Preface

If there is one challenge that teachers are likely to continue facing in coming years, it will be working with an increasingly diverse student population. This will be true not only in terms of the cultural backgrounds of children, but also in terms of the languages they speak. Already in many schools, English is the native language for only a minority of the school population. During lunch, an astute observer can hear literally dozens of different languages being spoken in a single school. Needless to say, it makes for some very interesting work in the classroom when a significant number of students may not be able to communicate effectively with the teacher, or with one another, much less understand the dominant language of instruction.

As just one example, one of our students, Thuy, moved from Vietnam to Southern California when she was nine years old. She had been a confident and well-liked student back home, with lots of friends. Yet once she arrived at her new school in America, she found herself isolated and confused. She didn't understand any English, so she found it difficult to interact with any of the other students or communicate her interests to her teacher.

There was only one other Vietnamese student in Thuy's school, which was located in a predominately Mexican American part of the region, yet even this student wanted nothing to do with this foreigner; she didn't want to lose her own popularity by associating with the new kid who didn't talk. Over the coming days and weeks, Thuy tried hard to pick up the language of her new country, but it was difficult when everyone ignored her. She listened to conversations as much as possible and tried to practice pronouncing the strange, new words when she was alone. Eventually, through persistence and a level of desperation to communicate with her agemates, Thuy was able to learn enough rudimentary grammar and

vocabulary to begin carrying on basic conversations. Now she was making progress!

Imagine Thuy's surprise when she soon discovered that she had been learning Spanish, not English! Since Spanish was the primary language of the children in the school, that was the primary means by which they were talking to one another, and the language that Thuy found herself acquiring—all the time believing that she had been learning English. This is but one illustration of the language complexity that exists in so many of our schools today.

Whether students are recent immigrants, inhabitants of a bilingual (or trilingual) home, or living in homes in which only native languages are spoken, they struggle tremendously with the burdens of not only keeping up with their schoolwork and establishing a social network, but also doing so with limited or nonexistent English-speaking skills. Their school performance suffers significantly, or, as in the case of children like Thuy, they may become isolated and see themselves as worthless, stupid, or poor learners.

When such a student is first presented in the classroom doorway, many questions may come to the teacher's mind: How can I possibly help this student when we don't even speak the same language? How will the other students react to having this person in their midst? How can I meet this student's special needs and provide a successful school experience? What can I do to make the adjustment easiest for all of us? And, how can I do this without exhausting myself in the process?

This ever more frequent situation does indeed present some obstacles. Fortunately, there are a number of options available to the general education classroom teacher who is looking for supplemental skills, ideas, and resources to better serve students acquiring English. The purpose of this book is to help teachers function more effectively with this student population and to do so in a way that enhances rather than complicates the classroom environment.

WHO CAN USE THIS BOOK

This book is directed first to the population of beginning teachers who are being initiated into the realities of teaching as a career. It is overwhelming enough to think about managing a relatively homogeneous group of students without contemplating the added

complexities of working with a class in which the children don't all speak the same language. Useful strategies for English language learners will thus augment a teacher's repertoire. Indeed, some school districts organize support groups for new teachers in which they can talk about issues and situations that confront them, such as working with English learners in the regular classroom. The strategies presented here will serve as a handy reference for teachers facing an increasingly diverse school population.

Next, students in teacher education courses will find this a useful primary or supplementary text. As teacher candidates prepare to meet the needs of diverse school populations, this book addresses the concerns and fears of those who have not had the training or opportunity to work with English learners.

Also, veteran teachers who are experiencing professional transitions in their work—who may have logged years of experience in the classroom but have had few opportunities to work with students new to the English language—will also find many of the concepts and methods described in this book quite helpful.

Finally, anyone involved in professional development for teachers, such as curriculum specialists, teacher mentors, and administrators, will find this book a valuable reference.

OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS

This book is derived from a previous work, *Children With Limited English: Teaching Strategies for the Regular Classroom*. When first published, it was one of the few resources available for practicing teachers. The second edition was expanded to include material on cultural backgrounds, values, learning styles, multiple intelligences, and applications of brain research to the practice of teaching diverse students. Since that time, there has been new thinking in the field, additional research, and many new teaching innovations that have been incorporated into contemporary practice. *English Language Learners in Your Classroom: Strategies That Work* greatly improves the previous book, with connections to current research, additional teaching strategies for building literacy, and the inclusion of checklists and tables, including how to create a comfortable classroom environment, develop a student roster of English learners, and use a guided lesson plan format.

Most significantly, we have added a new coauthor and voice to this project, that of Chris Street, who provides additional expertise in the areas of literacy, technology, and teacher preparation. New to this edition are updated demographic information with future projection trends; a separate chapter on literacy skills with specific resources for reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities; and a reinvigorated chapter on integrating current technology in the classroom, with suggestions for online resources.

The progression of chapters follows a pattern that resembles quite closely what practicing teachers actually do when they face the challenges of helping English learners. The first two chapters address the crucial task of developing relationships with students and parents in such a way as to build trust and establish a comfortable environment. Chapter 3 reviews principles related to second-language development. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present a wealth of practical teaching strategies. Chapter 7 focuses on ways to incorporate technology in the classroom, with sample online resources for students and teachers. Chapter 8 encourages teachers to collaborate with other professionals in the school and in the community as a way to involve others in the learning process. Finally, Chapter 9 pulls everything together and offers suggestions for planning strategic and effective lessons for the English learners in your classroom.

It is quite clear that the future of our educational system in this country will be determined largely by our willingness and ability to help an increasingly diverse population of children who want and deserve the chance to achieve their dreams.