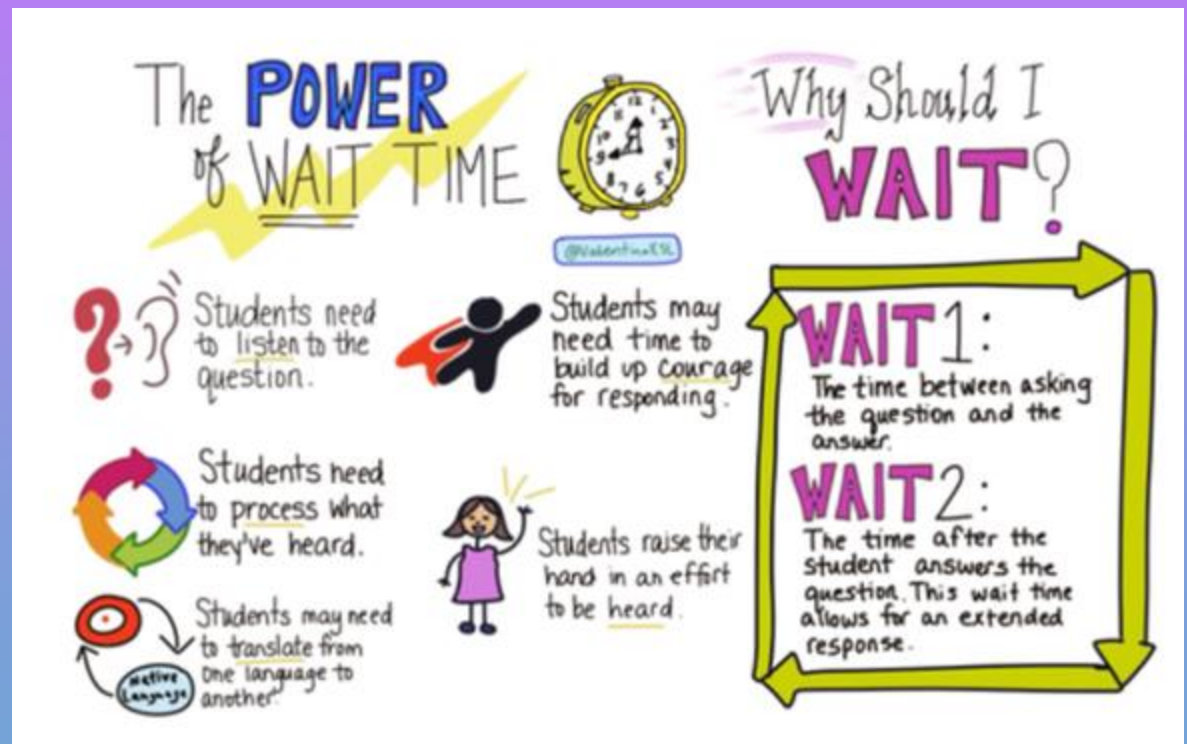
Resource: Adding English (Elizabeth Coelho)

Speak slowly and provide wait time

This offers all students time to think and it gives ELLs those extra seconds to translate and process their thinking and translate back to English.

What does it look like?

- *After posing a question pause and wait 3-5 seconds.
- *Slow down video lessons (YouTube).



Source: <https://www.valentinaesl.com/blog/wait-im-not-ready> (Valentina Gonzalez)

Teach language skills across the curriculum



ELLs should be given opportunities to apply their developing language skills across various content areas.

Students learn language faster when it is in context and when it is meaningful (not in isolation).

What does it look like?

*math– teach math vocabulary and math skills at the same time (add, subtract, difference, solve)

*science– teach content as well as science vocabulary (experiment, dissolve, rotate, observe)

*teach tier 3 (content) vocabulary as well as tier 2 (academic) vocabulary

Resource: Big Ideas For Expanding Minds (Jim Cummins)

Tiered Vocabulary

TIER 1 WORDS: Basic words that are commonly used in spoken language.

EXAMPLES: run, see, book, school

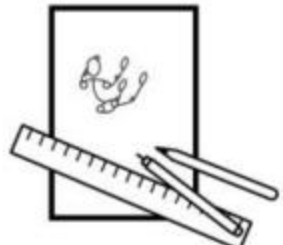
TIER 2 WORDS: High-frequency words used by language users across content areas. Because they are not used in spoken language as frequently, Tier 2 words can present challenges to some students when they are used in text.

EXAMPLES: cite, formulate, evaluate

TIER 3 WORDS: Words that aren't used frequently, except in specific content areas. These words are necessary for understanding the content presented in academic areas.

EXAMPLES: respiration, pi, amendment, protagonist



 match	 select
 identify	 compare
 label	 illustrate

Practice, Practice, Practice!

(Provide opportunities for ELLs to practice productive language throughout the day)



Beginner ELLs often develop receptive language skills (listening and reading) first. Productive language skills comes later (oral or written language).

A student who can follow verbal or written directions is not always able to produce oral or written language.

What does it look like?

*Use sentence stems or sentence frames (scaffold sentence structure and academic vocabulary to support student's ability to respond to a question or prompt).

-*Literacy lesson: "In the story, ____ and this reminds me of ____."*

-*In a science lesson: "If ____ amount of water was added, then the soil will ____ because ____"*

*Pre-teach vocabulary and have it on the wall for students to refer back to and use. (help students to access background knowledge and can help make new learning concepts more accessible)

*Intentionally plan lessons with opportunities to practice productive language.

*Provide unstructured time with peers

Resource: Big Ideas For Expanding Minds (Jim Cummins)

When ELs...

don't understand the text,

are unengaged,

use social language in writing,

struggle to complete a task,

find it challenging to understand concepts,

encounter an unfamiliar word



Teachers can...

allow ELs to work collaboratively to construct meaning.

have ELs create with the content knowledge; not just memorize it.

provide language mini-lessons.

differentiate the product (video, essay, infographic)

chunk information by teaching one idea at a time.

invite ELs to look up or translate only words & phrases – never complete sentences.

DEBRIEF



Topic: _____ Name: _____		
K What I Know	W What I Wonder	L What I Learned

Working with ELs in *Content Classes*

<i>Content Teachers</i>	English Language Teachers
Whole class • Introduce a new topic, context, or problem • Model instructions, skills, or processes • Frequency: most effective for short periods of time • Design authentic assessments that encourage students to create and apply content knowledge	 • Teach all students strategies to access texts or write with academic language • Lead reflection of literacy strategies • Differentiate assessments based on content, process, or product • Facilitate student-to-student talk before writing
Small group • Reinforce content topics • Further connections between ideas • Demonstrate a content-related skill • Frequency: occurs often to access content • Teach a mini-lesson to a group of students experiencing common challenges	 • Assign groupings strategically • Guide writing about the content • Teach content-specific vocabulary • Provide guided reading instruction • Offer content-related sentence frames and starters EmpoweringELLs.com
Peer-to-Peer • Allow students to collaboratively construct understanding of content knowledge • Apply content-specific skills to create a product • Frequency: occurs frequently to spur the most engagement with content	 • Assign students to a specific peer • Allow ELs to collaboratively read texts, process a video, or group write • Invite ELs to use home languages to construct understanding of content • Encourage ELs to use language to create rather than only memorize facts

You are
invited to
explore ...
Leah's and
Yin's Virtual
Rooms

Cultural Rooms:

Asian Heritage Month: <https://bit.ly/3vdIvib>

Black History Month: <https://bit.ly/3fHDeLt>

National Indigenous History Month: <https://bit.ly/3wPACRq>

Unity in Diversity Virtual room: <https://bit.ly/3y8kpYt>

Special Holidays:

Lunar New Year: <https://bit.ly/3FXV7l5>

Diwali: <https://bit.ly/3YociHi>

Ramadan: <https://bit.ly/373DWA0>

Vaisakhi: <https://bit.ly/3uPmtw9>

QUESTIONS? A LOOK AT OUR KWL
CHART? ANY FURTHER WONDER?

Any Questions?



Thank you for attending our session!



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