

Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

Susanna Miller: Good afternoon everyone and welcome to LD@School's Webinar. My name is Susanna Miller, and I will be your moderator this afternoon.

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After the webinar, we will be sending out the presentation slides, a link to a survey, and a link to the educator toolkit. In approximately three weeks, the webinar recording will be available and we will send a link to all participants.

If you would like to access a copy of the slides and the educator toolkit right now, you can do so by visiting our padlet, the address is right there at the top of the screen, but I will also copy and paste it into the chat once I'm done speaking.

The LD@school team is very pleased to welcome our guest speakers today. Brenda Sevillano-Pena and Maryteresa Nocera, whose presentation this afternoon is entitled, how does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development.

The ministry of education has provided funding for the production of this webinar. Please note that the views expressed in this webinar are the views of the presenter and do not necessarily reflect those of the ministry of education nor the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario.

We will also be tweeting throughout this webinar so if you'd like to participate in the conversation, you can send us a tweet by using our handle at LD@school or the hashtag #LD Webinar.

That takes care of all the housekeeping for this afternoon so let's get started. Please join me in welcoming our presenters for today. Brenda Sevillano-Pena is a qualified early childhood educator and teacher who takes great pleasure in supporting her youngest learners as they explore and learn about the world around them. In her role as early years resource lead K to 2, for the Toronto Catholic District School Board, Brenda services the entire board in providing professional development for educators as well as co-teaching and co-planning. She strives to build a community of educational practitioners that value and believe in the power of play. Maryteresa Nocera began her teaching career as an early childhood educator in both Toronto and Montreal. She's taught for the TCDSB for over 20 years, teaching kindergarten to grade five in different schools across the city. In her present role with the early years department, Maryteresa provides programming support to kindergarten, educator teams across the TCDSB. She's inspired every day by the students and educators whom she has the pleasure to meet and work with. Maryteresa believes passionately in working collaboratively with educators, families and communities to support all learners. Maryteresa is also a part-time educator for York



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

University, where she teaches the kindergarten additional qualification certificate courses. Now we will pass the floor over to Brenda and Terry.

Brenda Sevillano: Hello everyone and welcome today. My name is Brenda Sevillano, I'm very happy to welcome you all to today's session. I am also joined today with my colleague, Terry.

Maryteresa Nocera: Hi, I'm Maryteresa Nocera, it's a pleasure to be here and to be presenting together with Brenda this afternoon. We're really excited to be sharing our learning and our thinking out loud, perhaps of the journey we've been on in understanding our own, how we are culturally responsive in our classrooms and in the work that we do.

Brenda: Yes, so today's session is sharing our learning about culturally responsive pedagogy. How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development? Today we're talking about culturally responsive pedagogy using Zaretta Hammond's work. Zaretta Hammond is the author of the book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain* and is renowned for her research on issues around equity, literacy and culturally responsive teaching. This is our understanding thus far and as we continue to delve deeper into this topic and its impact in teaching literacy. We really hope that you enjoy today's session and that you'll be able to gather new learning and dive further deeper into this topic as you move forward in your trajectory and learning. With that being said, we'll talk about what today's sessions are going to entail. Let me just go into the next slide.

Today we're going to talk about four topics. First one is, why this learning for this child at this time. That's at the forefront of all the work that we do. What is culturally responsive teaching is the second part. The third part is how do we build cognitive routines that become habits of mind? Lastly, or the fourth part is a toolkit, and the toolkit will be to support your journey further in this topic.

I'm going to hand it over to my colleague, Terry.

Maryteresa: We're going to always begin with this question. A few years ago I had the pleasure of being involved in the rollout of the full day kindergarten. One of the things that has always stuck in my mind, was during one of our webinars, we learned about this questioning, why this learning for this child at this time? I think one of the things as educators and as Brenda said, we hope today to give you the opportunity to dig deeper into some topics, but also to go a little bit further into your understanding, but also to reaffirm the things that you're already doing.

When we asked that question why this learning for this child? We wanted to talk a little bit about our image of children. We always begin with that view of our students as being capable and competent. Seeing the students from the lens of asset rather than that deficit lens, and it's



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

such a critical piece. When you take a look at this image that we have on the screen, we think about, children come to us with so many things that they already know. There's so many literacies that they bring to our classrooms. When we see them as capable and competent, we plan learning opportunities that are different. We engage them in a different way. We include them in goal setting differently. Each student becomes a citizen of a space, citizens of our classrooms. In this image, which is in the how does learning happen, but it's also part of our kindergarten program. You can see it's coming from the students may come from home or childcare, moving into kindergarten and elementary. Although the conversation we are going to focus on is the habits of mind and literacies at a young age, it's really about thinking about as we move forward, what is our common view of children? Do we have a shared understanding for the foundations of learning and development? Is there coherence across the pedagogical approaches and that lead to more seamless programming for students? We think about Zaretta Hammond's work, about how do we start to empower our students from the time they step into our classrooms all the way up.

That brings us to the next-- Continue with that question, but thinking about the ELECT document. For those of you that are familiar with the full day kindergarten program or the kindergarten program, you'll know that excerpts of ELECT are embedded within our kindergarten program. A lot of our early childhood educators know this as the continuum that they look at, the developmental continuum. We want you to think about it in a different way. Think about how you observe children. How you know your individual children and their families. Think about this as a guide that identifies the sequences of development, not something that you're checking off, but rather seeing it as a way that guides your thinking and planning. Do you know your children and families? Are you using relevant theories to support behavior? Once you notice something, how do you move them to the next stage? When we think about this, who are these families and people in our community? What literacies are they bringing into our classroom spaces? Then how do we get them to move through those to the next stage that they need to move to. Think about how we include children in learning and their voice. How do we create collective spaces where we focus on the collective rather than the individual. An example that we wanted to share is thinking about a wonder wall. Wonderwall creates an opportunity where we honor all the diverse thinkers in our classroom, where theories are placed on that wonder wall. Are the theories always correct? It doesn't matter. What matters is that we're asking children to then investigate, to take what they know and go, and then we scaffold their learning and their literacies in order to develop further those theories. Sometimes they realize that those theories maybe weren't the best theories, but we give them the opportunity to collaborate in a space that's safe and that values thinking and brings agency and collectivism into that classroom.

Let's dig a little bit into what is culturally responsive teaching. When Brenda and I were thinking about how we would share our learning, we did a lot of reading. We do a lot of rereading.



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

When we go into our books, we add sticky notes, and the second time we go in, we add different color sticky notes, and by the end of it, there's many colored sticky notes. As we were doing our research, we came across this chart, which we thought was fantastic.

Thinking about the distinctions of equity, there's a lot of misconceptions about what does culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy look like. We all know that we have this shared-- We want to make sure we have a shared language and understanding. At its core, culturally responsive instruction is about helping students become independent learners.

Culturally responsive teaching should focus on improving the learning capacity of a student, centering around effective and cognitive, building cognitive capacity and academic mindset. Sometimes what we do is we think, well, we've built a multicultural classroom. We have diverse books. We have created the conditions for equity and learning. When you're really deep, is that truly what we've been doing? Sometimes when we realize, well, maybe multicultural isn't just enough, we need to move differently, so we think about the social justice side of it. We discuss issues of oppression. We read these books about Civil Rights and their leaders. We engage our students in talking about their culturally identity. Sometimes we realize then too, that, well now I've got the multicultural and the social justice, but is that really responsive teaching? According to Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, the heart of instructional equity and the science of exploiting the cultural schemer funds of knowledge that students come into to make learning sticky, that's where we need to focus. We need to build instructional practices around opportunities for information that makes learning stick. When students are better able to carry that cognitive load, it leads them to do the more rigorous work. Which is the things that Zaretta Hammond talks about. In order to have the vital equity work, yes, we need the multicultural classroom. Yes, we need to have those social justice issues discussed. What we're trying to do is build those students thinking skills, and being codebreakers, text users, critics, meaning makers. Instructional equity happens when we scaffold the learning just right. That it follows the way so that a student can be independent. Culturally responsive education isn't just about mentioning the issues of race or bias. Zaretta Hammond talks about that you're also focusing on building that brain power, by helping students leverage and grow their existing funds of knowledge. Each is important, but without focusing on just one, that we need to focus on building each component and brain power is where we want to build, because otherwise there's a loss. Yes, we need all three, but the reality is we have to focus on building that independent learner, not a dependent learner.

Brenda: Thank you so much for sharing that, Terry. Along with what Terry has been sharing and talking about, a lot of our journey as mentioned at the beginning of our presentation was on Zaretta Hammond's work, which her text is *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain*. As she said, mine is very much sticky notes. For your own information, we put a quote from her text of what does it mean to be culturally responsive? When we're talking about, what does it



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

mean to be culturally responsive? We're talking about in terms of your pedagogy, your approach. It is described as encompassing, social, emotional, relational and cognitive aspects of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Cognition and higher order thinking have always been at the forefront of culturally responsive teaching, which makes it a natural partner for neuroscience and the brain. Culturally responsive teaching is also referred to as CRT. It is a mindset. It is a way of thinking about and organizing instruction to allow for great flexibility in teaching. Culturally responsive teaching isn't as simple as we think, it's much more holistic. In

fact, in most cases, it wouldn't even look culturally responsive to an outside observer. Zaretta Hammond says, "CRT is about building the learning capacity of the individual student." She says, as Terry mentioned, there is a focus on leveraging the effective and cognitive scaffolding that students bring with them. The simplest way to judge whether you're teaching is culturally responsive, is whether you're diverse students of color, English language learners, immigrant students are learning. If they are not succeeding academically within your classroom norms, your approach might need to be shifted to a more culturally responsive pedagogy. What are the implications for culture? It is becoming knowledgeable about the larger social political and economic conditions for equitable educational outcomes. Zaretta refers to culture as the brain's hardware in her book. She refers to the importance of deep culture, which is rooted in a worldview, core beliefs and group values, not the surface of holidays and food and dress, but really what's the core. There are patterns that unite cultures focused on community and cooperative learning. This is framed as collectivism. The saying would be, I am because we are. There's this community perspective. While there is an individualistic culture, approximately 20% of the world has this individualistic culture. Hammond says, "Most schools are centered around the individualistic orientation." She explains, keeping your eyes on your own work, pull yourself up by the bootstraps is the sayings that would mostly go for that individualistic cultural mindset. If teachers understand what motivates students who come from collectivist cultures, they will be able to reach these students more effectively. Most European countries are rooted in an individualistic mindset. While the collectivist worldview is common among Latin American, Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and Slavic cultures.

With all that being said Zaretta Hammond designed this Ready for Rigor Framework. The framework is called A Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching. What does this look like? These are instructional moves that you can use in your classroom with tools and strategies that are blended together to create a social, and emotional, and cognitive conditions. That allow for students to be more actively engaged and take ownership in the learning process. This sets the stage for helping students move from being dependent learners to self-directed independent learners. As we talked about at the beginning, this is culturally responsive teaching in the early years. What does that look like in the early years? Because we get our students that come into



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

the classroom. Most often they are dependent because they're coming from their home where a lot of support is provided by their family. How do we get them to grow in that independence, in a way that matches their culture? Using that brain hardware. There's four parts to the rigor framework. There's awareness, learning partnerships, information processing, community of learners, and environment. Those are the four components. Then if you notice that circle in the middle, the part on the outside talks about wise feedback, affirmation, instructional conversation, and validation. Those are the scaffolds that the educators are doing in the classroom. In the middle where students are ready for rigor and independent learning, is

because you've set the stage for learning. I'm going to go through each component. The first part is awareness. Awareness is developing the right mindset, engaging in self-reflection, checking as educators our implicit biases, practicing social emotional awareness, and holding an inquiry stance regarding our impact of our interactions on students. Widening our interpretation of ourselves and our culture as well as to those of students that we're serving. What is their culture? What should we be learning about, and what should we be doing? As educators, we need to ask ourselves critical questions of ourselves, our view of students. According to Zaretta Hammond, deficit-oriented beliefs of student's performance influence instructional decision-making results in giving students less opportunity to engage in curricula interesting tasks and culturally congruent ways of learning. When viewing our own implicit biases, our brains will try to keep our narratives in check. Some of these narratives maybe you need to be colorblind, not calling attention to race, culture, or language differences. We need to take a step back and recognize what is going on. How does our own culture value and shape our own expectation of the classroom? How do we expect children to behave socially in taking turns? Some educators would even debate reading certain materials or certain books, because of the controversy that might spark from reading that book. However, that is the emotional risk that as educators we have to examine those deeply held beliefs that influence how we respond to our students. In this image is a fish tank and this was an aquarium that I had in my classroom when I was teaching kindergarten. The whole idea of the fish tank came about capturing an image of what equity may look like in your classroom. Some of the things that I've learned through practice and through one of them is the author Jenna Bilmes from her text *Beyond Behavior Management*. She talks about how we support children in providing an equitable classroom. She says when she does this she'll talk to children and she'll say giving the fish what the fish needs and the rabbit what the rabbit needs. What does that mean? A fish needs a fish tank, he needs fish food, and a rabbit needs a its cage, and then it's carrots and it's toys, or it's food and it's different. In the classroom when you're working with students, you explain the same thing, all of us have different needs and different learning. It's providing that equitable awareness, not only for yourself but also for your children in your classroom to know that not everybody's going to be doing the same, or learning the same because we all have different



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

needs. That equity comes in giving your students what they need. Awareness is key to not perpetuating inequities in our learning, and so that fish tank really stuck out to me as an image that I could share today in really understanding the awareness piece about the ready for rigor framework. The next part is learning partnerships. You have to be deliberate in bringing in other ways of belonging. The culture of the school has to be shifted into a collectivist community-based relationship that is founded on social political and cognitive endeavors. According to Zaretta, this is consistent with the fact that all human beings are hardwired for relationships after living in communal cooperative settings for millions of years. Rapport plus alliance gives cognitive insight. In alliance the teacher makes the invisible visible. The teacher is able to get a better understanding of students thinking routines. The students become more aware of their own learning norms and is positioned to directing their learning. The affirmation and rapport are really about building trust. Challenging students within their zone of proximal development is very important. This image here just captures the importance of being an ally with students when you're either instructing or when you're learning together. Giving them feedback in emotionally intelligent ways so that students are able to take it on and act on it. Not seeing mistakes as something that are wrong, but seeing them as opportunities for growth and learning. Then the next piece is information processing. The ability to process store and use information dictates whether we are able to do complex and complicated thinking in the future, because they are the very things that stimulate brain growth. Zaretta Hammond says, "Culturally responsive information techniques grow out of learning traditions of oral cultures, where knowledge is taught, processed, through story, song, movement, repetitive chants, rituals and dialogic talk." Engaging children in dialogic talk supports their oral communicative competence. The ability to use language effectively and appropriately in social situations. Textual talk during shared reading is positively related to vocabulary gains. Providing explicit opportunities to use words in fact has been shown not to simply for children to hear the words, but also being able to use them in practice to communicate their ideas and receive feedback. Providing opportunities for authentic learning engagements. Here is an example of children working together collaboratively, reflecting on an experience of a walk that they went on. They were looking at images and trying to find within the image letter shape formations. Being able to do this. One, as a community. Two, in a conversational format. Three, were multiple entry points. Everyone had access to giving their thoughts, to giving their ideas and suggestions and building that community space was a very productive learning experience. They were able to build new understanding based off of their background knowledge that they had built through their experience in that walk that they did. That's part of the cognitive routines that we will later further talk about. Lastly community of learners and learning engagement. The classroom is a critical container for empowering marginalized students. It serves as a space that reflects values of trust, partnership, and academic mindset. It is the ethos to set the social and emotional tone that goes beyond the cultural artifacts. Remember beyond the cultural artifacts, we want to go deep. We must ask ourselves what values do we want to communicate through our environment? What do we want children to experience in the time that they are in our



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

classroom? What do the artifacts on the walls communicate to students, parents and to me about what is important, and what do we want the environment to teach those who are in it? If we consider those elements, we will be able to really be responsive to our students. Creating rituals through music, or calling responses, facilitate the transition to an activity. Inviting students to create these and to contribute and where they can have ownership in their learning. As shown in this picture, environments that are flexible, where materials are flexible and easily accessible. Resources are provided where students have the agency to gather their own learning materials and be constructors of their own knowledge based off the learning that they would like to take on. Those are just little examples. Now, we are going to move on to Terry.

Maryteresa: I just wanted to go back to that. No, you don't have to move the slide, but just to say that piece about understanding our own biases sometimes, and the pressures that sometimes we feel within our school communities to create the learning spaces a certain way. Sometimes we see so much on Pinterest, and on Instagram, and on Twitter, and in others classrooms. We have to remember that whatever we're creating in that space, we're either co-creating with the students and we're also reflecting. Sometimes throughout the year taking a picture of your classroom, it doesn't have to have the students in it, and if it does, it's even better. It's to see where do students gather the most, what's happening? What would I see if I was coming in for the first time? Where do I see students engaging and learning the most? And how do I see them learning? Do I see the learning happening? Because sometimes we get caught up in the ideas and we lose sight of the purpose of why we're doing things, so it keeps going back to that question, why this learning for this child? Maybe even adding, in this way? So that you're extending that thinking.

What we're going to do now, is we're going to talk a little bit about how we build some cognitive routines so that it becomes habit of mind. We're going to dive deeper into the cognitive power plant with Brenda in the next few slides. The first slide we're going to look at is talking about nurturing the whole child.

We love this image because when you think about our students, we think about play. When we hear the wordplay, we have a lot of misconceptions about it, but the reality is our kids learn best through play. We know that this is where that excitement comes and the learning, the exploration. That doesn't mean there is an opportunity for explicit teaching, for sitting down knee-to-knee, eye-to-eye, face-to-face to talk about a learning and precision teaching. It's also about thinking about the whole child. How are we building that compassion? That agency? The time for play has to also include empathy and curiosity. In giving kids agency, in giving students agency and control over their own experiences, we want to build positive relationships. Yes, we now need to talk about numeracy and literacy, but if we don't have those relationships, those foundational pieces in our classroom. If we don't honor how they learn best through play, then



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

we tend to lose parts of that child. I think our focus is really about digging deeper into our understanding and learning and supporting student learning but also thinking about how do we give all of these things that we're seeing in this image? If things aren't working, then what are we doing to support the student learner? I love that expression of when a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment which it grows, not the flower. Sometimes it's, again, going back to that image, I think Brenda, of that capable and competent. Seeing all our students, no matter the age, the grade, that they all bring learning and something into that classroom. How do we then build the opportunities through play, through explicit teaching small group, large group, to build on the literacies they already bring.

That brings us into the next. We're going to talk a little bit about scaffolding independence, and we're going to talk a little bit about Bloom's taxonomy and thinking of it in a way as the gradual release, as the most appropriate way. Don't forget when you're thinking about this taxonomy also how-- Brenda talked about the environment. How we're creating an environment where students have choice and voice and agency. Are we just giving them the basics and then hoping that they get to the top? Or are we actually building a learning space for them to make choices and to be creative, to get to the top of that taxonomy? Classroom studies show that underserved English language learners, for example, and students of color routinely receive less instruction in the higher-order scale of development than other students and their curriculum is less challenging and more repetitive, that watered-down kind of thing. Sometimes that goes back again to that image that we have. The instruction focuses on those skills at the low end, that kind of the worksheet drill and kill type of stuff. This instruction denies our students the opportunity to engage, neuroscientists call that productive struggle, that challenge. I think that kind of goes back to that zone of proximal development. Zaretta Hammond talks about, the construction has to focus on moving students through those through that taxonomy. Going through each one, going from the lower to the higher end, and creating opportunities for productive struggle that actually grows brain power. As a result, it gives the opportunity for them to be the independent learners. Sometimes when we're scaffolding for example, we might not provide feedback because we're worried the way the feedback's going to be received. If you think about wise feedback, feedback that's instructive, not necessarily evaluative, think of it as specific and right. Maybe the child is still working on that remember and understanding piece. Giving them the opportunity to be invited, to be creating the goals together, listening to your timely feedback, just the right amount of feedback. Not causing high levels of stress in that student, but creating that engaging environment where they feel safe to try to grow their thinking and learning, and moving up into the different levels. We want to shift the from lower level to higher thinking practices, the opportunities that we provide through teaching the phonics, the phonemic awareness. Moving kids through stages of literacy and starting where they're at, and that's the other piece. We make assumptions that all kids come in at a certain point, and maybe they're only at recalling facts. When we get to know those



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

students, the literacies that they've already brought to us may actually be at a different level in that taxonomy.

I know we've heard a lot of talk about literacy and the changes that are coming around that. The ministry of education put out this developmental progression of skills. What we have to remember, is that in partnership with in learning, educators have to take time to be explicit in the way they teach and systemic in structure. We see kids, where are they in their learning?

Where do they need to go from here? Where do we need to focus? How do we help students to set goals to move through this? It's vital equity work for students that we have to understand that the reading, the advanced decoding skills, that's what empowers our students. We want to invite them to set goals, but we also, as educators need to think about where are we in our teaching and how are we moving our students through this. That goes back to the feedback, it goes back to the kinds of opportunities we plan for our students. How are we engaging them at a level that promotes the movement on that taxonomy, keeping in mind the developmental progression of their skills as well, and going back to that framework? That's why we've added that image, going back to that idea of those four areas of teaching.

Brenda: Just to add to what you're saying, Terry. When we're working with students in providing that explicit and systematic instruction, it's important to give that wise feedback, validating students learning, affirming where they are in their trajectory. Having instructional conversations where it's fluid, where it's not just a one-person, but it's fluid. Where you are instructing, but the children are doing, because the doer is the person that's learning. That's very important to keep in mind. I just wanted to add that piece. Moving along here.

Now we're shifting to, what does this look like when we're scaffolding early literacies? Unlike reading, language develops in a context through implicit adult-child interactions, with very little direct support. Development of reading on the other hand requires explicit systematic instruction and without it, children will not learn to read proficiently. Learning to read for non-mainstream English, dialectic, and multilingual learners can be challenging task, especially in the face of insufficient general oral language skills. Using evidence-based instruction we know is the most effective way to teach all emergent readers in the classroom. It is essential for our struggling readers using evidence-based instruction. It reduces the number of students requiring more intensive support in a small group or individualized setting, thus providing that inclusive learning space. Educators plan and implement systematic and explicit instruction, and consider that students come to school with different prior early reading experiences. How do we continue to maintain a culturally responsive classroom within an evidence-based instruction? What I've done here is the visual shows you, what are the components of



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

scaffolding those early literacy skills. What we'll do is we'll go through each one and we'll discuss it. Okay. We have to begin by recognizing and valuing what students bring to their home-based literacies. As educators, we differentiate our practice. That is very important for students, especially our multilingual learners. While these students are learning the language of instruction and developing vocabulary, for most students, language skills, including phonological and phonics knowledge, and the conceptual knowledge, are somewhat transferable from one language to another. Phonics and proficient writing skills, and first language, are most likely to transfer between other alphabetic languages. When our students have that background knowledge and that experience, it's an easier transfer. When we're looking at decoding phonics and fluency, going back to Terry's point, which is avoiding that drill and kill, what does phonics and fluency look like? It's using visual cues to remember sounds embedded in picture mnemonics, applying knowledge of sound, spelling, correspondence. These are just some of those components that you would do during your instruction. This isn't everything. I'm just giving you a snapshot. What we want to avoid is the drill and kill through worksheets and using engaging games and stories for explicit instruction and mnemonics for instruction. Using those scaffolds to support that early literacy. Yes, you are doing repetition in your instruction through a scope and sequence, and it's systematic, but we want to avoid, again, I'm repeating it, the drill and kill of worksheets because that's where the engagement goes down. That's where we keep students in that lower end of Bloom's taxonomy, and we're not progressing them forward. The next part is vocabulary development, oral language development. Oral language expression, using dialogic classroom talk, offers ideas and opinions, and makes connections for students to express feelings. Oral language is often conceptualized as vocabulary knowledge, but a more comprehensive and accurate view includes phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, listening comprehension, and narrative skills. The previous practice of telling our children to, "Sshh, quiet, it's time for me, then it's time for you," I think we need to rethink that and really provide multiple opportunities for students to be able to speak, for students to be able to talk and to use the language that they're learning through their experiences in the classroom, and put that into practice. Just want to make sure that I mention that. Then, another piece is that when we do teach our children morphology, there's a lot of keen interest into the root of language. That also engages our learners. Phonological awareness. For a child whose first language is English, but uses a non-mainstream dialect of English, identifying and manipulating phonemes and words may be more difficult. We know that phonological awareness is the knowledge that spoken language consists of smaller units, including rhyme, syllables, and individual sounds, phonemes. The ability to focus on and manipulate those phonemes in spoken words is referred to phonemic awareness. As I mentioned, for our students that speak English, but speak of a different dialect, that may be more tricky. For instance, a common phonological feature of African American English is to have a reduction in the final consonant clusters. A child may be shown a picture of a hand and asked to segment the sounds of that word, and the child may respond Ha-aa-an because the child's dialect, the final sound, D, is variably produced. It's not produced as often. In fact,



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

researchers have found that there is a tendency for children who use a greater amount of dialect in their speech to have lower scores on standardized measures of phonological awareness. How do we make sure that we address this when we're working with our students? Again, it goes back to that scope and sequence. It goes back to that explicit instruction, to showing students how our mouths are positioned, and through practice. As an educator, having an awareness of my students and their home languages and valuing that. The whole point is not to devalue it, but to bring value to it. That goes back to knowing your learner, right? Exactly.

Maryteresa: That idea of also knowing the community you're working in. Sometimes when we enter into school spaces, we're not always aware we're new to the community, so really understanding who the community members are, and our students, their knowledge and understanding of language and the function of language.

Brenda: Yes. I'm going to go to the next part. In word study and written expression, this applies to knowledge of explicitly taught sound to print spelling of words in the English language. Example, teaching the word, boat, the students would recognize B and T, and leave only a portion of the word left to focus on. When we're doing this, greater use of practice of phonological features of mainstream Canadian English for dialectic speakers implied an increased knowledge with review, practice and imitation. There's a positive association with decoding and word identification. Again, it's going back to that review and practice with students, and giving that positive feedback, that affirmation, that whole piece that we had shared from the blue circle of Zaretta Hammond's Rigor For Learning Framework. Got tongue twisted. Print awareness. This is where students demonstrate the reading behaviors that are quick and automatic in terms of the directionality of how words are written in a book and understand that print has meaning by providing a productive struggle with multiple oral readings of challenging unmemorable texts, with educator guidance, and moving away from the pattern and predictable texts. Once students have that foundational understanding of letter-sound, print understanding, and moving away from, again, that remembering piece, so, bringing this back to Bloom's Taxonomy, and this goes all back to Zaretta Hammond's understanding of moving a dependent learner to an independent learner, in order to move them to an independent learner, we have to provide them that productive struggle. When we challenge them with unmemorable texts, so, not a pattern book, students will be able to use more of their learning into practice. Lastly, with listening and reading comprehension. This is demonstrating the ability to listen to and understand oral language and develop self-awareness when reading to comprehend. In this piece, we would like to suggest that reading aloud high-quality children's literacy books, builds students' knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge. This all came from an article titled Linguistic Differences and Learning to Read for Non-mainstream Dialectic Learners. I just wanted to make sure I referenced the article from this was researched.



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

The early emergent literacy skills development and the brain. It was only natural to dive into this piece when we're talking about early literacy, especially because a lot of Zaretta Hammond's work really dives deep into neural science and how it all works together. When we know the way the brain works, we will understand that, first, the brain has to be calm and ready to have a sense of connection. That here is the neocortex executive function. It represents a control tower for air traffic control, thus the image that's there. It makes sure that all the planes arrive safely, and everybody takes off safely. That's the same thing that the executive function does in our brain. It just makes sure to prioritize the tasks, filter distractions, and controls our impulses, and it's part of our working memory. I want to say that without our neocortex, that executive brain area being calm and ready, no learning can happen. That's number one. This part of the brain is the moderator, and we want to make sure that if there is anxiety, if there is trauma, if there is stress, we need to first address those elements, or else it's going to overwhelm the learning process and so, again, learning can happen. Neural science tells us that the brain feels safest and relaxed when we are connected to others we trust to treat us well. Trust deactivates the amygdala and blocks the release of cortisol, which is that stress. The core is the ability to help students level up so that they can carry more of the cognitive load, which, that's this piece here. We want and need is to help children accelerate their learning by increasing this learning muscle. We know that skilled readers are made, they're not born just to be a skilled reader. We now have a deeper understanding of this, on how the brain processes multiple sources of information while reading. Brain researchers have identified areas and networks of the brain involved in processing print, speech sounds, language, and meaning. Since these neural connections required for reading do not exist between these areas in the pre-literate brain, efficient pathways are built with explicit and deliberate practice. The instruction has a significant influence on building these networks over and above immersion, and when instruction is explicit, these neural pathways are built. The triangle is there to just show you that the different components of the brain is these pathways are the ones that need to be built through that explicit and systematic instruction. This is the part where we're doing that remembering, where we're doing that scope and sequence, where we're following a scope and sequence, or doing that explicit and systematic instruction, but we're also providing opportunities for children to move up Bloom's taxonomy, so, moving from that dependent to independent learner by understanding language and really explaining how language makes sense.

Maryteresa: Yes, and also building that relationship piece, which is what she talks about in the very beginning, right, in that rigor for her framework? Yes. If we don't feel comfortable, you talked about that, if we're not calm and ready to learn, it's very difficult to do all the other stuff. There's so many layers when we teach literacy. Sometimes when we think of literacy, we think we got to jump in there and teach those phonics and phonemic awareness, but there are so many layers when we teach literacy. The students have to feel comfortable, and confident and valued in our space.



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

In our next couple of slides, we're going to look at some of the ways that we can start to continue to build literacy, but also creating that equalizer. Inquiry is known as the equalizer. How are we creating lifelong learners who lean into learning, rather than lean on adults for learning? What do we put in place to support an emergent literate learner, to be independent? Developing reciprocal relationships with students, parents, and colleagues is sharing that ownership of learning. Many observe that as students are made partners in decisions about their learning, there's more motivation. There's perseverance that grows, and there's a result in more in-depth learning. We want to promote that autonomy. How do we do that? We partner with our students? Sometimes you'll hear educators say, "Sometimes I walk beside the student. I'm a guide next to them. Sometimes I walk ahead of them because I'm leading them. Sometimes I have to walk behind. I have to listen truly listen," that pedagogy of listening to what the students are saying. We know that, in the early years, if we have kids tinkering, figuring things out, "What do we notice about nature around us? How can we be investigators, interrogators?" Using our wonders and theories primes the child's brain. Children grow into their intellectual life. Children have routines, and then they learn, through those routines, to regulate themselves. The beauty of inquiry is that it provides an entry point for all children. In Ontario, we have our Learning for All document, which came out in 2013. Even, in that document, talks about how using inquiry provides opportunities for all students. They can ask questions and see value in their thinking. In inquiry, for example, last year I had an experience with a teacher working in a Grade 1 classroom online. It's very difficult when we switched to that online learning and knowing that, how do I engage my students? One day she was reading a story, and one of the students said, "I really miss traveling." She said to the kids, "If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you want to go? What do you want to learn about?" Through that, they devised a poll, and they put, on the poll, different countries that you could visit. Kids started talking about all the different places. Then they got to vote on that, and they ended up deciding they wanted to explore Jamaica. All of a sudden, these theories start to develop. They looked at pictures, they looked at books. Now we're taking everything together. The literacy brings in the understanding of the environment, the world around them, that there are places beyond. Comparing communities. What's the difference between living in the city of Toronto and living in a community in Jamaica on the island? So many things happened in that. There was writing, there was development of phonemic awareness. Providing that opportunities where children can see an entry point, and engaging those students to be co-learners with you. It's not just about, the educator must do, but also about, how do we do together? Again, you want to build the independent learner rather than a dependent learner. Inquiry is also a great place with theories and ideas that start to ignite the brain.

Brenda: As you're talking about inquiry, what we're going to be diving into is the cognitive power plant because when we are diving into inquiry, that's where we're really getting our brain fired up. The goal of culturally responsive instruction is to help students build, in their head, that cognitive power plant. That cognitive power plant is their brain. That allows them to



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

do more complex and challenging work by building on their cultural ways of learning, through explicit focus on the cognitive routines. That's what we're going to go through right now. We're going to go through the cognitive routines. The first routine is igniting the brain. How do we do this? We could do this through call and response, music, what you see, what you think, a provocation, an image. Collaboratively sharing ideas about a topic of knowledge. That would be dialogic talk. Just to bring it over here. Also, what Zaretta talks about is just that when we do this, we build rapport with students. She also references Reggio Emilia, saying that, as practitioners, we're called to that pedagogy of listening. It's important that we build this with our students so we have a sense of respect for, and interest in what our students contribute. Again, trust begins with listening. The early childhood experience builds towards children becoming an independent learner. It's important to know what ways we stimulate children's brains so that they are lifelong learners with that intellectual curiosity, as opposed to just being compliant. Understanding only that the learner learns. First, get their brains fired up.

Sometimes you may think, "Oh, we're going to do this really fun call and response," but she, Zaretta Hammond, talks about, that the call and response idea goes a little bit more deeper. It's just not a plug-and-play but it's more, how do we use it in a purposeful way to deepen our students' thinking? First thing would be, decide its purpose, decide on a cue, explain the procedure, practice, and then getting the energy just right. Reviewing information can be a call and response. For example, the class repeats what the teacher said, therefore, reviewing the concept or reinforcing the [?] and by answering a behavior. For example, "The short vowels are?" and everybody says, "A-E-I-O-U." Then the teacher would ask, or the educator will ask, "What are the short vowels?" Then the students would respond. Then you can reinforce that by saying, for an example, "James, tell us what kind of syllable ends in a consonant?" Then the student would say, "It's a closed syllable." You're directing those questions specifically, to students. Then you could say, "Excellent." Then you say, "Class, let's all repeat. Class, what is it called when a consonant comes after a vowel?" Then everybody says, "A closed syllable." Sorry, I was just tripping over my words. Then a review is a call and response that can be used to review material that was covered earlier. For example, "Yesterday, class, we talked about closed syllables. What did we talk about yesterday?" "Closed syllables." Then, lastly, the other thing could be maybe around regarding solving a problem. Solve. The teacher asked the class to solve a problem and call out the answer in unison. Other educators call this technique, choral response, a different name, but the same idea. What we want to do is provide that purposeful call and response for learning.

Maryteresa: This is a great tool, actually, Brenda, because it works with anything. When you really think about it. It can even be based on a story, "What did we read yesterday? Who was the main character?" It's something that could be done quickly. We know how we talk about those transition moves and within those moments, I know we haven't really touched upon that yet, but I know we'll get into that a little bit. In a transition, for example, kids are getting ready.



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

This is a great thing to do with that group that's ready at the door, and it's time to go out. Instead of leaving them there to be fidgeting, thinking about, "How do I embed these little tricks and tips within those moments?"

Brenda: Yes. From igniting, then we go into that chunking of that information. It's chunking information to the right bite-sized information. The brain can only hold a certain amount of information and processing in the short-term memory. That's that executive function holds that short-term memory. Remember that executive function has lots of things happening at the same time. That's why it's so short. Such as seven numbers for both just one minute, and then it's gone. To make processing manageable, we need to feed the right bite-sized information for students. When we're teaching children to understand, we need. To make sure that we're able to connect it to prior learning. Multi-sensory tasks and learning phonics, decoding, and syllable awareness can support in using multiple senses to process information that can help with working memory and towards building that long-term memory. Visualization supports the development of listening, comprehension, and reading comprehension as the brain creates those mental models of the information that is processing. The right amount of information to process new learning can be done with retelling stories using props to support the retell of the story. In this image, here, you have examples of mnemonics. If you're teaching the letter F, you can shape that F into a fish, and that just makes that chunking of that information move towards that long-term processing, that memory. Then, using their hands for building letters, or for feeling the formation of letters, and then other visuals in the classroom to support their learning.

The next part is chewing on. When we're having students chew on information, we want to make sure that they're able to chew it on and to store it in certain parts of their brain. Understanding that there are similarities and differences between information that they're gathering. What's the whole, and what's that part of the whole that they're learning? What are the relationships that are connected in the information that they're receiving, and what are the various perspectives that are happening at that moment? Then that further creates the habits of mind, and that's that automaticity that we want our independent learners to have over our dependent learners. One of the things I would like to emphasize here is that in order to build that cognitive power plant, we really need to provide opportunity for our students to chew. When they are chewing, we need to give them time, time and space, to process those cognitive routines so that our dependent learners can really take the time to understand how this all connects in their brain.

Then, lastly, is review. With every instruction, very important to have this element of review, review and reflect, because that's where those neural pathways are being built. If you don't do the review, they're going to use it or lose it, so students need to authentically apply their learning within 24 hours. Possible authentic review strategies include playing a game, solving a



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

mystery, solve a real life problem. Work on a long-term project, practicing regularly with intensity and deliberateness, building understanding and retention, which leads to greater intellectual capacity. Reading a text is like putting the pedal to the metal when it comes to phonics. It is when real learning occurs and is confirmed. Far too many phonics programs have far too limited connected to text reading, so dependent learners are often given more skill and drill work instead of the application of the exercise. In fact, they even need more reading practice through texts that are not memorizable. They need texts where they're constantly putting, again, that pedal to the metal, putting that learning that they're engaged in through that explicit instruction and practicing it. These images provide different suggestions or ideas. Using analogies, even just like the one that I said, pedal to the metal, that's something that we're able to connect with and remember. When we teach children using analogies, that's also the way of being able to be responsive to their cultural ways of knowing. Just one example that I'll say is, from my background being Latin American, my mom teaches me a lot through sayings. In Spanish, they're called [Spanish language]. That's a cultural way of knowing we would pass on learning through a saying. Those sayings will always stay in your brain. Those are different ways that you can connect with your students in your classroom is bringing those sayings, and how can you use that strategy when you're teaching them different tools for learning?

Maryteresa: What I love about all of these, Brenda, is that idea, with chew, you want to give them time, but with some of the other ideas, it's about that maximum focus for minimum time. Keeping in mind that when we're doing all of this, sometimes these will be in-play moments when you're down with the students and you're involved with them. In that moment, it's that teachable moment where you might give a new idea, or see if they're able to chew on that idea. Like, "Did you get it? Did you understand? Are you able to transfer that skill?" Thinking about ways that are engaging and having fun. When we teach, when we work with students who are learning to communicate, who are developing that oral language, it's, we talk a lot about, wait, observe. Then you've given that wait time, you've observed, you listen and you engage. When you engage, make it fun, make it exciting. I think sometimes with those sayings, for example, they stick in your head because they're probably funny or they might be scary depending on how they're set. When we move into the toolkit, which we're going to take a little bit of time to look at, is also that idea of gamifying things, making it social, storifying it. Thinking about those things, we're going to take just a quick visit to our toolkit that we wanted to share with you.

In our toolkit, we've added ideas that we've tried, have been shared with us by other educators, we've learned through Twitter, Instagram. This is just a snapshot of some of the activities that we've talked about. Launching your Wonderwall and inquiry. When you have an opportunity, take a look at some of these. Some of these were given to us through our speech pathologists that we work with. One of the things we did want to show you is the micro-video. When you have an opportunity, we're not going to watch the video today, what we mean by micro-videos are videos that are instructional videos that take no more than two minutes to three minutes.



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

These are great to share with families as well. If you are working on, for example, a certain letter sound, or a child is struggling, modeling that in a short, quick video, that then your students can watch in the classroom on an iPad, so that you don't always have to be beside them, or you can share it with families. Then families can see what you've been working on. Micro videos are really just a different way of sharing instructional practices with families and your students, and with colleagues as well, if you want. The toolkit has just got a whole bunch of ideas. When you have a chance to take a look at them, go through them, share them, and hopefully, they will link you back to some of the stuff that we've been talking about today.

We've gone full circle. Right, Brenda?

Brenda: Yes, we have.

Maryteresa: We-- Sorry, Brenda. No, go ahead. Go ahead. Go ahead. I was just going to say, one of the reasons we put this back, I know we've gone into it in a lot of detail, but we wanted to bring this framework back because both of us really believe that a lot of change and things that happen are about educator mindset as well. It's not just about the students, but it's also about us, and it's a motivational tool. It's getting us to think about, how are we preparing ourselves in receiving the students? How are we deepening our knowledge and understanding? How are we digging into our own biases when we're creating those learning environments? Brenda.

Brenda: Yes. I wanted to bring us back to this moment because this is really what culturally responsive teaching is. It's about this framework. It's about having an awareness of ourselves and all those questions that I took us through. It's that learning partnership that's so important, building relationships with our students. It's about the information processing, so, that whole brain that I took you through. It's understanding, what are the strategies that I can do to ignite the student's brain to have them chew on information, to give them that right bite-sized information that they need? Then to review. Then, lastly, building that community of learners and that learning environment that is so crucial for our students so that they could see themselves reflected in their environment because they are valued and they have that agency, but all of this would not be possible. Again, going back to that wise feedback, that affirmation, the validation that we give our students because when we do that, we will be able to move our students from that dependent learner to that independent learner because once they have the capacity to build their brain and have the knowledge on how to think for themselves as an independent, that metacognitive work that they need to do, they will be able to move forward in their own thinking.



Webinar Transcription: *How does a culturally responsive educator scaffold emergent literacy development?*

With that being said, here are many of the resources that we addressed today. You'll be able to peruse those when you get today's package, but I do want to say, I do want to end off with this image.

Our role as teachers is to empower students to make an impact in the world. Zaretta Hammond talks about culturally responsive information processing does not have to be race-specific. It does have to be grounded in the context of our students' lives. Think that for a minute. Our task is to find ways to access their funds of knowledge and understand their home-based ways of learning as starting points for designing more authentic learning experiences. With that being said, we would both like to thank you very much for joining us and being a part of our learning journey that still continues, and that we hope that you can join with us.

Maryteresa: Thank you so much. It was great to be with you today. Thanks. Thanks, everyone, for joining. Bye now.

Susanna: I'd just like to thank Brenda and Terry for that informative and engaging presentation. If our audience members have any additional questions about cultural responsiveness, literacy practices, or anything to do with supporting students with LDs, please visit our website, www.ld@school.ca, or get in touch with us on Twitter using the hashtag, #LDwebinar, or by emailing us at info@LDatSchool.ca. We endeavor to answer all questions we receive from our audiences.

On behalf of the LD@School team, I'd once again, like to thank Brenda Sevillano-Pena and Maryteresa Nocero for their presentation, and thank all of our participants today for joining us. Please remember that we will be sending out the presentation slides, a short survey, and a link to the educator toolkit tomorrow morning. The feedback we receive through the survey provides us with really important information for producing future webinars. We would really appreciate if you would answer those quick questions on our survey. As a reminder, we will be sending out a link to this recorded webinar in approximately three weeks. Thanks again for participating and enjoy the rest of your day.

