



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
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Why Are We Bilingual? U.S. Intervención en Centroamérica

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by Sandy Alvarez

The United States has long been a country of immigrants and today has over 50 million foreign-born residents. For nearly a century, the immigrant share of the U.S. population has had a visible impact on the curriculum in certain public schools. Bancroft Elementary School—one of the District of Columbia’s top bilingual schools, notable for its large population of recent immigrants from Central America—has adapted to the changing demographic and embraced a bilingual model. The curriculum unit “Why Are We Bilingual? U.S. Intervención en Centroamerica” will address how districts and schools approach bilingual education. Students will answer the question: “When and why did Bancroft become a bilingual school?” They will connect immigration, the school’s demographics, and bilingual education at Bancroft. Because Bancroft has many students from Central American countries with migration patterns directly tied to U.S.-backed wars and economic and political intervention, this unit will explore the U.S.’s role in Central America. The curriculum will also address how the U.S. received immigrants from Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala and describe the dual and discriminatory immigration policy toward these groups based on the U.S.’s Cold War politics. Given that Bancroft originally launched its bilingual program to serve the language needs of immigrant students predominantly from El Salvador, several lessons will focus on El Salvador.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 1; recommended for English Language Arts, History, and Social Studies, grades 1-12)

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