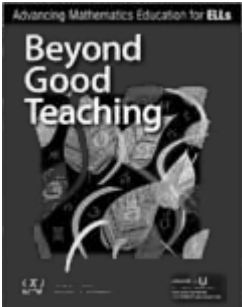


## **Beyond Good Teaching: Advancing Mathematics Education for ELLs**

May 2015 – Volume 19, Number 1

Beyond Good Teaching: Advancing Mathematics Education for ELLs		
Author:	Sylvia Celedon-Pattiches and Nora Ramirez (2012)	
Publisher:	Nation Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)	
Pages	ISBN-13	Price
236 pages	978-087536882	\$32.36 USD



In an age of industrial publishing, providing fresh insights is often a hurdle many authors cannot overcome. Nevertheless, in order to compete in the crowded market for education literature, authors often contend that their work provides a singular solution to some pedagogical condition affecting countless classrooms. In order to achieve this goal, authors often supply a quick fix that can supposedly be administered to all classrooms and pedagogical practices uniformly in order to alleviate the extenuating circumstances which lead to poor educational outcomes. These quick fixes often manifest themselves as either a new teaching method, a new manual for teachers, or a sentimental story about the dilemmas of a particular student demographic which is then punctuated with a call for reform. While most of these works on the surface are very compelling, a rigorous probing often reveals that their claims are not founded on diligent research.

*Beyond Good Teaching: Advancing Mathematics Education for ELLs* takes a vastly different approach. Edited by Sylvia Celedon-Pattiches and Nora Ramirez, the authors masterfully compose a treasure-trove of resources which form an undeniable link between suggested practice and thorough research. In order to accomplish this link between suggested practice and research, Celedon-Pattiches and Ramirez tap into the expertise of some of the leading academics across the U.S., including Professors from

Boston University, New Mexico State University, Purdue University, the University of Arizona, and Washington State University.

The enormous amounts of expertise of these leading academics includes: Cognitive demands on English Language Learners (ELLs) at advanced levels of mathematics both at the elementary and secondary school levels; Creating environments conducive to learning mathematics for ELLs; Different forms of assessments and the role these play in observing and learning about ELLs' mathematics understanding; Instructional principles and designing mathematics lessons which address reading, writing, listening, speaking, and presenting; and, Language demands of mathematics word problems for both students and their families.

However, *Beyond Good Teaching* is not simply a gathering of research with endless pages of academic language. Instead, Celedon-Pattiches and Ramirez skillfully weave the research findings of these leading scholars into a series of illustrations offered from the real-world experiences of highly accomplished practitioners. These practitioners include teachers and administrators at K-8 schools in Arizona, elementary and high schools in New Mexico, the Education Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey, and various other school districts around the country. By including a piece of a practitioner's real-world experience at the beginning of each chapter or case study, Celedon-Pattiches and Ramirez not only underline the practicality of any pedagogical guidance, but also allow the reader to contemplate real-world scenarios in which these research findings can have a significant impact.

In addition to the quality of its contents, *Beyond Good Teaching* is uniquely organized to allow the reader to absorb its information by reading the chapters and case studies and by viewing links to resources and other supplementary materials. The interactive design of this book requires the reader to move back and forth between the chapters and online resources, and hence may present an obstacle to audiences who are not adapt to, or interested in, pedagogical resources that rely on the use of technology. Nevertheless, for audiences who are not opposed to engaging an interactive pedagogical resource, or for the readers who prefer more than the written transference of information, *Beyond Good Teaching* offers a rich variety of resources that inform the reader and reinforce pedagogical suggestions through the use of many real-world examples. In fact, the technical expertise necessary to gain access to these additional resources is minimal.

Celedon-Pattiches and Ramirez amply and intelligently argue that the content of *Beyond Good Teaching* is useful to a large portion of the teaching profession today. That is, these well-crafted tools that aid in the teaching of mathematics to ELLs do not merely help a small group. Rather, as the population of ELLs grows, these pedagogical insights should be noticed and utilized by the entire teaching profession. To make this point, Celedon-Pattiches and Ramirez state that the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition recorded approximately 5.3 million ELLs in the United States in 2008, with a growth of over 53 percent from 1997-1998 to 2007-2008. Furthermore, between 1995-2005, states such as Alabama, Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Nebraska have seen a growth of 300 percent or higher in the number of

ELLs. The referencing of this data drives home the point that pedagogical practices must address the growing population of ELLs in all regions of the United States, and all levels of education. Therefore, the target audience for *Beyond Good Teaching* should not just be ELL teachers, but also include anybody who comes in contact with ELLs and their families, including guidance counselors, school administrators, and policy-makers.

While there is undoubtedly a need for insight into the mechanisms of mathematics instruction to ELLs, writing a single book to encompass all these insights would be impossible. Instead of enumerating what has already been deemed good teaching practices in the education literature, Celedon-Pattiches and Ramirez expand on what is already known by specifically addressing the language demands of students who are developing skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and presenting in a second language while learning mathematics. To meet this challenge, Celedon-Pattiches and Ramirez continually highlight how the strategies presented in *Beyond Good Teaching* are different from teaching mathematics to non-ELL students. Additionally, Celedon-Pattiches and Ramirez repeatedly emphasize how identifying and understanding these pedagogical strategies will be useful to practitioners, coaches, and professional developers.

Even though most of the chapters follow a very similar format, chapters 5, 6, and 8 stand out from the rest. These three chapters consist mainly of case studies dealing with teaching mathematics to ELLs in elementary school, teaching mathematics to ELLs in secondary school, and assessing ELLs in mathematics, respectively. These case studies provide a very unique insight into crafting teaching strategies and habits that are invaluable to all teachers, but to early career teachers in particular. It is common knowledge that most novice teachers come into the profession eager and willing to help students grow be in and outside of the classroom. Often this goodwill is trumped by a lack of know-how, simply because the novice teacher lacks experience. By providing case studies with relevant pedagogical discussions based in research, *Beyond Good Teaching* allows the teacher to gain valuable experience and insights before encountering these situations. This allows teachers from all ranks to grow professionally.

Despite the fact that the resources and insights offered throughout *Beyond Good Teaching* are undoubtedly invaluable to the practice of mathematics instruction to ELLs, and while each chapter and case study uniformly follow a standard format, the volume potentially reads as a somewhat random collection of case studies and research. Nevertheless, *Beyond Good Teaching: Advancing Mathematics Education for ELLs* is an invaluable resource for current and future teachers who teach mathematics to ELLs or who teach English as a Second Language. Similarly, the fact that this book includes lesson planning tools, instructional strategies which differ from traditional approaches to teaching mathematics, and a multitude of case studies making this book the perfect companion to any university level education class. A website, directions to external links, as well as other supplemental materials accompany this well-rounded interactive book. Because of the growing population of English Language Learners in the United States, I highly recommend this book.

**Reviewed by**

Kelly Hirschbeck

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

khirschb@uncc.edu

Copyright © 1994 - 2015 TESL-EJ, ISSN 1072-4303

Copyright rests with the authors.