Benchmark Hello! Research Foundation

Introduction

According to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE; 2016) *Newcomer Tool Kit*, newcomers to the United States are a highly heterogeneous group. The term newcomers "refers to any foreign-born students and their families who have recently arrived in the United States" (Chapter 1, p. 1). Newcomers bring their customs, religions, and languages with them and play an important role in the social and economic fabric of the American society. The challenge for newcomers who attend school is more difficult "since they must learn not only how to navigate a new culture socially, but also how to function effectively in an education system and language that typically differs from their prior experience" (USDOE, 2016, Chapter 1, p. 2).

Not only are newcomers challenged in U.S. schools, but teachers can be challenged as well. In the California Department of Education (2020) publication *Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students: Research to Practice*, the need for essential knowledge and skills to address multilingual students' needs, including newcomers, is critical given that schools and districts are becoming more and more diverse. López and Santibañez (2018) found even in states where teacher preparation standards are high, educators still struggle with how best to serve students who are newcomers to the United States, who come from households where English is not the primary language, or whose lived experiences differ from their own.

Benchmark Education Company has developed a new program especially for newcomers, called *Benchmark Hello!*. This program is a unique and comprehensive 8-week program that promotes newcomers' conceptual, procedural, and linguistic knowledge, with explicit, focused, and intensive linguistic, cultural, and social-emotional support. This research foundation described the research results that influenced the creation and design of this program. This research foundation is not intended to inform someone of how to implement the *Benchmark Hello!* program. Information on how to implement the program can be found within the program materials and within the professional development that comes with the program.

Newcomers

The term newcomers refers to different groups with different characteristics. Some newcomers are also English Learners (EL); about 50 percent of immigrants in 2014 (Zong & Batalova, 2016) ages 5 and older were not English proficient. ELs can also refer to students identified as requiring assistance with language acquisition who were born in the United States (USDOE, 2016). So, newcomers can also be ELs but not all newcomers are ELs, and ELs are not necessarily newcomers. Other groups that are generally classified under the newcomer umbrella are:

- Asylees who travel to the United States on their own and subsequently apply for or receive a grant of asylum
- Immigrant children and youth aged 3 through 21, not born in any state, and having not attended one or more schools for more than 3 full academic years

- Refugees that have fled their country of origin because of past persecution or fear of future persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group
- Students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), including students in Grades 4 to 12 who have experienced disruptions in their educations in their native counties and/or the United states, and/or are unfamiliar with the culture of schooling
- Unaccompanied youth including children who come into the United States from other countries without an adult guardian (USDOE, 2016)

As with many things that are new or unusual, misconceptions can occur. This is true of newcomers also. The USDOE (2016) provides information on the current understanding of newcomers and their needs.

1. To do things in the world, students need to learn language. To help develop academic language, students need to participate in meaningful and authentic activities about academic ideas and concepts (van Lier & Walqui, 2012). Newcomers do not need to develop significant language proficiency before participating in disciplinary learning.
2. The texts and other curriculum materials provided to newcomers by teachers should increase the intellectual challenge, with appropriate support that such challenge requires, rather than simplifying the curriculum and lowering expectations (Walqui & van Lier, 2010). Newcomers do not need materials and texts that contain simplified content and language as they learn English.
3. Literacy in a student's first language positively affects the learning of a new language (August & Shanahan, 2006). In fact, knowing more than one language can lower levels of communicative anxiety, including in their first language (Dewaele, 2013). Bilingualism is not counterproductive and does not negatively affect academic and language learning (van Lier, 2004).
4. Teachers need specialized knowledge to teach English and academic content to ELs, and to support the other needs of newcomers (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017). Teachers without the pedagogical and socio-emotional knowledge needed to support newcomers and ELs will fail to support the attainment of ambitions futures for these students (USDOE, 2016).

Teaching Newcomers and English Learners

Newcomers bring knowledge, experience, and a global prospective to U.S. schools that can help all students understand and act on issues of global significance (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). Cultivating global competencies includes investigating the world beyond the immediate environment; recognizing perspectives of others as well as their own; communicating ideas effectively; and taking action to improve current conditions. Incorporation of these ideas may create stronger and academically more inclusive classrooms and schools (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011).

Based on the content from the Understanding Language Conference at Stanford University during January 2012, key principles were developed for teachers, coaches, ELL[1] specialists, curriculum leaders, school principals, and district administrators as they work to design instruction for ELLs (Stanford

[1] The Understanding Language District Engagement Subcommittee at Stanford University used the term English Language Learner (ELL). While referring to the Stanford University document, ELL will be used. Otherwise, English Learner (EL) will be used.

University, Understanding Language District Engagement Subcommittee, 2013). To meet rigorous, grade-level academic standards, key principles include:

1. **Instruction focuses on providing ELLs with opportunities to engage in discipline-specific practices, which are designed to build conceptual understand and language competence in tandem**. Learning is a social process that requires teachers to intentionally design learning opportunities that integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening with the practices of each discipline.
2. **Instruction leverages ELLs' home language(s), cultural assets, and prior knowledge.** ELLs' home language(s) and culture(s) are regarded as assets and are used by the teacher in bridging prior knowledge to new knowledge, and in making content meaningful and comprehensible.
3. **Standards-aligned instruction for ELLs is rigorous, grade-level appropriate, and provides deliberate and appropriate scaffolds.** Instruction that is rigorous and standards-aligned reflects the key shifts in the CCSS [Common Core State Standards] and NGSS [Next Generation Science Standards]. Such shifts require that teachers provide students with opportunities to describe their reasoning, share explanations, make conjectures, justify conclusions, argue from evidence, and negotiate meaning from complex texts. Students with developing levels of English proficiency will require instruction that carefully supports their understanding and use of emerging language as they participate in these activities.
4. **Instruction moves ELLs forward by taking into account their English proficiency level(s) and prior schooling experiences.** ELLs within a single classroom can be heterogeneous in terms of home language(s) proficiency, proficiency in English, literacy levels in English and students' home language(s), previous experiences in schools, and time in the United States. Teachers must be attentive to these differences and design instruction accordingly.
5. **Instruction fosters ELLs' autonomy by equipping them with the strategies necessary to comprehend and use language in a variety of academic settings.** ELLs must learn to use a broad repertoire of strategies to construct meaning from academic talk and complex text, to participate in academic discussions, and to express themselves in writing across a variety of academic situations. Tasks must be designed to ultimately foster student independence.
6. **Diagnostic tools and formative assessment practices are employed to measure students' content knowledge, academic language competence, and participation in disciplinary practices.** These assessment practices allow teachers to monitor students' learning, making instructional adjustments as needed, providing students with timely and useful feedback, and encouraging students to reflect on their own thinking and learning. (Stanford University, Understanding Language District Engagement Subcommittee, 2013)

August, McCardle, and Shanahan (2014) provide a review of the optimal approaches to reading instruction for ELLs[2], covering the components of literacy, including decoding, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and writing, as well as key instructional areas of differentiating instruction, repetition and

[2] August et al. (2014) use the term English Language Learners (ELLs) in their article. When referring to this article, ELLs will be used. English Learner (ELs) will be used elsewhere.

reinforcement, scaffolding, and capitalizing on a student's first language strengths. Key points are listed below.

Overall, second language learners benefit from explicit instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and writing. Increased exposure to English text has a positive effect on word reading. There are strong outcomes when instruction for ELLs was tailored to their language differences by doing things like devoting more time to those English sounds not in the students' home language. Instructional approaches, such as grouping students according to their instructional needs, mastery learning with frequent teaching modeling, opportunities for practice, and cumulative review were found to be successful with ELLs. Peer-assisted tutoring was also effective where higher performing readers were paired with lower performing readers.

Oral reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately, with sufficient speed to allow sentences to cohere and with appropriate prosody. For ELLs, as well as for native speakers of English, the guided repeated oral reading procedure was found to be effective. Positive fluency outcomes occurred when ELLs were taught in small groups or one-on-one tutoring sessions.

August et al. (2014) point out that "vocabulary is an obvious area in which to focus instruction for ELLs because it emphasized teaching the meanings of words and their structural components (prefixes and suffixes)" (p. 492). Studies examined by August et al. looked at approaches to teaching both general and domain-specific vocabulary. In general, teaching techniques for native speakers of English and ELLs benefit from the same type of instruction in vocabulary. A couple of notable instruction techniques specifically for ELLs include using students' first language as the basis for English vocabulary development, tailoring the instruction to explicitly address concepts in the texts that could be potentially confusing to ELLs, and using visual aids and motor activities to reinforce word meanings.

Reading comprehension "depends on decoding, vocabulary knowledge, and general language ability, including listening comprehension" (August et al., 2014, p. 493). Often, the teaching of comprehension strategies that works well for native speakers of English does not work as well for ELLs, who have not yet attained enough English proficiency. Other techniques that were successful included instructional techniques that:

- Emphasized meaning and language development
- Included enhanced discussion emphases or intensive study of word meanings
- Included meaning-oriented instruction
- Built background knowledge by previewing key vocabulary through definitions and context-rich sentences, providing brief story introductions that included details from the story
- Used questioning of students throughout the reading to help connect new text with the students' experiences and to clarify students' understanding of the meaning of the passages
- Included showing students video clips that helped contextualize the story to be read

"Writing has been a neglected part of literacy" (August et al., 2014, p. 493). There is a renewed emphasis on the reading and writing connection, but there are few studies that focus on ELLs. Those that do focus on ELLs show that the writing of ELLs can be improved by explicit instruction on how to revise. Using a computer to complete writing assignments improves the quality of beginning ELLs writing

in comparison with their peers who used paper and a pencil. Collaborative writing studies had mixed results but could be more effective when combined with explicit teacher-directed instruction, including providing models of effective writing and targeted feedback to support writing revision. Strategies that make new information comprehensible to ELLs can also improve students' writing.

When considering differentiating instruction for ELLs, August et al. (2014) indicate consideration of first language proficiency and literacy, levels of English proficiency, and individual differences in learning ability and rates are important. Reinforcement of learned material with repeated exposures to skills, concepts, and vocabulary words is known to effectively strengthen learning. Through the use of teacher scaffolding, students can succeed in tasks that are beyond their independent abilities.

Francis, Lesaux, and August (2006) confirmed the value of approaches that use students' first language to help them become literate in the second language. Additionally, Dressler and Kamil (2006) found evidence suggesting there is a relationship between many literacy skills in the second language and knowledge acquired by students in their first language. Instructional routines that support first language use include conducting instructional conversation that permits some interpretation to take place in the home language, using bilingual glossaries for the targeted vocabulary, and providing instruction on the transfer of cognate knowledge from a first to second language (August et al., 2014).

Implementation within *Benchmark Hello!*

Benchmark Hello! is designed as an eight-week course that can go up to 16 weeks if necessary. This program was created and designed to help newcomers get started in the school environment, as an on-ramp to further learning. It uses a culturally sustaining pedagogy that supports asset-based learning and provides linguistic and social-emotional support. Diversity and culture are embraced and celebrated. *Benchmark Hello!* uses an explicit and systematic approach to language structures and vocabulary development. The importance of student engagement and the use of feedback in the different types of instruction used in schools is critical to student success.

The next five sections provide additional information about the foundations of the *Benchmark Hello!* program for newcomers. An explanation of culturally sustaining pedagogy is followed by a description of the asset-based approach to instruction. These topics are followed by social-emotional learning and why this is so important to newcomers. A discussion of Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions looks at differences in schools based on national cultures. Lastly, student engagement strategies are presented.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) worked toward, with her groundbreaking research of successful teachers who worked with African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1994), making pedagogy a central focus when looking at improving education, including the areas of equity and diversity. This work expanded to a critical mass by the mid-1990s to create an intersection of language, literacy, and culture with students of color who were marginalized by systemic inequalities based on race, ethnicity, and language (Paris, 2012). Paris and Ball (2009) referred to this time as the golden age of resource pedagogy research. "This research sought to provide pedagogical and curricular interventions and innovations that would move teaching and learning every further from the *deficit approaches* that echoed across the decades" (Paris, 2012, p. 93).

Deficit approaches to teaching and learning were based on viewing the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being as deficiencies to be overcome in learning for many students and communities of color (Paris, 2012). Overcoming these deficiencies meant learning the demanded and legitimized dominant language, literacy, and cultural ways of schooling (Paris & Ball, 2009). “The dominant language, literacy, and cultural practices demanded by school fell in line with White, middle-class norms and positioned languages and literacies that fell outside those norms as less-than and unworthy of a place in U.S. schools and society” (Paris, 2012, p. 93).

Ladson-Billings (1995) described joining the home and community practices, histories, and activities of students and communities of color with dominant school ones, in meaningful ways that did not devalue either, as culturally relevant pedagogy. Later, Gay (2000), suggested a change to culturally responsive pedagogy. Paris (2012) offers the following when defining culturally sustaining pedagogy, which has an explicit goal of supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism: “Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Paris claims that culturally sustaining pedagogy is interested in “sustaining and extending the richness of our pluralist society. Such richness includes all of the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being that our students and communities embody—both those marginalized and dominant” (p. 96).

In a 2014 article, Ladson-Billings embraces the newer concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy, indicating “if we ever get to a place of complete certainty and assuredness about our practice, we will stop growing” (p. 77). To Ladson-Billings, continued growth is important to teachers and students. Without it, no one succeeds. Hammond (2014) echoes Ladson-Billings when she encourages her readers to “think of culturally responsive teaching as a mind-set, a way of thinking about and organizing instruction to all for great flexibility in teaching” (p. 5).

Asset-Based Approach

Scanlan (2007) states “by conceptualizing linguistic diversity from an asset-based lens, teachers are better prepared to successfully engage linguistically diverse students and families” (p. 3). MacSwan (2020) identifies that home language has been identified as a problem or a resource. “The resource perspective has been incorporated into a movement for asset-based pedagogies, which seeks to draw out and emphasize community- and home-based knowledge, culture, and language as part of the school curriculum, permitting these to form a bridge to school-based teaching and learning for non-dominant groups just as they do for dominant groups” (MacSwan, 2020, p. 29).

López (2017) studied the effect of applying asset-based practices to classrooms to examine how teachers’ beliefs and behaviors of asset-based practices were associated with Latino students’ ethnic and reading achievement identity. Findings showed teachers’ understanding of the socio-historical influences on traditionally marginalized students’ trajectories moderated the expectations of teachers, leading to higher achievement of students. Additionally, teachers’ understanding of students in their classes and expectancy beliefs combined were found to be directly associated with teachers’ classroom behaviors, and teachers’ classroom behaviors were related to students’ achievements.

MacSwan (2020) concludes that seeking “to discover how children use language in non-school contexts and for non-school tasks, with the aim of informing strategies for connecting school experiences with

home experiences" (p. 34) creates an inclusive approach that focuses on students' home language and interests as assets rather than deficits. This approach is socially situated and seeks to include rather than exclude the diverse language and culturally background found in classroom setting.

Social and Emotional Learning

> "Social and emotional learning (SEL) commonly refers to a process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Williams, 2019, p. 162).

Elias (2004) and Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) provide evidence to suggest the integration of social-emotional competencies with academics enhances student learning. Additionally, Durlak et al. found social-emotional competencies not only prepare students so they are able to participate in learning experiences, but these competencies also increase students' capacity to learn.

Newcomers may face unique challenges, such as trauma from fleeing war-torn countries, being separated from family members during the immigration process, or dealing with trauma while at the same time negotiating new roles and identities in an unfamiliar cultural context, leading to distinct social-emotional needs (USDOE, 2016). "To help newcomers succeed as they experience these and other stressors, social supports are necessary on several fronts, and should offer multiple avenues for students to develop new relationships with adults and peers in a new school community and to build a sense of social integration" (USDOE, 2016, Chapter 4, p. 3).

Stavsky (2015) identified five competencies central to social-emotional development from the analysis of four frameworks, including the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies (CASEL, 2013); the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) Noncognitive Factors (Farrington et al., 2012); the Forum for Youth Investment Skill Areas (Wilson-Ahlstrom, Yohalem, DuBois, Ji, & Hillaker, 2014); and the Every Hour Counts Measurement Framework (Every Hour Counts, 2014). These competencies are:

- Intrinsic motivation (initiative, persistence, self-direction)
- Critical thinking skills (problem solving, metacognitive skills, reasoning and judgment skills)
- Relational skills (communication, cooperation, empathy)
- Emotional self-regulation (impulse control, stress management, behavior)
- Self-concept (knowing one's own strengths and limitations, belief in one's ability to succeed, belief that competence grows with effort) (Stavsky, 2015, p. 3)

Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Borowski (2018) describe the large buckets of CASEL, one of the frameworks used by Stavsky (2015). These buckets are viewed through an equity lens by Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Williams (2019), forming the following definitions:

> *Self-Awareness*: Competence in the self-awareness domain involves understanding one's emotions, personal and social identities, goals, and values. This includes

accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations, having positive mind-sets, and possessing a well-grounded sense of self-efficacy and optimism. High levels of self-awareness require the ability to recognize one's own biases; to understand the links between one's personal and collective history and identities; and to recognize how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected in and across diverse contexts.

Self-Management: Competence in the self-management domain requires skills and attitudes that facilitate the ability to regulate emotions and behaviors. This includes the ability to delay gratification, manage stress, and control impulses through problem-focused coping. It also implies appropriate expressiveness, perseverance, and being agentic in addressing personal and group-level challenges to achieve self- and collectively defined goals and objectives.

Social Awareness: Competence in the social awareness domain involves having the critical historical grounding to take the perspective of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures and to appropriately empathize and feel compassion. It also involves understanding social norms for constructive behavior in diverse interpersonal and institutional settings and recognizing family, school, and community resources and supports for personal and collective well-being.

Relationship Skills: Competence in the relationship skills domain includes the interpersonal sensibilities and facility needed to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships and to effectively navigate settings with differing social and cultural norms and demands. It involves communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting selfishness and inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, seeking help and offering leadership when it is needed, and working collaboratively whenever possible.

Responsible Decision Making: Competence in the responsible decision making domain requires the cultivation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to make caring, constructive choices about personal and group behavior in social interactions within and across diverse institutional settings. It requires the ability to critically examine ethical standards, safety concerns, and behavioral norms for risky behavior; to make realistic evaluations of benefits and consequences of various interpersonal and institutional relationships and actions; and to always make primary collective health and well-being. (Jagers et al., 2019, p. 167)

Yoder (2014) reports on ten teaching practices, identified as occurring most frequently across six SEL programs and eight SEL scholars. While not an exhaustive list, the instructional practices can be used to support positive learning environments, social-emotional competencies, and academic learning. Table 1 provides the ten teaching practices with brief descriptions.

Table 1. Ten Teaching Practices for Social-Emotional Learning and Development

Teaching Practice	Description
Student-Centered Discipline	Student-centered discipline refers to the types of classroom management strategies in classrooms. Disciplinary strategies should be proactive, developmentally appropriate for students, and motivate students to want to behave in the classroom. If a student breaks a rule, the consequences should be logical in relation to the rule that was broken.
Teacher Language	Teacher language refers to how teachers talk to students. Teachers should encourage student effort and work. Teacher language should encourage students on how to monitor and regulate their own behavior, not just tell students how to behave.
Responsibility and Choice	Responsibility and choice refer to teachers allowing students to have some say in making responsible decisions about their work in the classroom. Teachers provide structures so that students have a voice in the classroom
Warmth and Support (Teacher and Peer)	Warmth and support refer to the academic and social support that students receive from their teacher and from their peers. Teachers can demonstrate that they care about their students by asking students questions (academic and nonacademic), following up with students when they have a problem or concern, providing the teacher's own anecdotes or stories, and acting in ways in which students know that taking risks and asking questions are safe in the classroom.
Cooperative Learning	Cooperative learning refers to a specific instructional task in which teachers have students work together toward a collective goal.
Classroom Discussions	Classroom discussions refer to conversations students and teachers have around content where teachers ask more open-ended questions and ask students to elaborate on their own thinking and on the thinking of their peers.
Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment	Self-reflection and self-assessment are instructional tasks that occur when teachers ask students to actively think about their own work. Students need to think about how to improve their work on the basis of their self-assessment, based on teacher-developed goals and priorities.
Balanced Instruction	Balanced instruction is an appropriate balance between active instruction (students interact and engage with content in multiple ways) and direct instruction (teachers provide opportunities for students to directly learn about the material). An active form of instruction is project-based learning.
Academic Press and Academic Expectations	Academic press refers to a teacher's implementation of meaningful and challenging work, and academic expectations focus on the teacher's belief that all students can and will succeed. Students should have the sense that academics are extremely important, that the teacher wants them to succeed, and that they must exert effort in challenging work in order to succeed.
Competence Building—Modeling, Practicing, Feedback, Coaching	Competence building occurs when teachers help develop social-emotional competencies systematically through the typical instructional cycle: goals/objectives of the lesson, introduction to new material/modeling, group and individual practice, and conclusion/reflection.

Hofstede Cultural Dimensions

Since the 1980s, Hofstede (2011) has been researching the differences in national cultures. Culture distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. Culture is a collective phenomenon, with the individuals varying across a bell curve or spectrum, meaning not all individuals in

a certain culture exhibit the exact same characteristics. Hofstede and others started studying culture at the country level. Newcomers come from all different countries and cultures. Knowing about the culture of individuals who are newcomers does identify understood or conscious practices.

There are six dimensions defined by Hofstede and validated through other studies. Hofstede has identified actions within these dimensions that represent opposites or high and low levels of actions. The actions related to education and classrooms are presented below for five of the six dimensions that have education related differences. There is also a brief description of these five dimensions. The tables below the following dimensions show the two ends of the spectrum for the dimension. In the case of Power Distance, the small power distance where the unequal power distribution is smaller has an educational system that is more student centered. For the cultures with a large power distance, the educational system is more teacher centered.

> Power Distance has been defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. … It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. … All societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 9)

Small Power Distance	Large Power Distance
Student-centered education	Teacher-centered education

> Uncertainty Avoidance is not the same as risk avoidance; it deals with a society's tolerance for ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual. Uncertainty-avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 10)

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance
Teachers may say "I don't know"	Teachers supposed to have all the answers

> Individualism on the one side versus its opposite, Collectivism, as a societal, not an individual characteristic, is the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. On the individualist side we find cultures in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find cultures in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts, and grandparents) that continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty, and oppose other in-groups. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 11)

Individualism	Collectivism
Purpose of education is learning how to learn	Purpose of education is learning how to do

> Masculinity versus its opposite, Femininity, again as a societal, not as an individual characteristic, refers to the distribution of values between the genders, which is another fundamental issue for any society, to which a range of solutions can be found. … The assertive pole has been called "masculine" and the modest, caring pole "feminine." The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries, they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values. In masculine cultures, there is often a taboo around this dimension. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 12)

Femininity	Masculinity
Both boys and girls may cry but neither should fight.	Girls cry but boys don't; boys should fight back but girls shouldn't fight.

> The next dimension, Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation, is strongly linked to economic growth. Values found at the long-term pole were perseverance, thrift, ordering relationships by status, and having a sense of shame; values at the opposite short-term pole were reciprocating social obligations, respect for tradition, protecting one's "face," and personal steadiness and stability. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 13)

Short-Term Orientation	Long-Term Orientation
Students attribute success and failure to luck.	Students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort.

In looking at these cultural dimensions, it is easy to imagine the confusion that might occur in a classroom when students are expecting the teacher to have all the answers, with students waiting on the teacher to tell them what to do. Understanding the differences that could exist in a classroom of newcomers offers an opportunity to compare cultural difference, gaining insight into how cultures shape learning.

Student Engagement Strategies

Student engagement, according to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), is a multidimensional construct that unites three components (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement), allowing it to be thought of as a meta construct. Fredricks and McColskey (2012, p. 764) describe the three components of engagement as follows.

- Behavioral engagement draws on the idea of participation and includes involvement in academic, social, or extracurricular activities, and it is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out.
- Emotional engagement focuses on the extent of positive (and negative) reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, or school. Others conceptualize emotional engagement as identification with the school, which includes belonging, or a feeling of being important to the school, and valuing, or an appreciation of success in school-related outcomes.

- Cognitive engagement is defined as student's level of investment in learning. It includes being thoughtful, strategic, and willing to exert the necessary effort for comprehension of complex ideas or mastery of difficult skills.

Lei, Cui, and Zhou (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of sixty-nine independent studies (196,473 participants) to determine what effect student engagement had on academic achievement. The results of the meta-analysis indicated there was a medium positive correlation of all facets of student engagement and academic achievement, meaning a higher level of the overall meta-construct (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement) was associated with higher academic achievement.

Lei et al. point to Finn's (1989) participation-identification model of student engagement for an explanation of these findings. This model suggests that continued behavioral engagement leads to successful academic performance, that turns into students' greater recognition of the importance of school. This model has a positive feedback effect, where students are motivated to devote themselves to school study activities because of the recognition of the importance of school, leading to additional improvement of academic achievement. Finn (1989) stated "the idea that successful students develop a sense of identification with school while less successful students do not, or not to the same extent, has been described in positive terms under such rubrics as 'affiliation,' 'involvement,' 'attachment,' 'commitment,' and 'bonding' and in negative terms such as 'alienation' and 'withdrawal'" (p. 123).

Lei et al. (2018) found that of the three types of engagement, the effect size was highest between behavioral engagement and academic achievement, with cognitive engagement followed by emotional engagement with the lowest effect size. Wen, Zhang, Yu, and Dai (2010) found evidence that there may be a serial relationship model between student engagement and academic achievement, with emotional engagement leading to cognitive engagement, which leads to behavioral engagement, which leads to academic achievement. This might explain the lower effect sizes of the cognitive and emotional engagement components.

Connecting Family and Schools

Jung and Zhang (2016) found that "parental involvement in children's school related activities is directly related to their academic achievement, cognitive development, and English ability" (p. 345). Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) suggest families of newcomers may not be aware of the ways they can participate in U.S. schools. Families of newcomers should be encouraged to: advocate for their children and school; encourage their children's achievement, positive behavior, persistence, and active participation in learning and school activities; ensure that their children attend school every day ready to learn; communicate with the school about absences and any special circumstances affecting the student; and collaborate, volunteer, and engage in decision-making to improve the quality of the school.

Implementation within *Benchmark Hello!*

In *Benchmark Hello!*, each week parents receive a letter, translated into their home language, that introduces the week's topic, what instruction will be included in that topic, and how the family can help reinforce the topic outside of school. This letter can be returned to school by the child with questions or information that will be helpful for the teacher to understand. The Home–School Connection activities

vary week to week but always validate a family's knowledge and culture. The academic content is appropriate to students' grade level, and family members are encouraged to participate.

Assessment – Formative and Summative

The Newcomer Took Kit (USDOE, 2016) encourages classrooms to implement extensive formative assessment practices to inform instruction. In fact, Shore, Wolf, and Heritage (2016) suggest formative assessment can be viewed as part of the instructional process rather than a test instrument itself. Further, ongoing formative assessment can provide feedback about how students' conceptual, analytical, and language development are progressing, allowing teachers to adjust instruction if necessary, providing students with timely useful feedback, and encouraging student to reflect on their own thinking and learning.

Heritage (2010) identifies formative assessments will help teachers to:

- Understand that newcomers are a heterogeneous group, and that each student learns differently
- Continually assess achievement
- Obtain evidence of how students' thinking and language use evolve during the learning process; determine if students act on what they hear and see in real time
- Continually monitor the emergence of language and adapt to students' needs by designing new strategies that advance language learning
- Observe student performance to change instruction while it is happening and provide feedback and support that allows the student to self-assess performance

According to Reynolds and Livingston (2012), while a formative assessment involves providing feedback to students, a summative evaluation involves the determination of the worth, value, or quality of an outcome. "In the classroom summative evaluation typically involves the formal evaluation of performance or progress in a course" (p. 271). Using the summative assessment as a pretest and then posttest after instruction has occurred shows the progress across that instruction.

Implementation within *Benchmark Hello!*

Both formative and summative assessments are provided with *Benchmark Hello!*. The summative assessment is in the form of a pre-assessment and post-assessment. The summative assessment shows the difference in the four language domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) from before instruction occurs to after instruction has finished.

Formative assessments in *Benchmark Hello!* include several different types of student work. Student portfolios consist of a systematic collection of student work. The Reflect and Share section of each lesson is designed to provide time to explicitly monitor and reflect on students' learning, adjusting accordingly. Formative assessments are also assessing listening comprehension, oral expression, reading comprehension, and written expression.

Summary

To assist teachers and schools with the vital role they play in welcoming newcomers, helping them adapt to a new culture, learn a new language, and integrate into American society, Benchmark Education

Company created a newcomer program, *Benchmark Hello!*. This document identified who newcomers are and some of the challenges that they face when starting school in the United States. Effective methods of teaching newcomers and ELs were presented, followed by more detailed language and reading instruction suggestions for second language learners. The important Home–School Connection and formative and summative assessments help keep newcomers on track.

Effective instruction alone is not enough for this group of students. Five topics relevant to a newcomer classroom were also presented, including Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, asset-based instruction, social-emotional learning, cultural dimensions, and student engagement strategies. These important topics are not exclusive to newcomers but the combination of these ideas with the strong linguistic support and accessible materials is what makes *Benchmark Hello!* unique.

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