

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

**Have Your  
Culture And  
Learn English Too:  
Edtech for a  
More Inclusive  
Classroom**



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## Introduction

An increasingly diverse student population is changing the landscape of American schools. In fact, the National Center for Education Statistics reports that currently, there are roughly 5 million Emergent Bilingual students in U.S. public schools (NCES, 2021).

As a result, educators across the country are tasked with finding new and better ways to connect with and engage their Emergent Bilingual students. Creating more inclusive classrooms is a primary way to do this—the more inclusive the classroom, the more engaged the student. Engagement is key because research shows a strong correlation between student engagement and student achievement (Fredericks, et al., 2004).

So, how can educators keep Emergent Bilingual students engaged in learning for greater academic success? They can start by incorporating culturally sustaining pedagogy into classroom practice. While many tools and resources can help teachers do this, Lexia® English Language Development™—an adaptive blended learning program for Emergent Bilinguals—can be the cornerstone of a culturally sustaining instructional approach.

This Solution Spotlight outlines the ways Lexia English supports culturally sustaining instruction to better engage Emergent Bilingual students in language and literacy learning, laying the groundwork for future academic success.

**Emergent  
Bilinguals comprise**  
**>15%**  
**of K–2 classrooms**  
(NCES, 2021)

## What Is Lexia English?

Lexia English is an adaptive blended learning program that supports Emergent Bilinguals' English language acquisition through academic conversations. It's a speaking, listening, and grammar program that focuses on state language proficiency standards. The conversations are centered around math, science, social studies, biographies, and background knowledge to help learners incorporate academic English into other subject areas.



## Based on Proven Learning Science

Emergent Bilingual students benefit from proven strategies based on learning science to help them effectively gain knowledge. Learning science is an interdisciplinary field that studies how people best acquire knowledge and works toward the improvement of instructional methodologies.

Drawing on a range of disciplines from neuroscience and anthropology to linguistics and psychology, Lexia English delivers powerful instructional models for all students. These models are especially valuable for Emergent Bilingual students, who have historically been taught the same way as their monolingual classmates, when they need more dedicated speaking opportunities.

### Five Guiding Principles for Lexia English

- Learning English is not an intervention—it's an opportunity for bilingualism
- Incorporate an asset-based orientation
- Multilingualism and language variance are valued and seen as resources
- Diverse cultures are valued and seen as resources
- Honor and leverage the school-family connection



## What Is Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy?

According to Django Paris, who coined the term, culturally sustaining pedagogy requires educators to “support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence.” Its goal is to support “multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers,” sustaining “linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Paris, 2012).

## Developed by Experts with Diverse Backgrounds

**The team that created Lexia English is diverse**, bringing different worldviews and lived experiences together to design an inclusive solution that reflects the needs of today's Emergent Bilingual students.

With educational backgrounds in applied linguistics, the program's content writers are bilingual, many of whom learned English within a U.S. context. The combined contribution of their academic expertise along with their lived experiences make Lexia English a one-of-a-kind program that fully supports culturally sustaining pedagogy and practices.

## Incorporating an Asset-Based Approach

The asset model honors Emergent Bilinguals' heritage languages, cultural backgrounds, and other assets they bring to the classroom, rather than viewing them through an English-deficit lens. When multilingualism is valued and seen as a resource and talent, teachers can build learning around students' existing capabilities and knowledge.

Lexia English supports this approach, **viewing learners' heritage languages and cultures as assets**, and drawing on them to shape curriculum and instruction. The program offers instructional materials that are diverse in both image and perspective.

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## Prioritizing Speaking for English Language Development

For language and literacy skills to flourish, Emergent Bilingual students need daily opportunities to speak English. This can be supported through Lexia English. Using powerful **speech recognition technology**, the program enables students to practice their speaking and listening skills in a safe and nonjudgmental environment, helping to build linguistic confidence in academic English.

The program's speech recognition technology also enables scaffolded support, with immediate guided and corrective feedback, allowing for individualized learning paths as each student moves forward at their own pace.

When students have choices about their learning paths and are supported before they struggle, motivation and engagement increase. This is critical as research shows a strong correlation between student engagement and student achievement (Fredericks, et al., 2004). Engaged students feel connected to their academic experiences and develop more positive attitudes toward learning (Bridgeland et al., 2006).



## Guided by Diverse Emergent Bilingual Characters

**Seventeen culturally diverse and multilingual characters** are a defining component of Lexia English. Every character has a unique background and heritage culture, which they reveal throughout the program's levels. A few examples are included below.



Farah moved from Egypt to California when she was 7. Her heritage language is Arabic but she picked up English quickly. When her grandmother visits, she enjoys learning to cook family recipes.



Juan lives in a small town in Colorado that has a large population of Mexican Americans, allowing him to stay connected to his heritage. He was recently diagnosed with type 1 diabetes and wears pods to regulate his insulin and monitor his blood sugar, but he's managing it well.



Mei lives in San Francisco with her family. Though she was born in the U.S., she grew up speaking Mandarin with her parents, who are from China. Mei plans to be fluent in many languages and is considering a job in diplomacy when she grows up.

The characters speak with accents that reflect their heritage languages and use words of encouragement in those languages (e.g., Juan says, “¡Puedes hacerlo! You can do it!”). These accents are 100% authentic, as the voice actors actually speak the heritage languages of their characters. Each accent was thoughtfully selected to reflect the English accent variation found not only across the U.S., but also around the world.

Exposing students to many different accents and framing accents as assets—versus deficits—allows Emergent Bilinguals to see themselves as part of a diverse, growing community that encompasses and values a variety of cultures, worldviews, and ideas. It also helps them learn, as research suggests that familiarity with a native or non-native accent improves listener comprehension. Rather than being an impediment to learning English, exposure to a familiar accent, native or non-native, can actually help (White, et al., 2016).

## Fostering the School-to-Home Connection

Whether at home or in school, family or caregiver support is essential to driving better outcomes for Emergent Bilingual students. Research connects increased parent engagement to better student attitudes, improved academic performance, and a reduction in dropout rates (NEA, 2019).

For educators of Emergent Bilinguals, it's important to encourage parents to help facilitate language learning by: (1) speaking their first language at home with their children—to reinforce students' proficiency and (2) supporting the acquisition of English. Lexia English can help bring language learning into the home, **enabling collaboration with families and communities** to strengthen the school-to-home connection.

For example, the Lexia English Parent/Caregiver Report provides information about the skills students are working on, both in the classroom and online. Teachers are able to share this report directly with parents/caregivers via the myLexia® educator platform. It is available in multiple languages if needed to help families understand their own student's report. Additional resources, onboarding videos, and instructions translated in multiple languages are available in the program's Resources Hub, allowing students to access and use the program from home.

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Once a student completes a level in Lexia English, they receive an achievement certificate to be shared with their families. Like the Parent/Caregiver Report and additional resources, the certificates are offered in various languages. These certificates celebrate student achievement and important milestones in the program while enhancing the school-to-home connection.



## Conclusion

To reflect the reality of a more diverse student population and empower Emergent Bilinguals to thrive, now is the time to implement a culturally sustaining instructional approach. Lexia English can make it easier for educators to do so, providing a language and literacy curriculum that is diverse and engaging, while enabling students to see their heritage and multilingualism as an asset to be celebrated.

With Lexia English as the cornerstone of a culturally sustaining, asset-focused classroom environment, Emergent Bilingual students can acquire the literacy proficiency needed for academic success—moving us closer to a more equitable educational experience for all students.



To learn more about Lexia English and how it can help create more equitable learning environments, visit **[lexialearning.com/lexia-english](https://lexialearning.com/lexia-english)**

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Lexia is the Structured Literacy expert. For more than 35 years, the company has focused solely on literacy, and today provides a full spectrum of solutions for both students and teachers. With robust offerings for differentiated instruction, personalized learning, assessment, and professional learning, Lexia helps more learners read, write, and speak with confidence.

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