



# Multicultural Literacy in the 21st Century

by GABRIELLA DELEON-DEHAAN

*“To have another language is to possess a second soul.”*

–Charlemagne



## **LITERACY CHAMPION: GABRIELLA DeLEON-DeHAAN**

Gabriella DeLeon-DeHaan is a veteran Dual Language Teacher and English Language Facilitator in the San Bernardino City Unified School District. She is a Dual Language advocate committed to promoting Multilingualism and Cross-Cultural Education, while creating and facilitating many successful transformative educational programs. Gabriella has worked

as a member of the Latino Task Force in the San Bernardino City Unified School District in order to ensure equity in education. Additionally, she has been on several committees for District Curriculum Adoption including Social Studies, History, and Science. As a Science Fair Coordinator, she has created several after-school STEM Programs. As a result, her work was featured in The Victor Valley Daily Press newspaper when her students met the JPL engineers for the Mars Curiosity Rover Program. As an SBCUSD Onboarding Coach and Cal State San Bernardino Mentor Teacher, Gabriella has extensive experience with advising future educators.

Gabriella earned a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies and a BCLAD Teaching Credential from California State University, San Bernardino. She attended the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) for an internship in Anthropology. She later received her Master of Educational Administration and Administrative Credential from California State University, San Bernardino. She is the proud descendant of revolutionaries, entrepreneurs, and immigrant pioneers whose journey began in Central Mexico and brought them to the banks of the Colorado River, which has been documented in the books, “Children of the Revolution,” “Colorado River Boys,” and “Dukes of El Garces,” which she is currently writing. It was her father’s experiences in a pre-World War II railroad camp that inspired her to dedicate her life to helping marginalized individuals succeed through multilingualism, biliteracy, and cross-cultural education.



Artwork by Gabriella DeLeon-DeHaan

## One to Know: Adventures in CyberKinder, or How the Pandemic Propelled Us into 21st-Century Learning

Gabriella is currently developing a program titled “CyberKinder,” which fuses dual-language strategies, bilingual pedagogy, and the latest technological platforms to create a successful distance-learning online classroom for Dual Language Kindergarten students. It focuses on giving students 21st-century technological skills while, learning occurs in a format that is easily accessible to both the students as well as their parents. Gabriella developed this program as an equity solution to the seismic shift in education brought on by the 2020 COVID Pandemic. The curriculum integrates Multicultural Literacy, STEM inquiry lessons, and Dual Language principles to facilitate student learning and promote global citizenship. She is currently a finalist for the 2021 SBCUSD Ed Tech Innovation Award.

## What to Do

If you would like to know more about developing dual language education through multicultural literature, I recommend the following resources:

- [California Association for Bilingual Education](#)
- [Center for Teaching for Biliiteracy](#)
- [ELRISE](#)
- [CAL Center for Applied Linguistics Guiding Principles For Dual Language](#)
- [Science For English Language Learners](#) (Dolores Beltran and Lilia Sarmiento)
- [Mini-Shared Reading](#) (Barbara Flores)
- Beeman, K. (2019). [Integrating language, literacy, and content: The bridge to biliteracy](#) [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://www.teachingforbiliteracy.com/handouts/karen-beeman-cabe-keynote-address-july-2-2019-1-of-3/>
- Beeman, K., & Urow, C. (2013). [Teaching for biliteracy: Strengthening bridges between languages](#). Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing.

## More to Know and Do

Children's literature is a critical element in helping to develop a positive cultural identity and an understanding of the complex world in which we currently live. I grew up in the isolated Mojave Desert town of Barstow, California in a time before there was easy access to the internet. However, I never felt lonely because I was always surrounded by my family and books. For entertainment we would sit out in the yard around a campfire in the evenings where my father and grandfather would tell stories about our family's rich history [Editor's Note: See Gabriella's original artwork depicting her family's history]. They would also read classic books to us after dinner, such as Homer's *The Iliad*. I remember that my mother used to take my sister and me to the public library as a reward on Fridays. We always looked forward to the presentations and activities that went along with each story. These experiences are what motivated me to create similar family engagement activities for my students and their parents. I want to teach parents how to connect with their children through literature and to share the gift that my family gave me.

The following selections represent some of my students' favorite books. Each tells the story of how literacy is a journey to self-discovery.

- *Owl In a Straw Hat: El Tecolote del sombrero de paja* (Rudolfo Anaya)
- *Dreamers* (Yuyi Morales)
- *Arrow to the Sun* (Gerald McDermott)



### How to reach Gabriella

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