BEARS
Bilingual and ESL Action Research Study
PS 306
Bronx, NY 10468
2012-2013
Who are we?

We are a group of teachers from PS 306 in Bronx, NY; known as BEARS (Bilingual and ESL Action Research Study). We are a learning community committed to learning together how to look at new learning standards that are geared to preparing students for college and careers. Our learning community grows each year in new members who bring their repertoire of new experiences and expertise. Our goal is to develop effective and efficient ways to instruct vocabulary development for reading and writing that will help all learners, especially our ELL population (English Language Learners) and Exceptional Learners, through different settings to navigate through the new Common Core.

What are we doing?

We meet and discuss different aspects of teaching ELL’s, Exceptional Learners and Struggling learners. Through our discussions we seek to find solutions that we can incorporate into our lessons and units for student success in language development for reading instruction, writing instruction and its integration through the content areas. We are trying through our learning community to develop practices that will work with our population of learners and that we will be able to use with future learners.
**Why are we doing it?**

We have met and discussed that our school has been struggling with reading and writing development as measured by our academic gains in the ELA, Math and NYSESLAT Exams. We have seen small gains with the most problematic areas being acquiring and using new vocabulary by all learners.

We think this will be especially challenging now with the CCLS and the language standard that progressively increases in use and expectation throughout the grades. I myself always believed that language objectives were not only important to our ELL’s but to all learners (Yvelisse), a belief that the group shares - best practices are good for all.

**I. TEAM MEMBERS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher /Grade</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Licensing Area</th>
<th>Setting</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hilduara Abreu</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bilingual Common Branches</td>
<td>ESL 5th grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline Bramble</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Birth to 2 Early Childhood Annotation</td>
<td>1st / 2nd Grade Special Education Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha Canales Bilingual and ESL Left team December 2012</td>
<td>14+</td>
<td>General Education PreK-6 and Bilingual Extension</td>
<td>ESL push in teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcia McBeth</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Special Education Early Childhood K-12</td>
<td>Kindergarten Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane Pearson</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Early Childhood Family Day Care Provider</td>
<td>Substitute Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvelisse Perez</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>General Education Prek-6 Bilingual Pre K-6 ESL K-12</td>
<td>2nd and 3rd Bilingual self-contained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### II. Team: B.E.A.R.S. - Bilingual ESL Action Research Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Rationale:</th>
<th>Responsibility:</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Evaluation:</th>
<th>Resources:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yvelisse</td>
<td>I plan to develop two different units. Each unit is on responding to literacy in fiction and nonfiction. The task will be language embedded for ELL’s, rich in vocabulary, with use of visual cues and acronyms.</td>
<td>I will arrange meetings, gather resources, discuss creating templates, and discussing how to implement performance tasks that support common core learning standards. I will also keep the team on task, focused and on our time schedule. Also create our report template and gather resources.</td>
<td>September 2012 to May 2013, then we will meet on June 2013 to discuss our results and findings.</td>
<td>I will use data gathered from various sources and look for trends and growth. I will also look into the results of our AMNO 1, 2, 3 and 4.</td>
<td>NYC Bundles, Cognates list from a to z, Cinderella books, spider books, sharks books and David Shannon books. Rubrics and criteria’s created based on task by teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>I started with three types of nonfiction books, and students responded to the literacy and created three questions for each book and described what they learned from the books, they also draw pictures.</td>
<td>I will use the common core standards and the new performance standards for the students. I will try to stay on task to learn, implement, and utilize my resources to better understand the common core standards.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I will track student’s process and plan intervention for students who is in need, explicit instruction, assessment and feedback, also use the common core for proficiency.</td>
<td>Comprehension Toolkit K-3 and 3-5Rubrics and criteria’s created based on task by teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcia</td>
<td>I plan to develop two different units. Each unit is on responding to literacy using text to self-connection and Q-Question chart. Each student will read a fiction or nonfiction story. The context of story will be used to make connections and develop questions.</td>
<td>The project is designed to introduce students to go deeper into a text and to create questions as they read. I will arrange meetings with the students and team members. I will discuss the purpose of the project, two different tasks and how the common core learning standards are the key direction.</td>
<td>The project begins September 2013 until June 2014. Team members will meet with the students ten sessions to complete their work.</td>
<td>I will use data gathered from the students work and note any need for intervention by a rubric, standards and Feedback about their work. Performance is based on the grade and ability level.</td>
<td>Comprehension Toolkit K-3 and 3-5Rubrics and criteria’s created based on task by teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jaqueline</strong></td>
<td>I plan to discuss my findings on assessments based on Common core.</td>
<td>I want to learn more about Common core standards and assessments based on Common core.</td>
<td>I will participate in grading for CCLS Based Test in Elementary and Upper Elementary Math and ELA.</td>
<td>April 2013 to May 2013. Share findings with group.</td>
<td>I will share findings with group and compare with the prior year’s approach to high stakes testing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hilduara</strong></td>
<td>I want to learn to motivate more my students who are reluctant or struggling learners.</td>
<td>I will participate in this PLC and go to Professional Development on Common core. I will also do turnkey for other teachers on Common core.</td>
<td>September 2012 to June 2013.</td>
<td>I will share my learning with my group.</td>
<td>Common core workshops, engageny.gov., Student writing pieces, rubrics and criteria’s from common core for narrative and informative writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Resources:</strong></td>
<td>Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement by Richard Dufour/Robert Eaker and Pathways to the Common Core - Accelerating Achievement by Lucy Calkins/Mary Ehrenworth</td>
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III. Project SMART Participate Years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Members: B.E.A.R.S.- Bilingual ESL Action Research Study</th>
<th># of members in the Beginning of SMART Project</th>
<th># of members in the end of SMART Project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 yr. -2009-2010</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 yr. - 2010-2011</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3yr-2011-2012</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4yr -2012-2013</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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IV. Location and Focus:

P. S. 306 is located in the Tremont area in the Bronx, NY. Our focus this year is on the new Common Core Learning Standards and how they will affect teaching and learning by using teacher observation and reflection, student data on Common Core Learning Standards from ELA and Math Exams in 3rd and 5th grade and how to improve instruction and learning. During the second half of our study we had to relocate our learning community due to a lack of administrative support.

We will be looking at the standards and how they affect students who will begin with the new standards, special populations such as ELL’s and Special Education and look at Common Core Based Assessments. We will create study topics and units, and pilot them in our classrooms and in afterschool program settings.

How does teacher data from our learning community influence our school data?

Last year we learned from participating in our learning community and we began to focus on differentiation more. We began to see more dimensions within what is to differentiate. Another thing we learned was about how multi faceted and multi dimensional learning and teaching is based on the variables and how they influence learning; such as cultural influences, language and learning styles influenced student learning and proficiency. Another thing we learned was how important it is to understand student data (formal and informal) to guide instruction.
As students are adjusting to the demands and rigor of common core, teachers are also adjusting and learning how to create tasks that are more rigorous and aligned to learning standards. Teachers are learning the importance of having pre and post task performance indicators to guide instruction.

Now all classroom and after school tasks must be norm based and rubric based. Students need to know what is expected by using criterion-based exemplars which they can use to guide them on accomplishing the task at hand. According to the Common Core we should not believe that our students are a table raza or a sponge, they are individuals with unique experiences that need to be used in classroom based learning situations that will prepare them for careers and college.

**What impact has learning in this community had on our classrooms?**

Collectively we have come to the conclusion that we have began to look more closely at how we create tasks for students to address the outcomes of student work. We now look closely on how we construct tasks, as to how open ended are they, how much critical thinking is involved, how will student performance be assessed and how students did in task completion, understanding of task, and level of proficiency on task completion based on using evaluation tools such as rubrics and criteria’s.

**What do we consider will be our next steps?**

Next year, we would like to work on developing lessons and units that we will be able to use in our classrooms. We would like to have the opportunity to continue to grow professionally and continue to work collaboratively to develop a better
understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the New Teacher Effectiveness evaluation system, the Common Core Learning Standards, and how to address academic rigor and language development as required by the new learning standards. We would like to explore other teacher tools for collaboration and professional development such as teacher blogs and communities.

We have grown as learners, learned how to collaborate, and use assessments to develop lessons. Though we are familiar with backward design and UbD we would like to use it in conjunction with the new learning standards. We would like to learn to create language based core curriculum units using UbD and universal design. Another instructional approach we would like to become more familiar with is Singapore math.

We are interested in using technology to share ideas and track our own learning; use the technology to teach common core lessons with our students.
Teacher Reflections:

Hilduara Abreu

Over the last couple of years, educators and leaders across America have embraced an enormous set of urgent challenges: raising standards and upgrading curricula to better prepare students to compete in the global economy, developing new assessments, rebuilding accountability systems to meet the unique needs of our at-risk students, and adapting a new system of support and evaluation for teachers and school leaders. Throughout this process, we have established high goals for ourselves: college-and career ready standards for all by promoting higher levels of critical thinking and problem solving and set ambitious and achievable performance targets that really move the needle for kids at risks.

As we all know, these changes were overdue. Thus, we need to be flexible to enable all constituencies to meet these high demand goals. In a state as diverse as ours, where schools and students have different educational challenges, one-size fits all solutions do not work. We have to align our resources. As we move toward the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, we must have a robust plan for supporting teachers and the school administration team as they transition to this new journey. And most importantly provide students with high quality instruction derived from a rigorous curriculum that meets the academic needs of all students.

The second concern is “double testing” during the transition from the current statewide assessment to CCSS assessments students will be involved in field-testing new assessments. Although, in an effort to support our state education, states will be given a one year waiver to allow schools who are participating in these field tests to administer only one assessment—either the current statewide assessment or the field test.

Our country continues to face many challenges as we work together toward achieving academic excellence for all children, and the timing for these actions has real consequences for the students in the real world. Having higher expectations is an attempt to prepare our students for tomorrow’s challenges. Their readiness will have real consequences for their lives, and the nation’s economic health. Yet these efforts will only succeed if all parties have time, resources and the support needed to embark on the new path.
Jacqueline Bramble

Common Core is an interesting and pleasant experience for me. I was given the opportunity to score the English Language Art (ELA) and the Math proficiency test for elementary and middle school.

First day I sat in a room filled with one hundred and forty five teachers. Teachers from different schools which taught different subject areas. I had the privilege to sit with Literacy and Math coaches and to discuss and explain the advantages and disadvantages of the questions and answers. Upon our arrival we were introduced to the assessment manager from the Bronx and the other site supervisors. They in turn introduced a group of teachers who were trained by Pearsons, the testing company. We were divided by sections labeled A to D and also by tables. Each section were given two trainers. We were escorted to the auditorium with our trainers. Teachers were given three blue booklets-the training book, practice book and the Competency Assessment set. The trainers worked together with teachers and we did many examples and discussed how we arrived at the answers. We looked at the rubric and determined how many points would be given for each question, also how they would be distributed. Then once everyone understood the concept; we moved to the practice set book to do a few examples on our own. Once we were finished we were able to discuss how we graded each question using the rubric. The rubric was numbered from 1-4, the four clearly determined that the students mastered all areas of proficiency, one which was the lowest shows that the student did not understand the concept. The students would be given a zero if they did not attempt to answer the question or tried and then erased the answers. After discussion the trainers would give the correct answer and the reasons based on the rubric. Once the trainers clarified any misconceptions we were immediately given the Competency Assessment Set(CAS)which we did individually based on the grade we were prepared to grade. At the end of the test the trainers would collect all the tests and grade them. Teachers that did not pass would be called and retrained before scoring students tests.

Immediately after completion of the (CAS) Teachers would return to their tables. I was assigned table 18. Each table had at least six teachers and we had to select a table captain whose position was to receive the box from the supervisor, distribute the tests and overlook the score when necessary.

I personally scored both the English Proficiency Test and the Math test. I scored grades three, five, six and seven. I noticed the level of difficulty for each grade. I was able to make my own assessment. I noticed the grade four test was more difficult than the fifth grade test. Some questions were extremely difficult. Some students did not understand the questions and were off
task. I noticed that special education students had a lot of difficulty as well as the students in integrated collaborated classroom.

I observed that some schools in different district were well prepared. The students were able to answer questions with sophisticated vocabulary. Both the English Proficiency test and the math test consisted of multiple choices and short answer question which was scored from one to three points. The essay was given the highest score of four points if the students accurately answered the questions.

The Common Core has many advantages for children to succeed because it allows points as long as they attempted to answer the questions and stayed on the topic.
Marcia A. McBeth

Marcia McBeth
Reflection on Common Core on Student’s Performance

What is Common Core Standards?

It is a tool that has been designed to determine what a student needs to know and what the student should have learned at that grade level. Is it really common to all students who need to be educated in the 21st century?

Common core is the new fruit of choice for educating our students to be college ready, but where does the learning begin? What is common practice teaching in a big city may not be common in a rural town in Ohio. For example, 21st century teaching requires technology, a student who has limited access to computers in his home; may be at a disadvantage. He may have to stay late at school or go to a friend’s house to share a computer. We are looking to prepare our students but the materials are out of date and teachers need professional development to support the new goals. Are we ready to supply about a hundred thousand educators with these key tools for success?

In the text, Professional Learning Communities at Work, the author discussed six key characteristics that this type of community needs to have.
1- Shared mission, vision and values- everybody on the same goals
2- Collective inquiry -open to new ideas and seek new methods
3- Collaborative teams- groups of learning teams that shares with other educators
4- Action orientation and experimentation - taking action and willing to experiment with the unknown.
5- Continuous improvement- searching for a better way to reach the goals
6- Results orientation- develop a shared mission

If the educators can help create professional communities with these key factors then our students will be ready to meet the challenge of raising the bar on reading a stronger text, writing reports based month long reports then a required writing piece for the portfolio and performing mathematics instead of doing the math. I have a niece who attends a parochial school and one in public school. Every month, the teacher at the parochial school attended professional developments on the common core and provided
programs to support the students who are willing to grow. The teachers embraced the opportunity. They shared the mission with the students and parents. It makes a difference in the mission. In observation of public educators, the true collaborative educators are being pushed out of the system. The professional development is given to a select few educators and they perform the same task only pushing the higher level and blaming the previous teachers for low performing students. Therefore, how can this be a mission of college readiness, if you limit the development to a few?

In conclusion, common core is a way of making education a shared mission. We have the will to be successful but the door is only open for a select few educators and students. The system has decided by kindergarten whether or not this child will be successful. This is common without the core.
Diane Pearson

As an educator my beliefs about student learning include that they receive the skills and knowledge they need, as well as exposure to high level texts to base their discussion and construct greater understanding in all content areas while applying their prior knowledge. Successful engagement and learning experiences can help students win confidence when the curriculum is introduced and coherently structured to develop ideas and respond to literature.

I will continue to believe that in order to teach children, I will focus on the process, not content only. I will also create assignments for real audiences and increase text complexity to provide greater skills and understanding that all students must achieve.

I find that the Common Core course helped me as an educator learn the necessary tools to motivate students and learn from students that I had the pleasure of being in their environment. Students are able to use accountable talk and give their opinions, to further engage in the conversation on rigorous subject matter. The students learn how to express ideas and concepts by using structure sentences “for example”, “I agree with you because” or “I do not agree with you because”, giving the students access to academic language. This way, students will be clear on their understanding of the text and learning expectations. Students are able to respect and learn to appreciate similarities and differences in their learning.

I will continue to promote growth in all children, by promoting learning in more ways than just classroom-based by using the world they live in to establish and maintain clear standards that encourage all in the environment to learn, I will work with colleagues to build high standards, to have high expectations to help my students achieve and accomplish this goal of learning for all as in the common core. Other professionals should take this Common Core Standards course and challenge themselves to envision the future.
How common are the Common Core “New” Learning Standards?

Everyone thinks that the common core “New” Learning Standards are the next best thing that happened to education in the United States on a community, school, city and state, national, and global level. The reality is that Common Core is common to what pedagogical sense is, best practices and grounded educational practices for reading, writing and math.

“Knowledge without content, content is knowledge” I say this is the basis for the common core and the basis of best practices; also many educational theories Linguistic approach, Constructivism and Socialistic approaches to education. Learning is language based, experience based and prior knowledge is the basis of new learning constructs. The Common core takes all these approaches and combines them with what is developmentally appropriate to learning stages and has created common goals known as Common Core Learning Standards. Common core is a little bit of everything that works mixed together and voila effective teaching and learning. Finally learning has realized how we learn is linked to our social constructs, experiences and language development. The only thing left now is for educational policies to be aligned to this too, for all learners through the effective teaching practices and support for teachers and learners.

Though common core is for all, not all will benefit from it given we work in an educational system that is so dynamic with ELLs, Exceptional Learners, and SIFE students whose socio-economic backgrounds, cultural, self-efficacy and parental support has to be factored into the common core for all. Though it is the altruistic goal of the common core for all learners to be on the same page or place, not all will be able to have equity and equality in accessing the common core.

In addition to the adoption of Common Core by many states and an acceptance that is global, based on the use of Singapore Math for example that teaching less is better than teaching more. This is just good practice, we are moving forward by going back to what works. We are acknowledging that one size does not fit all and that all learners can learn at their own level, proficiency and pace: the acceptance of learning differences and how to use performance indicators and data to drive instruction and learning.
With the new standards and a new teacher evaluation system educators will be hard pressed to deliver standards based lessons that scaffold student learning as per our new continuum of the common core. Teachers will have to become masters at the art of scaffolding and differentiating instruction not only for lesson delivery, but to differentiate on performance indicators and tasks. Students who are not given the equity and equality that using differentiation creates will begin to fall into the cracks that will become gaps and canyons, given the academic rigor and expectations of the common core. More than ever catching them while it is early will become very appropriate.

I personally have used an approach similar to common core with leveled lexiles of different text types, non-fiction and fiction twin text approach to subject matter and in math I always stress to students the need to go step by step and show your thinking on paper. I always say from question to answer there is a lot of thinking and work going on, therefore show it. I personally think the common core is going in the right direction; alongside the academic rigor I see the need for teacher support, parent support, administrative support, and student support. Support the school with professional development that is relevant to their needs as to culture, language and the learners in that school or district. Our schools and educational organizations need to support communities in understanding what is common core and how they can support their child in this transition period and support administrators to understand what common core instruction and learning looks like for all learners.

Our educational policies and educational system need to align expectations with common core learning for the common good of all.