“Buzz Word” Assignment

Choose one topic from the list of “Buzz Words” below and discuss why it is so controversial in the field of early childhood education. You will find three (3) articles that support your topic and three (3) articles that disagree with the idea. In a six (6) page paper, summarize your findings. Remember that every argument has two (2) sides. It is important that you pay adequate attention to arguments that may disagree with your view as well as to persuade others holding your same position(s).

Choose one (1) of the following topics:
1. Site-based management: groups of teachers, parents, and community representatives who help make decisions at the school level.
2. Standards-based education: instruction aimed at providing students the specific skills and levels of competency necessary to move through the educational system; aligning the curriculum to meet the national standards of instruction.
3. Bilingual education: providing instruction in more than one language.
4. Charter schools: providing free public elementary/secondary education under a charter granted by the state legislature or other appropriate authority.
5. Voucher system: funds allocated to parents to be used to purchase education for their children at public or private schools in their area.
6. Inclusion: the practice of ensuring that all students with disabilities participate with other students in all aspects of school.
7. Tracking: placing students in classes based on their academic abilities.
8. High-stakes testing: testing students using standardized tests and having the outcome of these tests determine the students’ academic future.

After you have formed your point of view relative to the topic, describe how it fits into a larger ethical dilemma. You should do this with a paragraph that interprets the topic and describes the position you take can help us further understand the issues raised by the discussion around the topic. You should begin to think about the different sides of the debate.

Format for Final Paper:
1st page: define your topic, what is it, how do schools use it, who is it meant for, who uses it, etc.
pp. 2-3: summarize the three (3) articles that agree with/support your topic
pp. 4-5: summarize the three (3) articles that disagree with your topic
p. 6: summarize which side you agree with and why

Be sure to summarize the authors’ ideas by using your words not their words. Cite the names of the authors you are paraphrasing and the year of the article.

Include the references for your six (6) articles on a 7th page titled “References”. Remember to use APA Citation Style. If you have any questions along the way please ask!
The topic I chose for the “buzz word” assignment is bilingual education. Bilingual education is defined as education in two languages (Morrison, 2009). Bilingual education consists of programs that are designed to assist English language learners while they learn English, both academic and conversational. The programs in bilingual education help English language learner get to be on par with their native English speaking peers (Porter, 1998).

There are different programs that are specifically designed to help English language learners, which schools get to pick from and implement. Two bilingual education programs I read about during my research are: dual language program (Estrada, Gomez & Ruiz, 2009) and transitional learning program (Miners, 2008). Dual language programs are designed where English language learners are placed in the same class as native English speaking children and the class, as a whole, is taught one language for part of the day and in another for the second half. The dual language program can also be implemented in different ways some chose to teach in one language certain subject and in the second language the rest of the subject (Estrada, Gomez & Ruiz, 2009). Transitional learning programs are designed to help English language learners in their native language until a certain point when it stops and it turns into English only (Miners, 2008).

On the other hand, I read about the opposition to bilingual education and how they for the most part believe in structured English immersion. Structured English immersion is when English language learners are put in English only classes (Necochea & Cline, 2000). Structured English immersion is what Ron Unz and many Latino parents fought for during proposition 227 (Amselle, 1997).
The three articles I found that agree with bilingual education are “Let’s Make Dual Language the Norm” by Veronica Lopez Estrada, Leo Gomez and Jose Agustin Ruiz-Escalante, “All Languages here Welcomed” by Orhan Agirdag and “English Language Learners: The Benefits of Transitionary Learning” by Zach Miners.

In the article “English Language Learners: The Benefits of Transitionary Learning” Zach Miner interviewed Josie Tinajero about her opinion on how the United Stated is handling the fast growing population of English language learners. Josie Tinajero is a Spanish language and reading expert (Miner, 2008). She was asked about what are the best ways for schools to work with English language learners? She believes that teaching them in their native language until they are fully skilled is the best way to help them. She believed that English language learner will later take these skills acquired and transfer them over as they learn English. Another interesting point she made during the interview is that many of the programs used in schools are failing English language learner because they are designed to ‘phase out’ their home language which is “a tremendous tool for helping children learn” (Miner, 2008). During the interview, Tinajero also mentioned how many times English language learners are mistakenly placed in classrooms for special needs as is they have a learning disability. She stresses the fact that a teaching in their native language helps put an end to this error because that way teachers know whether or not the child is actually learning and understanding.

In the article “Let’s Make Dual Language the Norm.” by Veronica Lopez Estrada, Leo Gomez and Jose Agustin Ruiz-Escalante I read about the different ways to teach in a dual language program. One way is to use the 50/50 approach where half of the day is spent teaching
In a native language and the other is taught in English. Another way to teach in a dual language program is the Gomez and Gomez model which is designed for English dominant and Spanish dominant speaker. In Gomez and Gomez model math is taught in English, science and social studies in Spanish and the rest of the school activities alternate in language daily (Estrada, Gomes & Ruiz, 2009). This article also mentioned the different misconceptions about English language learners. For one the ‘best way to teach ELLS English is to immerse them in English’ which is untrue. Another misconception about English language learners is that ELLs will learn enough English in one year, studies have shown that it take up to seven years for English language learners to fully master English academically (Estrada, Gomes & Ruiz, 2009). According to the article assessments have indicated that schools that use dual language programs both the English and Spanish dominant student meet or excel in proficiency standard (Estrada, Gomes & Ruiz, 2009)

In the article “All Languages here Welcomed” by Orhan Agirdan I read about the language learners in and outside of the United States. The article pointed out the different methods used in different countries and the author mentioned about what he believed where the best approaches when dealing with language learners. Agirdan believes that language is part of a child identity and that by not allowing children to use their home language teachers are making them feel out of place (Agirdan, 2009). The author wrote the three practices educators must avoid when teaching language learners. First insisting on a monolingual classroom should be avoided. “Studies have shown that proficiency in the home language is positively related to proficiency in the second language” (Agirdan, 2009) Secondly banning home language outside of school should be avoided. Directing language learners to speak only the majority language at
home is the example given. Lastly is restricting praise to second language proficiency (Agirdan, 2009). In this article Agirdan, also wrote of the five practices educators should adopt. First, welcome languages in the classroom. One way to do this is by maybe learning certain phrases to use with the language learners. Secondly, asking the student themselves to share their language. Another thing teachers can do is having the students’ help their peers, if you have two students that speak the same second language pair them up to help each other (Agirdan, 2009)

The three articles I found that disagree with bilingual education are: “Adios, bilingual ed.” by Jorge Amselle, “Effective Educational Practices for ELLs within Mainstream Settings” by Juan Necochea and Zulmara Cline and “Case Against Bilingual Education” by Rosalie Pedalino Porter.

In the article “Adios, bilingual ed.” it mentioned the initial purpose behind bilingual education. Initially bilingual education was meant to help non English speaking children and prepare them for regular English language classrooms. According to the article, instead of doing what it was meant for, bilingual education segregated English language learner (Amselle, 1997). In the article, the author wrote that about three-quarters of all English language learners are Spanish speakers. These students spend up to 80% of their day being taught in Spanish and only hear English during recess, lunch, P.E, and music. An outcome of this is a higher dropout rate (Amselle, 1997).
In the article “Effective Educational Practices for ELLs within Mainstream Settings” I read about what schools must do in order to achieve success at structured English immersion. According to the authors there are eight components which are necessary to effectively teach English language learners: leadership, ongoing staff development, incorporation of primary language and culture, allocation of resources and materials, validation of current practices, merging theory and practice, accountability, and curriculum alignment. Some of the more important components are, in my opinion, leadership, ongoing staff development and allocation of resources and materials just to name a few. Leadership, meaning the schools principles, must obtain the engagement and commitment of the school staff to teach English language learners and respect them. Principles must ensure that they have the capacity to educate all students in their schools (Necochea & Cline 2000). Another important component is ongoing staff development. I believe this is important in general not only when dealing with English language learners. ‘Teachers, administrators and other staff must learn the skills and attitudes necessary to improve instructional practices for Ells’ (Necochea & Cline 2000). Lastly, allocation of resource and materials, principles can’t expect teachers to implement the recommended instructional strategies without the right material and recourses’. Some of the material or resources that can be used to help teach English language learners are visuals and/or realia (Necochea & Cline 2000).

In the article “The Case Against Bilingual Education” I read of what was meant by bilingual education and how that wasn’t achieved at the end. The main point behind this article, I believe is that most parents want their children to learn English and bilingual education is failing because the children in these classes aren’t learning English. In the beginning bilingual education
was meant to teach English to ‘immigrant children so that they can do regular schoolwork and receive an equal educational opportunity’ resulted in ‘extended segregation’ (Porter, 1998).

It is really hard to pick one side, when I began my search for this assignment I believed in the importance of bilingual education. But I was unaware of all the different methods to teach English language learners. I believe both sides had very strong points. Structured English immersion if done right can be successful; children will learn English which is very important.

I believe that the best approach at teaching English language learners is to use the dual language program. In my opinion both sets of students, English dominant and English language learners benefit from dual language programs. The United States is a very diverse country and it is a major advantage to be fluent in two languages.
References-

Estrada, Veronica Lopez & Gomez, Leo & Ruiz-Escalante, Jose Agustin (2009) Let’s Make Dual Language the Norm *Educational leadership* 66(7) 54-58

Agirdag, Orhan April 2009 All Languages Here Welcome *Educational leadership* 66(7) 20-25

Miners, Zach (2008) English Language Learners: The Benefits of Transitionary Learning *District administration* 44(9) 20-20


Necochea, Juan & Cline, Zulmara (2000) Effective Educational Practices for ELLs within Mainstream Settings Race *Ethnicity & Education* 3(3) 317-332

Standards based education is an attempt to streamline all students’ learning, pedagogues’ teaching, and make assessments uniform. Standards based education is rooted in the belief that by creating a steadfast academic standards supported with high expectations and consistent instruction, students will be equitably educated. In order to prove this has occurred widespread standardized assessments are given to schools in order to measure their students’ academic achievement.

Wikipedia defines standards based education as “…an evolution of the earlier Outcomes-based education…” (2009). The article continues to explain that outcomes based education is no longer used in the United States but is utilized in Australia. However it prevailed throughout the 1990s as the basis for American education. “The standards based movement calls for clear, measurable standards for all school students” (2009). This way it is possible to measure “each student against a concrete standard instead of measuring how well the student performed compared to others” (2009). Designing standards have taken on a business of their own. “Standards are chosen through political discussions … instead of by textbook publishers or education professors or tradition” (2009). It is the intent of politicians to decide what students need to know in order to contribute to the work force and general health and well being of the national economy.

Standards Based Education seems to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing. While researching this paper I read articles with specific praise for standards based education while the next article criticized the same component the first one praised. Ultimately standards based education is the current form of education in this country, no matter what either side has to say. The course of this paper is set to expose the positive and negative characteristics of standards based education. In writing this paper my own opinion of standards based education has changed.
Although standards based education appears rooted in outcomes based education there is a distinct separation between the two. Outcomes based education was largely criticized and eventually abandoned because it individualized education so much so it seemed there was little evidence to determine a students’ academic successes (2009). Standards based education seeks to compare the student, whole student body and even school districts to a uniform expectation, instead of comparing these entities unto themselves. There is a line in the sand so to speak, that all students are expected to reach. Standards based education does not always account for a student’s schema or prior experiences. Instead it moves students on from where they started.

DomNwachukwu’s (2005) article describes blending culturally responsive teachings and state standards. In this article DomNwachukwu (2005) outlines an entire unit of study with its consistent and tight relationship to standards. “The standards provide us with the goal of each lesson, which specifies where this lesson is going, yet the teacher is required to isolate certain measurable objectives that would convince her at the end of this lesson that the destination was reached” (DomNwachukwu 2005). Here the author states one of the biggest critiques of standards based education. Often teachers feel like they have to teach to the test or stay within the standards. DomNwachukwu (2005) excellently points out the importance of the teacher using the standards to inform, rather than control, what she is teaching.

The unit DomNwachukwu (2005) outlines is a visual and performing arts class addressing homelessness. The teacher eloquently relates the socially sensitive topic of homelessness to rigorous state standards. To close the article DomNwachukwu (2005) offers an extension of the lesson into an ELA project using very similar learning goals and objectives, obviously derived from the same standards. Both lessons incorporate academic standards, social action and get students excited to learn something new while making a difference.
Carlson et al (2007) authored their article for three direct purposes “to review the historical background of the standards reform movement; to discuss a research project to redesign program content and align standards; … and to discuss survey results concerning … teacher perceptions about standards and accountability” (Carlson 2007). Their findings indicated that standards based accountability has some impact on teacher’s behavior regarding student achievement (Carlson 2007). That university teacher preparation programs are aligning their standards with those set by the state and professional organizations indicates teachers of various amounts of experience understand truancy the purpose of utilizing standards in their lesson planning. Carlson et al (2007) do leave the reader wondering if pre-service and novice teachers employ the same diligence regarding standards when planning lessons.

Schmoker and Marzano (1999) address the issue of standardized curriculum in their article *Realizing the Promise of Standards-Based Education* (Schmoker 1999). In this article the authors review the main proponents of standards based education and seem to spiral the same conclusion in each piece of their work. “Less is more...students learn more when we teach less” (Schmoker 1999). By creating standards that can be addressed multiple times students will have a deeper understanding of content. When students are introduced to too many topics their ability to retain all that new information is minimalized. It should be a goal of standards based education to impart standards that focus on skills or strategies instead of memorization of fact.

Interestingly enough a typical math textbook in the united states has up to 350 times more content in it than those of European nations. However those some European countries, with less content taught throughout a school year, their students tend to out perform their American peers (Schmoker 1999). Tragically it seems that in our best efforts to provide our students with a wide range of content we instead are dooming them to perform below their international peers. By overexposing students to so much material they are not as likely to
connect with it in a usable way. They learn the assigned material for an exam or project and then seem to replace it with the next topic, instead of keeping it in their usable intellect.

Whelan Ariza (2006) explains the challenges of standards-based education as it pertains to ELLs. The content of most standardized tests implies a thorough understanding of Americana culture. Many students whose first language is not English may not have this shared sense of culture or history. By asking them to take a test outside of their native language and culture we essentially set students up to fail. There is little evidence that suggests it is possible to teach colloquialisms and other culture specific verbiage in order to prepare students for such an exam. Again the standards are so narrow in their learning goals that many social and emotional aspects are not included.

Whelan Ariza (2006) discusses at length in the cited chapter, the various difficulties ELLs face as students. Not only are they required to learn a new language; they are required to perform at the same level as their native English-speaking peers. Standardized testing does not accommodate their learning needs.

Wieczorek (2008) details the improved literacy rates among Japanese children. This improvement is linked to the format of education in Japan. Although, as the author points out, there are several similarities between American and Japanese education the primary difference can be seen in the relationships among teachers and their students’ families.

In summary standards based education can be created to serve students, teachers and school districts need for accountability. Standards based education may not create a general starting point for students but aims to have them finish with similar academic competence. There is still much debate regarding this issue and its efficacy to accomplish the large goal of educating such a vast population of students. I believe standards based education is the best form of education we can provide our children currently. However educational reform is
ongoing, it will be interesting what academic historians will write about the nation’s obsession with old teacher and students accountable for what they do every day in classrooms all over the country.
References


