



Special Article Series Reprint

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Successful Bilingual Education Programs Criteria for Exemplary Practices in Bilingual Education

María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and Josie Danini Cortez, M.A.

Twenty-five common characteristics contribute to the high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs. The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) identified these characteristics through funding by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA). IDRA rigorously and methodically studied exemplary bilingual education programs in schools across the nation as determined by limited-English-proficient (LEP) students' academic achievement. IDRA now is helping others identify successful programs or raise the bar with their own bilingual education programs.

The 25 indicators that emerged from the research were clustered around five domains:

- School Indicators,
- Student Outcomes,
- Leadership,
- Support, and
- Programmatic and Instructional Practices.

This study comes at a critical time. There are an estimated 3.7 million LEP students in the United States, a persistent achievement gap between LEP and non-LEP students, and a critical shortage of bilingual education teachers with the preparation, skills and tools to ensure that *all* of their students succeed.

Over the next six months, the *IDRA Newsletter* will feature a series of articles on our research study's significant findings. The series will provide information on each

of the five indicators and outcome standards with first-hand accounts from teachers, administrators, parents and researchers across the country.

We begin the series this month with an overview of the research study. The primary purpose of this study was not to prove that bilingual education works – there are years of rigorous research that prove it does work when implemented with integrity. Instead, the purpose of this research study was to identify those characteristics that are contributing to the high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs. First, we will present some background information.

Condition of Education for LEP Students Bilingual Education Act

The *Bilingual Education Act* (BEA) was first enacted in 1968 as a response to the 80 percent dropout rate of language-minority (Hispanic and Native American) students. California offers an excellent example of the condition of education for language-minority students prior to the *Bilingual Education Act*.

In 1872, California legislators passed an English-only classroom mandate that lasted 95 years. In 1967, then Governor Ronald Reagan signed Senate Bill 53, repealing the English-only mandate and authorizing bilingual education in California schools.

In his 1999 testimony to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and

Pensions, Dr. Joel Gomez, director of the Institute for Education Policy at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at George Washington University, cites the reasons for the English-only repeal:

It [the English-only mandate] kept students from learning their academic subjects in a timely fashion; it caused language-minority students to be retained in grade because they were behind in their academic studies; it caused students to become frustrated, to give up and drop out of school. And most ironic of all, English-only instruction did not lead to mastery of the English language.

Prior to the repeal of the English-only mandate in California, only half of the California Mexican-American youth between the ages of 18 and 24 had even completed the eighth grade.

The intent of the 1967 California *Bilingual Education Act* and the federal version in 1968 was to help states and school districts develop and implement quality education programs for LEP students.

The word "quality" must be underscored for it was the intent that LEP students be afforded an equitable and excellent education, using programs and approaches that would accelerate their academic achievement and performance and hold all students, including LEP students, to high standards.

LEP Enrollment

There were an estimated 3.5 million LEP students in the United States in 1996-97 – a conservative estimate of LEP student enrollment as reported by the nation's state education agencies that receive Title VII funds. This represents a 6.9 percent increase from the previous year (see box on Page 3). This is considered a conservative estimate also due to the incomplete response rate of state education agencies to OBEMLA's annual *Survey of States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services*, which is one of the primary methods used to collect data on the number of LEP students in the various states and outlying territories and jurisdictions. For the 1996-97 school year, 54 states or jurisdictions responded to the survey – Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia did not participate nor did American Samoa, Northern Marianas, and Wake

English language learners should not have to give up their language, their culture, or their diversity as the price for learning English.

Islands.

Confounding the data collection and analyses is the fact that there is no federally mandated definition of limited English proficiency. While the *Bilingual Education Act* does include an operational definition of "limited English proficiency," LEP status depends largely on state and local agencies. In the 1996-97 survey, most of the state education agencies based their definitions of limited English proficiency on a combination of a non-English language background and/or difficulties with speaking, reading, writing and understanding English.

LEP Student Assessment

State education agencies use various assessment methods to identify LEP students, including home language surveys (which may be used to identify language backgrounds or determine limited English proficiency), teacher observations, parent information, achievement tests and/or referrals, student records, and teacher interviews. A few states report using between the 30th and 50th percentile cutoff

on standardized tests as a criterion for determining limited English proficiency.

Language proficiency tests are also used by states to determine limited English proficiency, including Language Assessment Scales, Idea Oral Language Proficiency Test and the Language Assessment Battery.

The primary reasons that the survey results are incomplete in determining the educational condition of LEP students are the variations in assessment instruments across states and the exemption of LEP students from testing or data not reported by the category of "LEP student."

Educational Status of LEP Students

With these caveats in mind, the national snapshot of the educational status of LEP students as reported in the survey is dismal:

- Thirty-three states reported that 5.1 percent (37,837) of their LEP students were retained one or more grades the previous year (1995-96). These states reported a total of 740,516 LEP students collectively. This is only 21 percent of the 3.5 million LEP students at the time.
- Thirty-three states reported that 1.7 percent (14,032) of their LEP students dropped out of school the entire year before the survey. Few states even reported any information regarding academic achievement as measured in performance on standardized tests.
- Thirty states reported 19.3 percent

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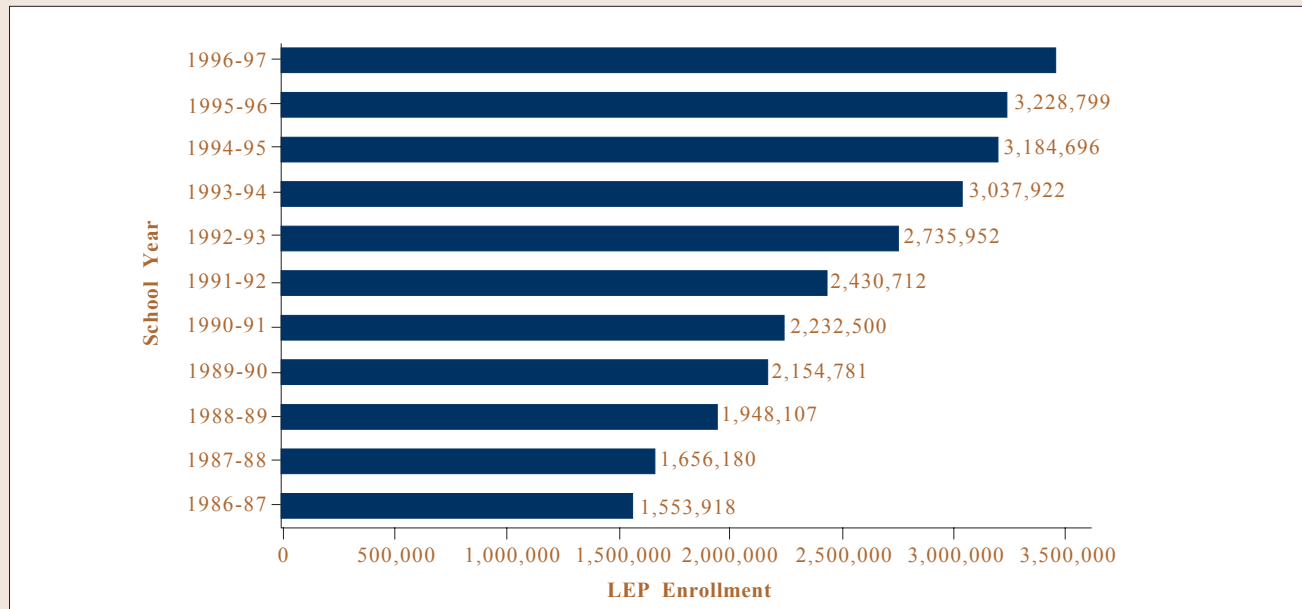
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U.S. LEP Enrollment Growth from 1986-87 to 1996-97



Source: Donly, B., et al. *Summary of Bilingual Education State Educational Agency Program Survey of States' LEP Persons and Available Educational Services 1993-94*. Prepared under contract for the U.S. Department of Education by Development Associates Inc., in Arlington, Virginia (1995).

(253,763) of LEP students scored below state norms in English reading.

- Thirty states reported 16 percent (211,433) of LEP students scored below state norms in mathematics.
- Eighteen states reported 6.9 percent (52,880) of LEP students scored below state norms in science.
- Seventeen states reported 6.6 percent (51,388) of LEP students scored below state norms in social studies.

LEP Student Services

Forty percent of U.S. teachers reported having LEP students in their classrooms in 1994, but only 29 percent of these teachers had received any training at all in how to serve them. L.T. Diaz-Rico and L. Smith report that between 100,000 to 200,000 bilingual teachers are needed in U.S. classrooms (1994). The critical shortage forces schools to rely on uncertified aides. D. Haselkorn reports that in California, two out of five adults providing bilingual instruction are bilingual aides (1996). In fact, California, the state with the most LEP students, was unable to serve 23 percent of their LEP students in 1995.

This is an important statistic to factor in any assessment of student achievement. The achievement gap between LEP and non-LEP students is indicative that many teachers lack the preparation, skills and tools to ensure that *all* of their students

succeed.

In the year 2000, the numbers of LEP students in California served by bilingual education programs has been dramatically affected by the passage of Proposition 227. In June 1998, California voters passed Proposition 227 that officially mandated an end to bilingual education in that state (with few exceptions). Now, less than 12 percent of LEP students are enrolled in bilingual education programs (California Department of Education). Thus, most LEP students are not receiving the services and programs they need for an equitable and excellent education.

Despite the political and educational realities of California, the country's leadership is still calling for *all* students to receive equitable and excellent educational opportunities, including equitable and excellent bilingual education programs.

The importance of this call to action is the underlying premise that native languages and cultures are assets, not deficiencies. English language learners should not have to give up their language, their culture, or their diversity as the price for learning English. The inherent value of all students and their characteristics must be recognized, acknowledged and celebrated. When LEP students walk into a classroom in this country, they should not be limited in their access to an equitable and excellent education. For that to occur,

teachers must be prepared to serve them.

Methodology Used for This Study

IDRA had one primary research question: *What contributed to the success of a bilingual education classroom as evidenced by LEP student academic achievement?*

"Success" was operationally defined as evidence of academic achievement (compared to district and/or state standards) for LEP students in bilingual education. Additional indicators and research questions that guided the IDRA study included the following.

School Indicators

- What are the school indicators, including retention rate, dropout rate, enrollment rate in gifted and talented programs and in advanced placement programs, enrollment in special education or remedial programs, test exemption rates, and program exiting standards (by LEP and non-LEP percentages)?

Student Outcome Indicators

- What are the student outcomes for oral and written language proficiency (by LEP and non-LEP percentages)?
- What are the student outcomes for content area mastery in English and the native language (by LEP and non-LEP percentages)?

School Level Indicators

- How evident is leadership at the school level, and what are the characteristics?
- How evident are the vision and goals at the school level, and what are the characteristics?
- What are the characteristics of the school’s climate?
- What linkages exist between central office and school level staff? How are they characterized?
- How is the school organized?
- What are the demographic characteristics of professional staff, and what opportunities for professional development are provided?
- What is the type, level and quality of parent involvement in the school and the bilingual education program?
- How do staff hold themselves accountable for student success, and how are students assessed?
- How are the staff selected and recognized?
- What is the type, level and quality of community involvement in the school and the bilingual education program?

- What are the characteristics of the classroom climate?
- What are the teacher expectations regarding student success?
- How is the program articulated across grade levels?

IDRA ensured that programs selected for site visits reflected the diversity of U.S. schools and included elementary and secondary schools, different language groups, LEP concentrations, and Title I targeted assistance and schoolwide programs as well as Title VII grantees (current and former).

In addition to the review of quantitative student and school outcome data, school demographic data, surveys of principals, teachers and administrators, and structured formal classroom observations were other sources of quantitative data. Qualitative data included structured interviews with the school principals and the administrators and focus group interviews with teachers, parents and students (whenever possible). Additional qualitative data were elicited from school profiles.

A framework was provided for describing each site visit thus providing a context and background for the visit. IDRA gathered, analyzed and synthesized all of these data. Results were then triangulated

to provide a rich and accurate picture of each program. Patterns and trends across programs were also identified, providing the empirical basis for the resulting criteria.

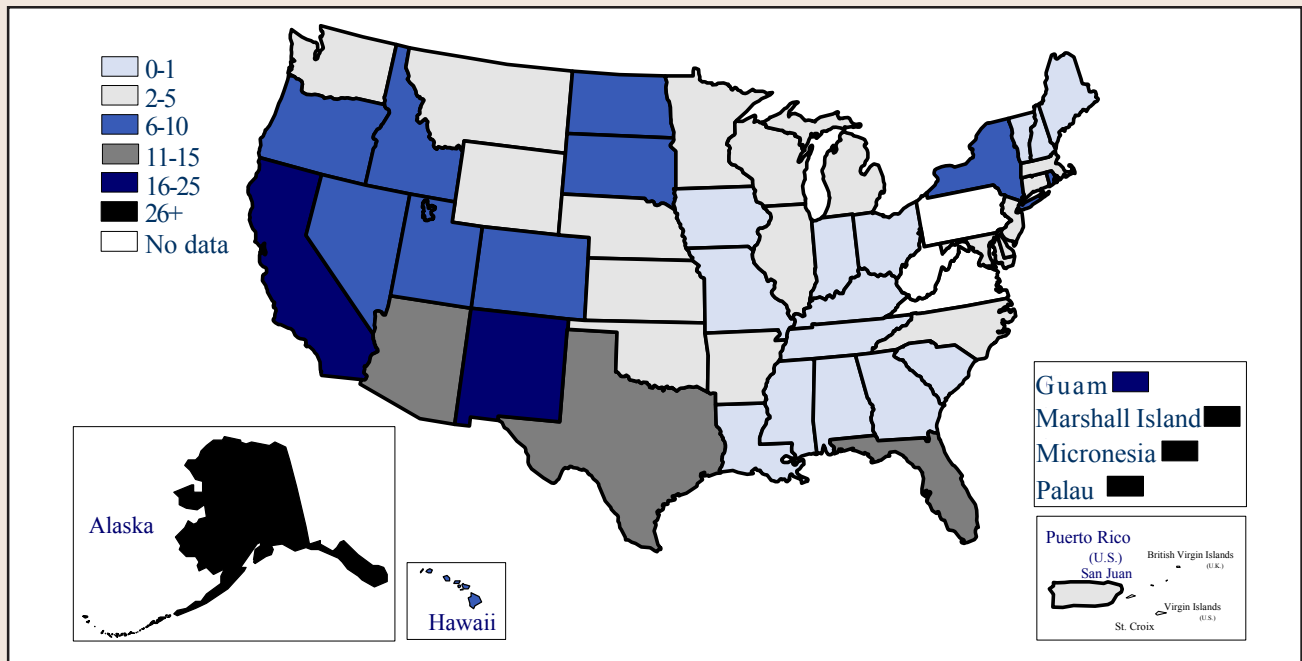
It is important to note that this research study was *not* an evaluation of bilingual education programs, that is, we did not evaluate programs using a set of characteristics and criteria already established. Instead, we developed the criteria by observing and learning from programs that had evidence of achievement for all of its students. These criteria can now be used by practitioners and researchers to assess programs and recognize areas that are strong and others that may need improvement.

It is also important to note that if each of the programs in this study were to conduct a self-assessment by these criteria, there would be no perfect program – one that meets 100 percent of the criteria. They would, however, meet most of the criteria with room for improvement for a few. Perhaps one of the most important lessons these programs teach is the need for constant assessment in a context of school accountability for student success, and/or focus on improvement and celebration of achievements. It is in this spirit that we present the major findings of this study. Next month, we will feature the school

Classroom Level: Programmatic and Instructional Practices

- What are the characteristics of the bilingual education program model?

Percent of LEP Enrollment by State 1996-97



Source: Macías, R.F. et al. *Summary Report of the Survey of the States’ Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services, 1996-97* (Washington D.C.: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1998).

indicators, including school profiles and organizing similarities.

Resources

Diaz-Rico, L.T. and J. Smith. "Recruiting and Retaining Bilingual Teachers: A Cooperative School Community-University Model," *Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students* (Winter 1994) v. 14 p. 255-268.

Haselkorn, D. "Breaking the Class Ceiling," *Education Week on the Web* (August 7, 1996). Available at: <http://www.edweek.org/archives>.

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Indicators of Success for Bilingual Programs

School Indicators	Student Outcomes	At the School Level: Leadership	At the School Level: Support	At the Classroom Level: Programmatic and Instructional Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Retention Rate ✓ Dropout Rate ✓ Enrollment in Gifted and Talented/Advanced Placement Programs ✓ Enrollment in Special Education or Remedial Programs ✓ Test Exemption Rates ✓ Program Exiting Standard ✓ Oral Language Proficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Written Language Proficiency ✓ Content Area Mastery in English ✓ Content Area Mastery in Native Language ✓ Leadership ✓ Vision and Goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ School Climate ✓ Linkages ✓ School Organization and Accountability ✓ Professional Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Parent Involvement ✓ Teacher Accountability and Student Assessment ✓ Staff Selection and Recognition ✓ Community Involvement ✓ Program Model ✓ Classroom Climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Curriculum and Instruction ✓ Teacher Expectations ✓ Program Articulation

Intercultural Development Research Association, 2001

Successful Bilingual Education Programs

10 Schools Serve as Models

María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and Josie Danini Cortez, M.A.

Editor's Note: Last year, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducted a research study with funding by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) to identify characteristics that contribute to the high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs. The August 2001 issue of the IDRA Newsletter began a series of six articles describing this research study's significant findings. The first installment provided an overview of the research design and methods. This second article features an overview of the schools' demographics and the major findings pertaining to school indicators.

Amid a backdrop of great language diversity among the students and parents that U.S. schools serve are schools with exemplary bilingual education programs and extraordinary individuals who are committed to equity and excellence. This commitment manifests itself as academic success for *all* students, including limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. These schools refuse to make excuses for a lack of student achievement; they refuse to settle for anything less than excellence and high standards for all.

While there are many such schools and classrooms across this country, time and resources dictated that IDRA work with only 10 schools and use their lessons learned as a guide for developing criteria that others can use to assess their own programs. The following provides an overview of these schools' demographics and the major findings pertaining to school indicators. There is also a profile of one of the schools as described by an IDRA researcher.

School Demographics

By design, the school demographics reflected a diverse landscape. Programs in eight elementary schools, one high school and one middle school participated in this research study. The student enrollment for

the 10 schools ranged from 219 in the high school to 1,848 students in the middle school. By geographic location, there were six urban schools, three rural schools, and one reservation school.

There was also diversity in ethnic representation. Hispanic students ranged from 40 percent to 98 percent of students enrolled; Asian students made up 2 percent to 41 percent of the students enrolled; Russian students ranged from 12 percent to 32 percent of the students enrolled; and Native American students comprised 3 percent to 98 percent of the students enrolled. The number of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students ranged from 20 percent to 100 percent. Four of the 10 schools implemented dual language or two-way bilingual programs. The languages used for content area subjects included Spanish, English, Rus-

sian, and Navajo.

All of the schools were committed to maintaining the students' primary language and culture while learning English. This commitment was evident in the school administration and staff, the majority of whom were proficient in two languages. Most of the office staff also were bilingual, allowing for open communication between the school personnel and the students and families.

Five of the 10 schools had Title VII funds, including one in California, that had received an Academic Excellence Dissemination grant in 1994 to 1996.

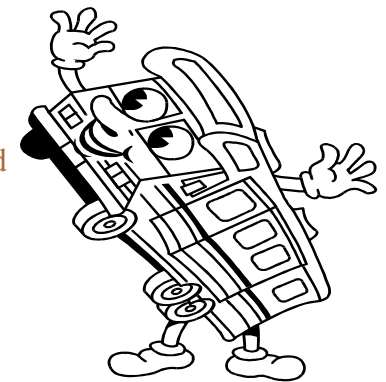
School Organization

Schools generally organized themselves by grade level teams with both vertical and horizontal alignment and accountability evident. Faculty met frequently, some

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This month's question is...

How do you measure student success?

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as often as three times a week. There was support by the administration for these regularly scheduled meetings, with the principals often planning the agendas, in most cases, with input from the teachers and staff.

Six out of the 10 schools included elective staff in their meetings, allowing for easier integration and alignment. Most of the time at the meetings was spent on curriculum and instruction, with staff using student data to inform curriculum and instruction decisions. Teachers were also provided regular planning time.

There was open and easy communication between the principals and teachers at these schools. Teachers reported frequent discussions with their principals via e-mail, meetings (formal and informal), open-door policies, and principals visiting the classrooms daily.

All of the schools had technology in classrooms. The extent of use varied by school (see boxes below and on Page 8).

School Indicators

The 10 schools participating in this study had similar profiles, including:

- High poverty – Nine of the 10 schools had at least half of their students eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program, a poverty indicator.
- High average attendance – All of the schools had high attendance (86 to 98 percent).
- High percentage of their students participating in the bilingual education programs – Most of the schools had at least one-third of their enrolled students being served by bilingual education programs – one school served all of its 219 enrolled students.
- Low retention rate – Most of the schools had low retention rates. Four schools retained 1 percent or less of their students.
- Low annual dropout rate – Nine of the 10 schools had a 0 percent annual dropout rate.

- Low percentage of migrant students – More than half of the schools did not serve migrant students. Of the five that did, three served less than 10 percent. However, in one school, two out of five students were migrant.
- LEP student representation in gifted and talented programs – Most of the schools with gifted and talented or advanced placement programs had LEP students fully participating.
- Low LEP student representation in special education programs – Most of the schools had few LEP students in their special education programs.

Example of a Successful Bilingual Education Program

Each bilingual education program is part of a school with its own unique context and special characteristics that are clearly evident. These characteristics or “indicators of success” are described in the follow-

Organization at Schools Studied by IDRA

School	Faculty Organized	Effective Staff in Meetings	Frequency of Meetings	Percent of Time Spent in Meeting on Curriculum
School A	Teams and departments	Yes	50% Teams meet three times a week; 50% Departments meet two times a week	100% Depts. student progress and curriculum teams
School B	Grade level teams	Yes	Scheduled once a week; additional meetings as needed.	100%
School C	Grade level teams	No	Teachers meet every Wednesday from 3:00 - 5:30 p.m.	100%
School D	Grade level	No	Third grade weekly	100%
School E	Grade level	As needed	Weekly	100%
School F	Teams – one teacher teachers in Spanish; the other in English	No	Once every two weeks	AMIGOS lead teacher
School G	There are no teams or departments. The only department is the language arts group.	Yes	Every Friday	20%
School H	Grade level	No	Weekly	100%
School I	Grade level teams	Resource teachers included	Weekly	100%
School J	Grade level	Yes	Weekly	80%

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Organization at Schools Studied by IDRA (continued)

School	Block Scheduling	Technology Used in Bilingual Education Program	Title VII Grant	Type of Bilingual Program
School A	Yes	All of the school is hard wired.	No	Maintenance – <i>Project New Beginnings</i> and dual language
School B	No	All classrooms equipped with computers; all students (K-5) scheduled to computer lab.	Yes	Bilingual/Transition
School C	Yes, reading	Every classroom has a computer.	Yes	Bilingual/Accelerated transition
School D	Yes, third grade	Yes	No	Bilingual/Late transition. Working on late transition program. Has FLES program for English, Spanish and Russian speakers.
School E	No	Yes	No	Dual language
School F	Literacy block in both languages	The school has a computer lab, and every class has a work station.	Yes	Two-way bilingual program
School G	No	Yes	Yes, last two years	Bilingual
School H	No	Yes	No	Dual language
School I	No	Every classroom has computers.	Title VII Academic Excellence Dissemination Grant 1994-1996 DBE 1989-1992	Two-way bilingual immersion
School J	No	Yes	No	Bilingual

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ing profile of one school, providing a first-hand look at the inner workings of a successful program and school.

Heritage Elementary School, Woodburn, Oregon

Woodburn, Oregon, billed as the “City of Unity,” prides itself on its cultural diversity. Here, Anglos, Hispanics and Russians come together in a unique blend of local and extended heritage. Woodburn has developed a cosmopolitan blend of cultures not normally found in cities of its size – an area of only four square miles.

Woodburn is located in northeast Oregon, approximately halfway between Salem and Portland, in the midst of lush, fertile farmland. Employment opportunities range from food processing to construction

of manufactured housing to professional services, resulting in a relatively affluent community. Historically, farming has contributed greatly to Woodburn’s economic health, and large farms and orchards still put their stamp on this area.

Heritage Elementary School is an attractively designed new school, only three years old, and stands in a neighborhood of well kept middle- to upper-class homes. It is adjacent to the middle school.

The school serves three language groups: Hispanic Spanish-speakers, Russian-speakers and English-speakers. Hispanic students are predominately of Mexican or Mexican-American origin, and most are classified as migrants because their parents are local farmworkers (having moved to Woodburn from Texas or California) who

sometimes go north to Washington to pick fruit. Many workers have begun to settle in Woodburn and are no longer classified as migrants, but new migrant farmworkers continue to replace those who have been reclassified.

Most of the Russian students are recent immigrants and are members of a sect known as Old Believers, which was formed more than 700 years ago when the Russian Orthodox church split from the Greek Orthodox church. Portions of the sect spent many years in exile in China, Turkey and Argentina before coming to Woodburn to settle in the 1950s. They speak an old dialect of Russian and follow many traditional customs that separate them from mainstream American society. Also, many are migrant workers in the fishing and timber industries who mi-

grate to and from Alaska.

The Heritage Elementary School building is clean and bright. Pictures of parents, teachers and students as well as examples of students' work decorate the hallways. When IDRA researchers visited, the principal exhibited her pride both in the teachers and students. She spoke very openly about the program and its continual development.

A third grade teacher believes the building is one of the best support services available for students learning English. She remarked, "We label everything on the walls in Russian, Spanish and English – hallways, classrooms and administrative offices."

Inside the classrooms, posters and student work grace the walls. Most of these use both English and another language. There are also a large number of books in every classroom, both in the native language and English. In one class, there are more than 40 books that have been translated from English to Russian by a group of involved parents.

Most classrooms have listening centers, a reading corner and a computer station. Student desks are arranged in groups of four or five, and the teacher moves among the groups. Moreover, teachers interact with each other frequently regarding instructional topics and methods.

One teacher cited the sharing of ideas and thoughts among the staff as being the most important professional development activity. "Curriculum planning and mapping here at the school helps us to see that we are all going in the same direction," she said.

Students are enthusiastic and participate in the lessons, some teacher-directed and others independent. Although teachers encourage the students to speak in their home language during the morning sessions, they are not prohibited from communicating in English if they want to. Thus, students can often be heard conversing in both English and their home language.

Heritage Elementary School conducts several bilingual education programs simultaneously. The late-exit program serves 342 English-learners (57 percent) from kindergarten through third grade who had low English student language assessment scores when they entered school. Even though these students will officially exit the program at the end of the third grade, the plan allows for all of them to continue in a bilingual program through fifth grade. The program was begun four years ago and has added a grade each year, having reached third grade this year.

"Curriculum planning and mapping here at the school helps us to see that we are all going in the same direction."

Students with higher English language assessment scores upon initial entry are placed in mainstream classrooms and can be pulled out of class for English as a second language (ESL) support in grades two through five. In grades four and five students can receive pull-out native language support or support from bilingual educational assistants within the mainstream classrooms.

Until recently, Oregon did not require that bilingual teachers obtain a bilingual endorsement; nevertheless, five teachers from Heritage Elementary School are currently working toward one. Of the total staff, 35 percent speak Spanish and 19 percent speak Russian. Of the classified staff, 50 percent speak Spanish and 29 percent speak Russian. Of the three native language classrooms observed (one Russian and two Spanish), all three teachers and one aide were fluent in the respective language.

Heritage Elementary School has drawn on the research of prominent bilingual educators in designing and evaluating its program. Before starting the program four years ago, the staff read the literature and visited schools with exemplary practices in Oregon and around the country. They then decided to implement a late-exit model. Last year, they asked a research team to the school to assess the program and provide the staff with suggestions for improvement.

The school has both a Spanish-English bilingual and a Russian-English bilingual program. In addition, for English proficient students, it offers Spanish and Russian as a foreign language for an average of 90 minutes per week.

The design of the bilingual program specifies the amount of time devoted to each of the three components: an ESL component called English language development, instruction in the native language, and sheltered English techniques. Initial reading instruction is provided in the native language, with English literacy usually delayed until third grade. The content areas are provided initially in the native language with a carefully planned introduction into each grade of

specified subjects using sheltered English techniques.

From the beginning of the program at the kindergarten level, students spend a portion of each day with English speakers. Russian and Spanish speakers are also grouped together for English language development. The staff reported that this accelerated their English acquisition because both kinds of students were forced to use English to communicate with each other. Students remain in the program through at least the fifth grade.

IDRA researchers noted that all the instruction is uniformly of high quality and reflects best practices recommended for mainstream and second language-learners. Students often work in cooperative, heterogeneous groups or with partners. Student-to-student and teacher-to-student interactions are frequent, meaningful and focused on instructional tasks. Activities are hands-on, and teachers use a large variety of materials: bilingual books of many genres and types as well as visual, audiovisual and art materials.

Many students were observed receiving individual or small group assistance from additional teachers, bilingual educational assistants and parents. This extra help is provided inside their classrooms or in quiet, cozy corners in the halls outside.

All students, English-learners and native English-speakers, are integrated in one of the morning and afternoon homerooms. This gives everyone an opportunity to mix with each other as a group and begin and end each day together.

One teacher interviewed believes this arrangement has contributed to the success of the school's program. She noted: "Students start and finish in a mainstream classroom. The first and last periods of the day, students are with the same teacher and their mainstream class. This gives students a feeling of being more integrated into the entire school."

Throughout the day, English-learners are divided into language groups and placed in an ETP instructional model (late-exit, early-exit, literacy center, or mainstream classroom depending on each student's language capability) and are taught in their native language of Russian or Spanish.

Language capability is assessed by administering a home language survey. The ETP coordinator makes the appropriate assessment to determine the particular English learning level of each child. Students are also given the Oregon student language assessment and the Woodcock-Muñoz language

tests before being placed in an instructional model. Additionally, kindergarten and first grade students are given the Brigance Screen to measure basic language skills, and teachers use various classroom assessment methods to determine how students are progressing during the year.

Although the school is moving toward a late-exit program, presently only those in kindergarten through second grade are in such a program. Third, fourth and fifth graders are in an early-exit program, having made the transition into English. Other students are identified as mainstream English, and some students are placed in literacy centers. Sheltered English techniques are used to help students who have not mastered English by the end of fifth grade.

The school also has an English Plus program, through which parents can opt to have their children continue to learn their native language. Students can also learn a third language through English Plus – English, Spanish or Russian.

Heritage Elementary School's bilingual education practices are deemed exemplary in large part because of its support of

native language development and retention. According to a Russian parent: "Many students have grandparents who don't speak English. The kids are very interested in speaking to their grandparents, so they are motivated to learn. The children are not embarrassed to speak Russian in school, because they use it at home and in their neighborhood."

This integration of community culture and school lifestyle makes an enormous impression on the parents and stimulates them to contribute to their children's school and become involved in their children's success.

Although the state of Oregon requires that by third grade students are transitioned to English, the school continues to create avenues for supporting the students in their native language while they learn English.

Also important is the staff's organization of the classwork for these students, such as in the English language development classes, where students who are native Spanish-speakers are mixed with native Russian-speakers. A Russian parent affirmed the effectiveness of this arrangement: "Half

of the Spanish class and half the Russian class are intermingled where they must learn English."

Also vital to this school's success is the high level of involvement of parents, despite many of them leading migrant lifestyles. Russian and Hispanic parents state that volunteering is second in importance only to the teachers' involvement in assuring the success of the bilingual program.

Heritage Elementary School exhibits three of the most important elements of successful bilingual education practices: (1) a dedication to providing the most successful learning and development programs to the students; (2) teachers and staff who truly care about the students and are passionate about teaching, and (3) parents who become involved and volunteer in educational activities.

María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., is the IDRA executive director. Josie Danini Cortez, M.A., is the production development coordinator. Comments and questions may be directed to them via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

Successful Bilingual Education Programs

Student Assessment and Outcomes

María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and Josie Danini Cortez, M.A., and Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: Last year, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducted a research study with funding by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) to identify characteristics that contribute to the high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs. The August 2001 issue of the IDRA Newsletter began a series of six articles describing this research study's significant findings. The first installment provided an overview of the research design and methods. In the September 2001 issue we featured an overview of the schools' demographics and the major findings pertaining to school indicators. This third installment features the major findings in student outcomes.

More than two decades ago, IDRA's founder and director emeritus, Dr. José A. Cárdenas, wrote: "The evaluation design, materials, and techniques commonly used by the school are frequently most inappropriate for use with minority populations. Not only are the tools inadequate, but conclusions based on cultural and language biases can be extremely erroneous and detrimental to the student" (Cárdenas and Cárdenas, 1973).

While much has improved in the area of accountability and assessment, much remains to be done. Nowhere is this more evident than in the assessment of bilingual education programs where assessment tools and their appropriate use with limited-English-proficient (LEP) students are often found lacking. Without appropriate and meaningful assessment tools that hold the teachers and administrators accountable for student academic achievement, it is impossible to determine a program's effectiveness or impact on the students it is serving.

IDRA's research study of bilingual education programs was grounded in the premise that a "successful" bilingual education program must have evidence of student academic achievement as determined by appropriate assessment measures. Each of the 10 programs selected for this research study provided data for students in their bilingual education programs. Given that IDRA had operationally defined "stu-

dent success" as evidence of academic achievement, it was imperative that programs provide relevant and appropriate data for review. This data included student outcome indicators, such as oral and written language proficiency and content area mastery in English and the native language.

Prior to IDRA's site visits, each school submitted for review its most recent achievement data (1997-98) disaggregated by LEP and non-LEP status. Longitudinal data (three years or more), if available, were also provided. Assessment measures, as expected, varied among the 10 programs. These

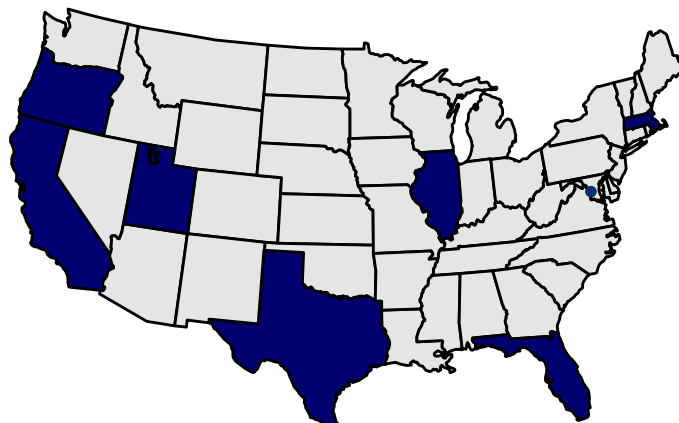
programs were located in schools in California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington, D.C.

Assessment Measures

In reviewing the data provided by the schools, it is important to note some caveats regarding LEP student assessment—namely, that variations in assessment instruments across states, the exemption of LEP students from testing and data not reported by the category of "LEP student"—makes comparisons of achievement data across sites next to impossible. Exemptions for LEP stu-

Promising and Exemplary Practices in Bilingual Education

IDRA studied programs in these states.



Intercultural Development Research Association

dents at the schools we studied were uncommon, with only one school in Texas reporting a 2 percent exemption rate. All of the other schools reported no exemptions.

In compliance with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) regulations governing the implementation of Title VII-funded programs, there is a range of student assessment instruments across the country. Title VII grantees are required to collect common types of data, including achievement data, language proficiency data, and teacher credentialing and certification data. While these data are included in many of the evaluations submitted to OBEMLA, there is no current requirement that the grantees use any specific assessment instruments. The rationales for this usually include variations in program focus, differing state assessment requirements that may parallel or take precedence over local assessment decisions, and the belief that certain nationally-normed standardized test instruments may be better aligned with the local program curricula.

All of these are considered legitimate reasons for non-standardization. However, without a uniform standard of assessment involving common instruments, a comparative analysis across sites would be inappropriate. Any macro- or meta-analysis can only attempt to paint broad brush strokes of common assessment and evaluation practices at schools implementing bilingual education programs.

In IDRA's review of the evaluation data submitted by the schools, two things became evident: all of the schools tested their students and were committed to accountability for all students, and there was a wide range of assessment instruments used by schools.

Keep in mind that part of the selection process for this study required all of the schools to have data reflecting high student performance on locally-selected achievement measures. Given the known variability across sites, specific

types of data requested were not prescribed. Nevertheless, the instruments used by schools tend to cluster into three major types:

- state-mandated assessments that are part of a state assessment or accountability system;
- locally-selected instruments in English and/or the students' native language, that are nationally-normed and considered appropriate for evaluation of the program being implemented; and
- locally-developed instruments that yield data considered useful by the local project in assessing its effectiveness.

Of the schools studied, one in California, one in Illinois, one in Oregon, and two in Texas use data collected from state-required assessment programs as part of their local program evaluation. In California, the school used the Stanford Achievement Tests – required under the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) system. In Illinois, the school incorporated data collected as part of the Illinois G Achievement Program (IGAP). In Texas, the schools used the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), which is the state-developed criterion referenced measure used to evaluate Texas schools' performance.

Other sites used non-mandated standardized tests, including the Brigance, the California Test of Basic Skills, and the Woodcock Muñoz Battery, to obtain objective measures of student progress. Some of the sites also reported student achievement using standardized tests in the student's native languages such as the APRENDA.

In addition to achievement test data, some of the schools track attendance rates, retention, and student graduation rates for all of their students.

Assessment Practices

The assessment and evaluation practices also varied across schools. We found that the schools we studied tended to do the following:

- compile data on year-to-year progress of students enrolled in the

bilingual programs and simply assess the extent and/or statistical significance of those changes (Oregon);

- compare the performance of program students against a state passing standard (Illinois, Texas);
- compare the percentage of program pupils scoring at or above a set percentile – usually the 50th percentile (California, Illinois, Oregon); and/or
- compare the program students' performance against some other standard such as "expected scores" developed by the test publishers (Oregon: Pre-LAS).

The number of years of achievement data available ranged from two to five years. The schools had compiled at least two years of data – allowing for pre-post comparisons (Oregon) or multiple year trend analyses (Illinois, Texas). Some of the data provided was longitudinal – spanning several years, while other data focused on a single year, comparing program performance levels against some local or state-selected standard.

Almost all of the sites measured students' progress in English, assessing proficiency (LAS: Brigance) and/or English reading (TAAS, CTB, SAT, IGAP, Oregon Plus). The majority of schools also assessed student achievement in mathematics (California, Illinois, Oregon, Texas).

Programs tended to compare their students' performance either against an external performance standard (state passing scores or percentiles – California, Illinois, Oregon, Texas) or against the average score for non-LEP pupils or sub-groups of other pupils, such as Title I and special education.

Unique Student Assessment Features

Schools reflected the different contextual features in their assessment measures. Some states, in addition to assessing reading and mathematics, measured student achievement in language (Illinois), social studies (Illinois), spelling (California), and writing (Texas).

Common Achievement Level Findings

In analyzing student achievement data, there are significant observations that are common to all of the schools:

- They collected and analyzed one or more types of student achievement data, using multiple measures.
- They had procedures for assessing all of their students and for compiling, organizing, and analyzing their student data.
- They engaged in some tabulation and analysis of the data. Some had external support from external evaluators; others involved teachers in the collection and the analysis of the data to help school teams craft improvement plans.

IDRA also observed the use of multiple measures, which were culturally and contextually appropriate for the students. In addition to the yearly progress measures, there were ongoing or interim measures that were used as benchmarks and indicators of progress throughout the year. Schools used data to inform and drive their curricular and instructional practices, with administrators and teachers accepting accountability for the academic performance of their students.

Student Outcome Indicators

All of the 10 schools that IDRA studied reflected significant progress (statistically and educationally) for the students served by their bilingual education programs during the program year (1997-98). While, in some cases, there was a notable gap in the achievement of students served by the program and the regular students, especially when they were compared to the state's standards, the majority of students reflected a narrowing of the achievement gap over time.

In fact, in many cases, the growth rates for the students served in the program sites exceeded the rates of improvement for the comparison groups included in the reports. In a few instances, the growth rates were extraordinary, reflecting accelerated improve-

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ment rates over relatively short time frames.

Example of a Successful Bilingual Education Program

Each bilingual education program is part of a school with its own unique context and special characteristics that are clearly evident. These characteristics or “indicators of success” are described in the following profile of one school, providing a firsthand look at the inner workings of a successful program and school.

James Bowie Elementary School, Alamo, Texas

Part of the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District, James Bowie Elementary School is located in Alamo, Texas. The district is in the southern tip of Texas, known as the “Valley” (even though, geographically, the area comprises the Rio Grande river delta). The three cities that make up the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District are small, the largest being Pharr.

The entire area's population is ap-

proximately 40,000 permanent residents. The population swells during the winter months because of an influx of retired individuals who migrate to the area in the winter in and return to their northern homes in the spring. Access to Mexico is via the McAllen-Hidalgo-Reynosa International Bridge, only 11 miles away.

The area is a center for winter vegetables, citrus and cotton; most of the students come from the agricultural community. Because there are three growing seasons in the Valley, most agricultural workers are not migrants but permanent residents of the area.

James Bowie Elementary School is a clean, well-lit school, very functional and conducive to learning. The classrooms are decorated with student work. Each classroom also displays some kind of cultural artwork, such as prints by Diego Rivera, Pablo Picasso and Vincent Van Gogh.

Students at the school represent three ethnic groups, but the overwhelming majority – more than 95 percent – are Mexican Americans who speak Spanish as their native language. Anglo

students represent less than 5 percent of the student body, and less than 1 percent are African-American.

Classrooms are highly student-centered at James Bowie Elementary School. Rules are posted on one wall, while student work, examples of recently introduced lessons (e.g., vocabulary words) and other educational materials are displayed prominently on other walls. Rooms are divided into “work centers” that enable the students to take advantage of a variety of learning tools.

A computer classroom is one work center, and children as young as pre-kindergarten make use of the area. In another area, the writing center introduces even the youngest students to the elements of proper writing, beginning with holding a pencil correctly and tracing various shapes. The music center allows the students to identify different instruments by sight and sound and to listen to and learn about different types of music. Pre-kindergarten classrooms always have music playing softly in the background – from classical to folk.

Impressively, 20 or more students in each classroom, working in groups, did not result in an overwhelming noise level. One IDRA researcher noted, “In every room, in the hallways, even in the music room, the sounds being produced were sounds of learning.”

Teachers at James Bowie Elementary School use every teaching opportunity to relate to the prevailing culture of the area, touching on the everyday life of the children. Examples in math classes may utilize the exchange rates between dollars and pesos. Writing assignments and class discussions encourage examples from students’ homes and community. Such topical basis in the everyday lives of students reinforces the importance of the area’s culture.

The teachers are cognizant of the need to provide a learning environment attentive to the needs of English-learning students: classes are conducted in Spanish even though every student is bilingual. As a lesson moves along, the teacher may teach a concept in Spanish, but the students may answer in En-

glish. English-learners pick up vocabulary from Spanish-learners, and vice-versa.

In addition, the school has hired several Title I-support teachers who provide intense Spanish instruction in a pull-out program. These teachers work with those students who will be tested in Spanish.

Another IDRA researcher noted, “I had the opportunity to observe these classes and found the students completely engaged in discussion and hands-on activities before they began writing their compositions.” The climate in these classes mirrors that of the regular classroom.

Much of the uniformity in class structure and equality of lesson plans is the result of collaborative planning. Teacher conference and planning periods are scheduled at the same time each day by grade level. This allows time for development and sharing of ideas on how to use curriculum and materials to augment effectiveness.

Test results are reviewed at this time, as teachers are held accountable for student learning in six-week assessments. To maximize test scores, teachers provide after-school and Saturday tutoring sessions. When they see that a student is experiencing academic difficulties, they provide one-on-one tutoring sessions for that student.

Writing assignments tend to reflect the cultural background of the students and always begin with a classwide discussion of the topic. Sometimes, the teacher assigns students to write a group story. For example, one class was prompted: “*Te he premiado \$2,500. ¿Como vas a compartir este dinero?* [You have been awarded \$2,500. How are you going to divide up this money?].” One student began discussing how his uncle had won some money, and that if this had happened to the student, he would give the money to certain groups of people. Other students joined in the discussion. After 10 to 15 minutes, the teacher asked them to come to a consensus. The students decided that they would help out their families, their church

and the poor children of Mexico. The teacher then proceeded to model the writing process, and wrote a group story as a class.

Again, an IDRA researcher commented: “It is discussion like this that leads me to believe that the English-learning students are being served, not only academically but also culturally. Every lesson I observed touched on the everyday life of the children.”

One unique aspect of the bilingual program at James Bowie Elementary School is the “One World, One Culture”

“Every lesson I observed touched on the everyday life of the children.”

class. This is an enrichment class that all students attend once a week as part of a Title-I schoolwide project. In this class the lessons are structured to teach self-respect and pride in Hispanic cultures as well as a diverse array of other cultures.

The teacher of this class is specially trained in diversity and very knowledgeable in the areas of history and geography. Because she immediately captures the students’ attention, everyone looks forward to the class. There is also a hands-on component that usually takes the form of a writing assignment.

One observed lesson focused on the importance of older family members in various cultures. The teacher began a discussion of grandparents, asking specifically about the children’s grandparents and how they were regarded in their own families and culture. The final assignment had each student design and create a card for his or her grandparents to be presented to them on Grandparents’ Day.

Another unique program at the school is the music (*Estudiantina*) program. During music class, students in third, fourth and fifth grades begin learning how to play various instruments, such

as the violin, guitar, mandolin, or piano. Each student is provided an instrument. They play Spanish songs with which they are all familiar, songs they hear on the radio, in the community, at weddings and other special occasions. At the same time, they learn the foundations of music and theory. The *Estudiantina* requires after-school practice sessions, and the group performs often throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

Students participate year-around in cultural events in the community such as parades, social functions and holiday celebrations where the choir, drill team, folkloric dance troupe, *Estudiantina* and other groups perform. As one teacher put it, "The school has set up various committees for the sole purpose of promoting unity among staff, students and their families in community involvement."

Lessons in all classes tend to be interconnected across disciplines, which is accomplished by using literature-based lessons. When a teacher introduces a story, a discussion is held and then a semantic map is created. The students' work then reflects the connections across the curriculum. Discussions and research on topics under study are facilitated by access to computers – at least two in each classroom and separate computer labs available to all children.

Students with special needs are served in the regular classrooms. They are not singled out, rather they mix with the rest of the class. The teachers may afford them more individualized attention, but their inclusion in discussions and group assignments is the same as other class members.

Children at James Bowie Elementary School are fortunate that bilingualism is inherent in the culture of the Valley. Spanish and English are both spoken in conversations throughout the area, often blended together in the same sentence. Children in bilingual classrooms receive instruction in Spanish, but they carry on regular conversations with their friends in English. Bilingualism in the area, coupled with the school's compre-

"The school has set up various committees for the sole purpose of promoting unity among staff, students and their families in community involvement."

hensive bilingual program, is a main reason the school has earned national recognition for the performance of bilingual students.

Teachers keep a closely monitored portfolio of each student's work that is shared with the student's parents on a weekly basis. Most of the work included is work created by the student, not worksheets that he or she has completed. This portfolio is also reviewed by the school administration. Together, teachers and staff monitor students' progress so that any needed modifications are made as soon as possible and instructional time is not lost. Parents must sign and return the portfolio so that the teacher may document that they are aware of their child's progress. Communication with parents is in both Spanish and English.

It is evident that all the teachers at James Bowie Elementary School believe their students are important. The school's vision and goal is the success of all its students as reflected in the school motto, "All students can learn." Students are treated with respect and dignity, and the students treat their teachers in the same manner.

Throughout the entire school, banners in both Spanish and English are displayed, reinforcing that each student is important. A sense of pride is evident everywhere in the school. This sense is engendered and reinforced by the teachers and staff and creates a bond among the students, parents and school person-

nel. This bond perpetuates the high standards expected from each student and gives families as well as the entire community a stake in the school's success.

Resources

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Successful Bilingual Education Programs

Indicators of Success at the School Level

María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and Josie Danini Cortez, M.A.

Editor's Note: Last year, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducted a research study with funding by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) to identify characteristics that contribute to the high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs. The August 2001 issue of the IDRA Newsletter began a series of six articles describing this research study's significant findings. The first installment provided an overview of the research design and methods. In the September 2001 issue, we featured an overview of the schools' demographics and the major findings pertaining to school indicators. This third installment in the October 2001 issue presented the major findings in student outcomes. This fourth installment features the major findings in student outcomes and assessment.

As IDRA visited, interviewed, and surveyed the teachers and administrators, parents and students in 10 different bilingual education programs and their schools, one thing became evident: leadership is an essential ingredient in the formula for student success. Leadership manifests itself in different ways, such as commitment to students, valuing of students and their families, and openness to innovation and change. But, one aspect was evident in all of the individuals involved with the programs: each had the ability to inspire and see what was possible.

Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal write of this ability in *Leading with Soul*: "Perhaps we lost our way when we forgot that the heart of leadership lies in the hearts of leaders. We fooled ourselves, thinking that sheer bravado or sophisticated analytic techniques could

respond to our deepest concerns. We lost touch with a precious human gift – our spirit." This aspect of leadership is difficult to measure but immediately recognizable. And it is this aspect that is critically needed to achieve equity and excellence for all students.

IDRA researched school- and classroom-level indicators of successful bilingual education programs. Our extensive review of other research provided a strong theoretical framework with indicators conducive to successful programs for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. IDRA framed these indicators as research questions in areas of leadership, vision and goals, school climate, linkages, school organization and accountability, professional development, parent involvement, staff accountability and assessment, staff selection and recognition, and community

involvement. This article provides IDRA's major findings in five of the 10 school-level indicators. The remaining five will be presented in the January 2002 issue of the *IDRA Newsletter*.

IDRA's primary research question for this study was, "What contributed to the success of a bilingual education classroom as evidenced by LEP student academic achievement?" In addition to the student data, qualitative and contextual research questions for other indicators emerged from our extensive review of the research and IDRA's own history in bilingual education.

Five main questions guided the research for school-level indicators. Each question had a more detailed subset of questions. The questions that guided the research for five of the school level indicators follow.

Leadership – How evident is leadership at the school level, and what are the characteristics (Carter and Chatfield, 1986; Lucas et al., 1990)?

- Is the school leadership well-informed of the rationale for bilingual education, and does it share an active commitment to bilingualism?
- Does the school leadership proactively involve the community and private sector in the design and development of the bilingual program?
- Does the school leadership support educational equity and excellence for all students?

Vision and Goals – How evident are the vision and goals at the school level, and what are the characteristics (Villarreal and Solís, 1998)?

- Do a vision and a set of goals exist that define the achievement level expected of all students, including LEP students?
- Are the vision and goals communicated to students, and do they guide the instruction?

School Climate – What are the characteristics of the school's climate (Lein et al., 1997; Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi, 1986)?

- Does the school climate communicate, in concrete ways, high expectations to LEP students, a sense of family, a

Bilingual teachers were never isolated from the rest of the faculty. They, along with the bilingual program, were fully integrated into the rhythm and essence of the school.

high level of trust among all school personnel, and shared responsibility and decision making?

- Are student linguistic and cultural diversity valued and celebrated?
- Is innovation introduced and managed with careful attention to the process of participation and ownership at all levels of the institution, families and the broader community?
- Do the adaptations keep the positive vision that all children can achieve to their maximum potential and be fully fluent in English without sacrificing their native language?
- Are the challenges accepted by everyone and reflect ongoing respect and validation of all participants, even those who disagree with the changes?
- Is the climate safe and orderly?

Linkages – What linkages exist between central office and school-level staff, and how are they characterized (McLoed, 1996)?

- Are linkages to central office staff facilitated by clear roles and responsibilities of central office staff?
- Does the central office staff provide leadership, credibility and respect for the program?

School Organization and Accountability – How is the school organized (Villarreal and Solís, 1998; McLoed, 1996)?

- Is the school organization based on the most efficient way of maximizing the impact of instruction?
- Is the program an integral part of the school's academic plan?
- Are small organizational arrange-

ments (e.g., families, academic teams) created to increase communication among teachers, parents and students?

- Is there strong accountability for the success of all students?

IDRA conducted onsite classroom observations; held structured interviews with teachers, administrators and parents; and administered surveys at each of the participating schools. Below are the major findings for each area.

Leadership

All of the schools we studied had strong and visible leadership. While the principals varied in their leadership styles, all had some common traits:

- total and unwavering commitment to their students' achievement and to an excellent bilingual education program that was fully integrated into the school;
- open and frequent communication among the principal, faculty and staff;
- pro-active involvement of faculty, staff and the community in the bilingual program;
- professionalism, skills, and knowledge;
- well-informed of the rationale for bilingual education;
- valuing of all individuals – students, faculty and staff;
- ability to inspire, motivate and validate;
- openness to innovation and change;
- access provided to current research and best practices;
- ability to identify, secure, and mobilize resources; and
- support for faculty and staff.

Teachers and administrators we interviewed believed that their schools' administration supported teacher autonomy. Also important was the involvement of English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual education teachers in the schools' decision-making process as well as their autonomy in the decisions they made in their classrooms.

Vision and Goals

All of the schools had visions and goals that were published and evident throughout the schools, setting clear expectations for the achievement of all students. Furthermore, these visions and goals manifested themselves in the day-to-day work of the principals, faculty, staff, parents and families. In some cases, the visions and goals were developed by the principals, faculty, staff and parents, adding a dimension of ownership and buy-in.

Surveys showed that the schools had visions that embraced the goals of bilingual education with a mission inclusive of all students and their families.

In one instance, an IDRA researcher commented:

The school is innovative in the way it deals with a multitude of languages and cultures as it prepares students to transition into a new country and a new language. The school has a way of valuing differences and acknowledging potential in every student.

Another IDRA researcher observed:

This school is successful because of the commitment and the integrity that the teachers have toward the bilingual program at their school. They attribute their success to the clear and focused program that is articulated throughout the campus and to the support that the principal provides. All of the teachers say that the success is due to the fact that they value learning a second language and because of the *calidad de los maestros en esta escuela* [The quality of the teachers at this school].

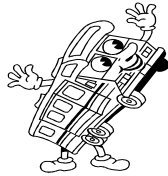
School Climate

While school locations varied greatly – from inner-city urban to rural and isolated – the intrinsic character and climate of the schools shared some common traits:

Did You Know?

There are about 3.5 million limited-English-proficient students in the United States – a conservative estimate as reported in 1996-97 by the nation's state education agencies that receive Title VII federal funds.

Forty percent of U.S. teachers reported having LEP students in their classrooms in 1994, but only 29 percent of these teachers had received any training at all in how to serve them.



For more facts and statistics, go to the "Field Trip" on IDRA's web site.

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- All of the schools were safe and orderly;
- All of the administration, faculty, staff, parents and students felt responsible for maintaining a safe and orderly climate;
- "Order" operationally looked different in the different settings: "orderly chaos" in some, structured and well-defined in others; but the underlying "order" of well-defined expectations, responsibilities and roles were clear and understood by all;
- "Safe" included personal safety as well as safety to innovate, change and communicate;
- All of the schools affirmed and valued racial and cultural differences; and
- All of the schools had a climate of caring, belonging and friendliness.

Teachers and administrators reported a positive school climate that nurtured and maintained cultural diversity and mutual respect.

Linkages

The central office staffs provided strong leadership and respect for the bilingual programs IDRA studied. There were clearly articulated roles and responsibilities among central office staff as well as frequent and open communication between central office and school staff. All of the schools reported strong support from someone in central office for their program and

their school.

In addition to the vertical linkages, there was evidence of horizontal linkages as well, with teachers working in teams, sharing, exchanging, communicating and focusing on achievement of all students. Bilingual teachers were never isolated from the rest of the faculty. They, along with the bilingual program, were fully integrated into the rhythm and essence of the school.

Teachers and administrators reported a high degree of collaborative work between faculty and staff:

- "There is master coordination in this school, collegiality, and a deep sense of purpose as well as a tremendous sense of trust and loyalty among the staff and administration."
- "We are doing... team teaching. During the day, we exchange classes in first grade: I teach in Spanish to the other teacher's students, and she teaches my children in English."
- "Teachers are more united – all teachers work with all children. All teachers are responsible for working in the bilingual education program."
- "We [elementary school teachers] have a lot of communication with the middle school."

School Organization and Accountability

The bilingual program was an integral part of the schools and their

academic plans. It was evident that faculty and staff held themselves accountable for the success of all students, including LEP students. Surveys showed that teachers and administrators saw bilingual education as an integral part of their schools.

At one school, an IDRA researcher observed:

The bilingual program is an integral part of the school. When a parent signs up [for his or her child] to attend the school, they know that Spanish will be the mode of instruction in grades kindergarten to two and that from grades three to eight, the students will be receiving bilingual instruction. The students do not transition out of the program, and they are expected to achieve at or above the state standards. All of the teachers hired for the school must speak Spanish with native-like fluency.

In another case, an IDRA researcher stated:

Teachers hold themselves accountable for the success of each student. During the classroom observations, it was evident that the teachers knew exactly the level of skills of each child.

Example of a Successful Bilingual Program

Strong leadership, clear and well-articulated vision and goals that fully integrate bilingual education into the school, safe and positive school climate, strong linkages across grade levels, and a school organization and accountability that holds teachers and administrators responsible for the success of all students are five indicators that were found in the research sites. One example of such a program is found at Paul Bell Middle School in Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Paul Bell Middle School, Miami-Dade County, Florida

Opened in September 1997, Paul Bell Middle School, is a state-of-the-art facility built on a 16-acre tract in Dade

County, Florida. The facility consists of eight building clusters constructed around a courtyard, with office and auditorium spaces centrally located. The area in which the school is located is one of rapid residential and commercial growth, due west of Miami on the western side of Sweetwater.

Every classroom at the school is clean, well-lit and conducive to learning. The students take pride in their school and maintain it well. Student work is displayed throughout the classrooms, as is literature about the topic currently being discussed. There is an abundance of printed material on the walls, but it does not create a distraction. Everything on the walls is needed during the lessons. Student work is also highly visible in hallways and common areas.

It is evident that learning is taking place at Paul Bell Middle School. Whether answering the teachers' questions or interacting with each other, students are always respectful. They are always on task throughout the entire lesson.

An IDRA researcher noted:

Students were not afraid to ask questions. They did not feel embarrassed if they did not understand something the teacher was explaining. Students felt comfortable discussing the lesson with the teachers as well as with each other.

Paul Bell Middle School is a bilingual school where language instruction is offered in Spanish, mathematics, geography and science. A variety of exceptional learning resources is available to students here, from the media center and language and computer laboratories to specialized resource rooms and exceptional student facilities. The school boasts a variety of remarkable pre-vocational areas, including business, work experience, family and consumer sciences, health education and graphics and technology labs.

The goal of the ESL program at Paul Bell Middle School is to facilitate the acquisition of English, maintain

proficiency in the home language and promote the acquisition of language arts skills. To achieve these goals, all English-learning students are strongly encouraged to register in the bilingual program. The ESL program's main focus is to develop English language proficiency.

Inclusion in the bilingual program maintains the English-learners' proficiency in the home language and helps develop their language arts skills. The presence of the students in bilingual courses enriches the multicultural experience for all students. It ensures that bilingualism will be maintained and breaks down the isolation that sometimes is experienced by English-learning students.

The goal of the bilingual program at the school is to develop bilingual, biliterate and bicultural students capable of leadership and success in the multilingual society of the global economy. To become bilingual and biliterate, or to maintain these skills and abilities, students must not only learn the language, they must also use their native language to learn.

To that end, the bilingual program at Paul Bell Middle School requires one class period of Spanish language arts curriculum and two class periods of basic subject area instruction in Spanish. The Spanish language arts curriculum further develops and enriches the language arts skills while familiarizing the students with Hispanic culture.

Content areas taught in Spanish vary from grade to grade, however, curricular learning objectives of all courses are the same regardless of the language used for instruction. Additionally, literature and fine arts are emphasized as teaching tools in all curricular offerings, thus exposing students to the richness of their bicultural heritage.

Technology instruction and utilization is integrated throughout Paul Bell Middle School. Every teacher has a computer in his or her classroom, and every student has access to one. Computer centers are located in

classrooms, the library, various laboratories, resource rooms, the media center and other facilities. Computer students also maintain a web site. Media students prepare and broadcast the morning announcements – in both English and Spanish – from the school’s studio.

The school’s language arts curriculum is at the heart of its bilingual instruction. Literature is the springboard for all other activities in the classroom. Multicultural selections from classical and modern works comprise the bulk of subject matter studied. Reading and composition are infused throughout all of the disciplines, with the language arts classes supporting and reinforcing the curriculum pursuits of the other disciplines.

Paul Bell Middle School’s approach to teaching English-learners has allowed success for all students in a bilingual, bicultural environment. The program’s exemplary practices make it a model for bilingual education.

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Successful Bilingual Education Programs

Indicators of Success at the School Level

**María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.,
and Josie Danini Cortez, M.A.**

Editor's Note: Recently, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducted a research study with funding by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) to identify characteristics that contribute to the high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs. A series of six articles in the IDRA Newsletter describes this research study's significant findings. The November-December 2001 issue featured the major findings in student outcomes and assessment, as will this fifth installment.

Research finds that exemplary bilingual education programs hold school staff accountable for their students' success, while providing them with the support and tools they need. These programs also nurture meaningful parent and community involvement. Our study of 10 exemplary bilingual education programs confirms this.

IDRA researched school- and

classroom-level indicators of successful bilingual education programs. Our extensive review of current research provided a strong theoretical framework with indicators conducive to successful programs for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students.

These indicators were framed as research questions in 10 areas: leadership, vision and goals, school climate, linkages, school organization and accountability, professional development, parent involvement, staff accountability and assessment, staff selection and recognition, and community involvement.

This article provides IDRA's major findings in the second set of five of the 10 school-level indicators; the first five were presented in the November-December 2001 issue of the *IDRA Newsletter*.

Five main questions guided the research for school-level indicators. Each question had a more detailed subset of questions. The questions that guided the research for five of the school level indicators follow.

Professional Development – What are the demographic characteristics of professional staff, and what opportunities for professional

development are provided (Milk et al., 1992; Villarreal, 1999)?

- Do fully-credentialed bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) teachers receive training that is aligned with the instructional plan prepared for LEP students?
- Do teachers also receive training and technical assistance as needed, particularly regarding best practices in bilingual education and ESL?

Parent Involvement – What is the type, level and quality of parent involvement in the school and the bilingual education program (McLoed, 1996; Robledo Montecel et al., 1993)?

- Do parents feel welcomed and play different roles (leadership, decision-making, resource) in the educational process?
- Does the school provide opportunities for parents who do not speak English to participate?
- Do parents meet with teachers and administrators to discuss their individual and team responsibilities?
- Together, does the team provide support to ensure that LEP students reach the goals established for all students?
- In the same way, do students outline the ways in which they will be responsible for their own learning?
- Are these responsibilities shared with parents?
- Do students, parents and teachers discuss and reinforce the importance of meeting those responsibilities in ensuring success?

Staff Accountability and Student Assessment – How do staff hold themselves accountable for student success, and how are students assessed (Berman et al., 1995; Valdez-Pierce and O'Malley, 1992)?

- Is there alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment?
- Does the school assess student progress and continually re-evaluate its capacity to help all students reach high standards?
- Do the staff believe that assessments must measure authentic work of students and involve them and their

At the schools IDRA studied, parents were strong advocates of the bilingual programs and were welcome in their children's schools, not as "helpers" but as partners engaged in meaningful activities within the school structure.

parents in the process?

- Does student assessment and progress monitoring use baseline student data on language and content knowledge to plan and adjust instruction?
- Are responsibilities for student success clear, and are they shared with all school personnel?
- Do teachers use periodic, systematic and multiple student assessment measures to inform the instructional decision-making process?
- Do staff hold themselves accountable for the success of every student?

Staff Selection and Recognition

– How are the staff selected and recognized (Maroney, 1998)?

- Does staff selection and recognition include screening to ensure proficiency in both languages, training for teachers to become action researchers, and adjusting the program to ensure that all teachers are able to serve LEP students?
- Do teachers feel supported and free to innovate, and are they regularly recognized for their contributions to their students' achievements?

Community Involvement

– What is the type, level and quality of community involvement in the school and the bilingual education program (Moll et al., 1992)?

- Does the responsibility for the educational success of LEP students rest on the entire educational community of the district, not just on the bilingual education central staff or the bilingual or ESL teachers in the campus?

- Is the community perceived as an asset that should be integrated into the school resources in a way that values and acknowledges their contributions?
- Is the community a strong advocate of the program?

Through on-site classroom observations, structured interviews with teachers, administrators and parents and surveys, these are the major findings for each area.

Professional Development

At the schools IDRA studied, bilingual teachers were fully credentialed and continuously acquiring new knowledge regarding best practices in bilingual education. All teachers in the schools received information about bilingual education. Teachers took a pro-active interest in keeping up on best practices and sharing their lessons learned with others.

One non-bilingual education teacher who did not speak Spanish, began taking evening classes to learn Spanish on his own time and at his own cost, so that he could communicate with Spanish-speaking students.

Ultimately, teachers were committed to learning and sharing for the sake of their students. Professional development was perceived as a means to that end. Teachers and administrators reported substantive, appropriate and inclusive professional development with all teachers providing input into professional development.

One administrator explained: "Teachers seek out professional development, and some is provided by the district and school. All of the programs we have are there to support ESL."

Another commented: "Teachers who go out to workshops have to come back and give presentations on the workshops to other teachers."

A teacher added: "We as teachers meet and decide what we think needs to be done in the school. We take these needs to the principal and school council and make recommendations. Staff

development has more meaning because we make recommendations about it.”

A teacher described: “Our weekly grade level planning is one of the main ways we provide our own staff development. The planning that we do, the work we do at these meetings prepares us for the work we do with students.”

Another teacher said: “[One teacher] cites the sharing of ideas and thoughts among the staff as being the single most important professional development activity. Curriculum planning and mapping at the school helps us see that we are all going the same direction.”

Parent Involvement

At the schools IDRA studied, parents were strong advocates of the bilingual programs and were welcome in their children’s schools, not as “helpers” but as partners engaged in meaningful activities within the school structure. Parents’ experiences were validated and honored in the classrooms, irrespective of their socioeconomic backgrounds.

Some businesses facilitated parent involvement with flextime for work so that parents could participate in school activities during the day.

One teacher stated: “Many of the farmers allow time off for parents to attend English classes, parent meetings and school events. One farmer even posts school events [notices] at his farm for parents to attend.”

Parents reported that they felt they belonged at their children’s school and were very positive about the administration, faculty and staff, saying they believed them to be truly concerned for and committed to their children’s success.

School respondents reported actively encouraging parents to participate in all activities in meaningful ways. They also reported that all parents were knowledgeable and supported the bilingual education program, citing mutual respect and validation toward cultural diversity.

A parent said: “*Los maestros permiten que los padres vengan para platicar personalmente con ellos. Yo he mandado una nota pidiendo juntarme con ella. Ese mismo día vienen a buscarme.* [The teachers allow parents to come and talk personally with them. I have sent a note asking to meet with her. That same day she came to look for me.]”

Another parent added: “*Los niños tienen más éxito siendo bilingües porque cuando llegan a la universidad van a tener más oportunidad encontrando trabajo.*”

Research finds that exemplary bilingual education programs hold school staff accountable for their students’ success, while providing them with the support and tools they need. These programs also nurture meaningful parent and community involvement. Our study of 10 exemplary bilingual education programs confirms this.

El estudiante bilingüe es más exitoso. [The children who are bilingual are more successful because when they get to the university they will have more opportunities to find jobs.]”

Staff Accountability and Student Assessment

The schools studied used multiple assessment measures, including measures in the students’ native language. Rigorous academic standards applied to all students, including LEP students.

Administrators and faculty actively sought appropriate assessment measures and set clear and rigorous standards and achievement levels, sometimes engaging expertise and support from researchers in the bilingual education field. Teachers felt accountable for all of the students. They knew each one individually and adapted their instructional strategies according to the needs and strengths of each. Student assessment was ongoing and used for diagnostic purposes.

Survey respondents confirmed assessment in multiple languages and

the disaggregation of data by student group and program. They also reported frequent discussions between the principal and the faculty on student achievement.

An IDRA researcher observed at one school: “Upon further probing, when asked if they felt the pressure from the principal to maintain this level of expectation, they looked startled and replied, ‘No way!’ A teacher explained: ‘We have our high expectations, but it is our colleagues that are pushing us to maintain and stay focused. I know if I lag behind, the teacher next year will

come and talk to me and see what it is I am teaching. She’s going to be the one to kick my behind, not the principal!’”

Staff Selection and Recognition

At the model schools, staff were selected based on their academic background, experience in bilingual education and language proficiency. They were also selected for their enthusiasm, commitment and openness to change and innovation.

Teachers were strongly supported, often recognized for their students’ successes. They were part of a team that was characterized as loyal and committed.

Many of the staff stayed in their schools. One group followed their principal from one school to another, implementing a successful program in both. Teachers and administrators also reported positive reinforcement of their students’ academic progress.

Community Involvement

The communities of the schools IDRA studied were well aware of the

bilingual education programs and were strong advocates of the programs. Community members formed strong linkages with the schools, sharing staff and building resources, and expertise.

One notable exception was the California school, which was struggling to survive in the context of Proposition 227. There, the community was divided, and the school isolated, left to survive despite the political context. These dynamics appeared to have resulted in a united stand among the administration, faculty, and staff and have mobilized many to actively fight for their students' rights to an excellent and equitable education.

Teachers and administrators reported active and positive engagement of parents and community members, many in long-term and intensive partnerships. This resulted in shared responsibility and ownership for student success.

A teacher commented, "Senior citizens and retired people come back to work with students."

Another stated, "We [the school] took a trip to the nursery [on a farm] where students' parents worked – the hard work was valued and a source of pride."

A parent added: "*La iglesia apoya mucho. El padre de la escuela nos dice a nosotros los padres que también debemos estudiar. También que apoyamos a nuestros hijos.* [The church provides much support. The priest tells us that we as parents should also study and support our children]."

Example of a Successful Bilingual Program

A commitment to professional development, strong parent involvement, staff accountability and ongoing assessment, informed staff selection and meaningful recognition, and active community involvement are five indicators that were found in the research sites. One example of such a program is found at St. Mary's Public School in Mount Angel, Oregon.

St. Mary's Public School, Mount Angel, Oregon

St. Mary's Public School's high expectations of excellence for all learners include teachers and staff as well as students. The principals, teachers, aides and staff work collaboratively, through continuously planning and re-evaluating the school's program and each student's progress to ensure success for each student.

Teachers meet weekly in teams by grade level. The Title I reading teacher is included in these meetings. There is ongoing work on projects where data is collected and analyzed, and changes or affirmations are made. Depending on the need, these meetings can be held two or three times per week.

District improvement plans are discussed and teachers often seek, as well as share, strategies to help meet goals. St. Mary's Public School has a very committed staff. They come early and stay late. It is not surprising to find many teachers at the school on weekends.

All teachers and staff are involved in action research. This shows a commitment to the premise that student learning is the job of everyone at the school and keeps each member of the teaching and support staff accountable to the school's goals. Everyone looks to each other for assistance in areas where improvement is needed.

For planning during weekly meetings, faculty members are divided into teams. The principal is present at reporting times and works with the team or with individual teachers to get them back on track as needed. These planning meetings and discussions are often lively – teachers are vocal and joyful when test results are reported. There is tremendous support to ensure student achievement.

Native language instruction is supported starting at the kindergarten level. Since the school's vision encompasses excellence for all students, teachers and assistants strive to always put children first, not curriculum or prep time. The ability to help students is

constantly evaluated. St. Mary's Public School commits itself to being proactive rather than reactive.

ESL students make up a large part of the student population. The school has been on the cutting-edge of school reform since the current principal came to the school. School site team meetings began 14 years ago, and block scheduling began a year later. The principal instituted site committees before they were mandated, as well as multi-age instruction, which proved to be an uphill battle for support in the community. The school has been involved in Goals 2000 since it began.

Block scheduling allows uninterrupted reading time for students with all support staff. Teachers share students and skill groups and continually assess how students are progressing. The staff ensures that all students are treated equally, regardless of their backgrounds or special circumstances.

Additionally, assistants are treated like teachers; they are involved in training programs and planning sessions; and everyone is involved in making sure the students receive whatever they need to succeed.

Each year, the principal directs staff involvement in new projects. This guarantees professional growth for the staff; teachers and other classroom aides see firsthand how their new efforts benefit students. Moreover, the bilingual program at St. Mary's Public School has made the faculty more aware of modifying education plans to suit each individual student. School staff and the community are dedicated to making the school special, innovative and visionary.

The school's valuing of culture and diversity is evident in activities within the school as well as involvement in community events. There are monthly sing-alongs featuring songs from predominant cultures of the area as well as a multicultural winter concert. Assemblies are also held in which the principal gives out awards to students who excel in the classroom and the community.

The community supports the school's activities and provides ideas and supplies.

Additionally, many cultures are celebrated through studying about and participating in festivals. One proud teacher noted: "All cultures are respected, and there is zero tolerance for cultural bias."

Within the school, unity among students is promoted through the "Buddy" reading program, schoolwide themes, peer mediating, and tutors and readers from across ages and classrooms. Unity within the staff is boosted by celebrations of teachers' day, assistants' day, boss' day and secretaries' day, as well as the participation in committee and staff retreats.

Teachers learn from each other through their weekly team planning and team teaching in inclusion models. Teaming develops the curriculum for teaching English-learning students important academic skills.

For example, regular teachers work closely with the ESL teacher to pick out content area vocabulary, which is then studied in classrooms. The vocabulary is presented in both English and Spanish, and a concerted effort is made in all subjects to use the vocabulary words. Such support in planning and instruction ensures English-learners' skill and knowledge development.

The staff invite parents into the school to participate in school activities at every opportunity. Assemblies are open to parents and extended families. Programs featuring music and dance are specifically developed to show the students' talents to the community. Teachers also host parent coffees where everyone makes supplies.

Importantly, the school has a migrant liaison who conducts home visits with teachers and offers transportation to the school for open house, parent-teacher conferences and other events. Parents are encouraged to attend school-sponsored curriculum nights, where they are shown the


Did You Know?

Between 1990 and 1998, American's high-tech employment increased 21 percent while high-tech degrees awarded declined 5 percent.

Nationally, 5.4 percent of the population was enrolled in higher education in recent years. California and Illinois enroll 6 percent of their state's population. Michigan enrolls 5.7 percent, New York enrolls 5.6 percent, and Texas enrolls only 5 percent. Texas would have to enroll immediately 200,000 more students to reach California's current participation rate.

In Texas, less than half of the students who enter a public university will graduate with a bachelor's degree in six years.

Source: *Closing the Gaps: The Texas Higher Education Plan* (Austin, Texas: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2001).



For more facts and statistics, go to the "Field Trip" on IDRA's web site.

www.idra.org

lessons and teaching practices used in the school. St. Mary's Public School also has home consultants for Spanish and Russian households.

The school sponsors a booth at the annual Oktoberfest celebration, providing funds to the school district. The community is also involved with the homework club, sponsored by the Mt. Angel Youth Commission.

This group, sanctioned and supported by the school, works with students on comprehension and completion of homework assignments. A bond issue has recently passed that will provide additional funding for the youth commission's homework club.

Furthermore, there are field trips, newsletters, personal letters to the home in the native language, and frequent phone calls from classroom teachers, the ESL teacher and the migrant liaison. Meetings with teachers of English-learners are conducted with the help of interpreters.

One of the favorite functions of the staff and parents is the daily "early morning greeting" time, when parents bring their children to the school.

Teachers and staff stand outside the school, weather permitting, and are available to chat with parents, answer questions and generally socialize. This enhances community involvement with the school, particularly volunteering and fund-raising opportunities.

For instruction purposes, St. Mary's Public School groups its students by content area and level of achievement. In content areas, students are grouped heterogeneously, while in reading, grouping is mostly homogeneous. Student groups flex depending on academic need and remain fluid to allow varying rates of progress.

Classroom organizations range from whole classes in some subjects to small groups in others, such as math, reading and writing. Generally, however, students are grouped by ability rather than age. Cross-tutoring is organized wherein students who excel in specific subjects are paired with students who are having difficulty. Students who help others in one area often find that they themselves need help in another. Through this arrangement, all students

benefit.

Each grade has guidelines based on state criteria. The school also has developed its own benchmarks that align with Oregon's. Standardized testing, state tests and open-ended assessments are used to measure compliance.

Data is shared at staff meetings, and specific sessions are scheduled for data analysis. There is ongoing assessment and intervention to assure that all students reach end-of-year benchmarks. Yearly plans for each grade level are built on those results and continuously updated, and checklists and quarterly assessments are shared with parents. Data analysis is also presented at staff meetings and district planning meetings.

St. Mary's Public School supports English-learners with the appropriate instructional strategies, resources and environment. Indeed, its approach to the bilingual education of children has made it a program with exemplary practices.

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Indicators of Success at the School Level, Part III

by María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and Josie Danini Cortez, M.A.

This is the last of a series of articles outlining major findings of IDRA's research of exemplary and promising practices in bilingual education programs. It comes just as the U.S. Congress approves the 2001 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) with the President signing the final HR 1 *No Child Left Behind Act* on January 8, 2002.

Education Law Changes

In this Act, Title VII (*Bilingual Education Act*) is now Title III (*English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement Act*). The Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) is now named the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for LEP Students (OELALEAA). The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) is now named the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELALIEP).

In the 120 pages of the new Title III regulations, the term *bilingual education* is never used. It has been

replaced by *English language acquisition*.

The primary purpose of Title III is to "help ensure that children who are limited English proficient, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet" (Title III, Part A, Sec. 3102).

This primary purpose is similar to the original 1968 *Bilingual Education Act*, which states that limited-English-proficient (LEP) students will be educated to "meet the same rigorous standards for academic performance expected of all children and youth, including meeting challenging state content standards and challenging state student performance standards in academic areas."

One key distinction is that the new regulation does not specify the methods for achieving such standards. The former law specified the development and implementation of exemplary bilingual education programs, development of bilingual skills and multicultural understanding, and development of English and the native language skills.

Through Title VII, exemplary bilingual education programs were developed and key research was

conducted that informed and improved bilingual education programs for LEP students.

LEP Children Must be Served

Students who speak a language other than English have the right to comprehensible instruction that fosters learning. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the failure of schools to respond to the language characteristics of LEP children was a denial of equal educational opportunity (*Lau vs. Nichols*, 1973).

The *Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974* states, "No state shall deny equal educational opportunity on account of his/her race, color, sex or national origin by... the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional program" (20 U.S.C., Section 1703 (f)).

This was followed in 1975 by detailed guidelines for determining the language characteristics of students and appropriate educational responses to those characteristics.

As the country enters this new legislative era, it must be remembered that the civil rights of children remain unchanged. Educators must use the most appropriate tools available to ensure their students' success. One of these tools is bilingual education.

Thirty years of research have

proven that bilingual education, when implemented well, is the best way to learn English. Children in such programs achieve high academic standards.

IDRA’s research re-affirms what is possible when committed and dedicated individuals use research to develop and provide excellent bilingual education programs for their students.

This last article presents IDRA’s major findings in the classroom level indicators, focusing on the program model, classroom climate, curriculum and instruction, teacher expectations, and program articulation.

At the Classroom Level

IDRA visited each of the 10 bilingual education programs selected for this study. It was important to collect information directly from each program and observe first-hand the program models being implemented. This was in addition to the extensive review of quantitative student outcome and school data, and surveys of principals, teachers and administrators.

IDRA researchers conducted structured, formal classroom observations as well as structured interviews with the principals and central office administrators and, whenever possible, focus group

interviews with teachers, parents and students. Researchers also described each site visit providing a rich context for each program.

Program Model

In the schools IDRA studied, all of the program models – transitional, late exit and dual language – were grounded in sound theory and best practices associated with an enriched, not remedial, instructional model and were consistent with the characteristics of the LEP student population. Administrators and teachers we surveyed believed in the program and consistently articulated on its viability and success.

An IDRA researcher observed at one school: “Before starting the bilingual program four years ago, the staff read the literature and visited exemplary schools in Oregon and around the country. It then decided to implement a late exit model. Last year, they asked a team [of researchers] to the school to assess the program and provide the staff with suggestions for improvement.”

At another school, a teacher stated: “We don’t have an early exit model. Students gradually transition. We work hard to make sure we teach

concepts that will help them transition. They have content and concepts in their own language that help them be successful.”

Classroom Climate

The classrooms we studied strongly reflected the school climate. There were different styles but common intrinsic characteristics, such as:

- high expectations for all students,
- recognition and honoring of cultural and linguistic differences,
- students as active participants in their own education,
- parents and community members actively involved in the classrooms through tutoring, sharing experiences, reading, planning activities, etc., and
- heterogeneous grouping.

People we surveyed reported highly interactive and engaging classroom climates with a high percentage of time on task and consistent, positive student behavior.

An IDRA researcher noted: “For the most part, few of the classrooms were arranged with desks. If the classroom had desks, they were arranged in such a way that they made a table or a center for the group to work with. The students had very interesting

Indicators of Success for Bilingual Programs

School Indicators	Student Outcomes	At the School Level: Leadership	At the School Level: Support	At the Classroom Level: Programmatic and Instructional Practices
✓ Retention Rate	✓ Oral Language Proficiency	✓ Leadership	✓ Professional Development	✓ Appropriate Program Models
✓ Dropout Rate	✓ Reading and Writing Proficiency	✓ Vision and Goals	✓ Parent Involvement	✓ Positive Classroom Climate
✓ Enrollment in Gifted and Talented/Advanced Placement Programs	✓ Content Area Mastery in English	✓ School Climate	✓ Teacher Accountability and Student Assessment	✓ Academically Challenging Curriculum
✓ Enrollment in Special Education or Remedial Programs	✓ Content Area Mastery in Native Language	✓ Linkages	✓ Staff Selection and Recognition	✓ High Teacher Expectations
✓ Test Exemption Rates		✓ School Organization and Accountability	✓ Community Involvement	✓ Program Articulation
✓ Program Exiting Standard				

Intercultural Development Research Association, 2001

discussions on different topics. The students are responsible for setting up the classroom. They set up the bulletin boards, and they decide or give input into the type of direction they want their discussions to follow.”

A Russian parent stated, “[The teachers] are really passionate about teaching our kids.”

Curriculum and Instruction

In the schools IDRA studied, the curricula were planned to reflect the students’ culture. All of the instruction we observed in the classrooms was meaningful, academically challenging, and linguistically and culturally relevant. Teachers used a variety of strategies and techniques, including technology, that responded to different learning styles.

Teachers and administrators reported their bilingual program was designed to meet the students’ needs with alignment between the curriculum standards, assessments and professional development. Teachers were actively involved in curriculum planning and met regularly, with administrative support, to plan.

At one school, an IDRA researcher reported: “Students start and finish in a mainstream classroom. The first and last periods of the day students are with the same teacher and their mainstream class. This gives the students a feeling of being core integrated into the entire school. This is different from other programs where ESL [English as a second language] students only are integrated during P.E., art and music.”

At another school, a researcher noted: “There is a day set aside for teachers to plan Russian and Spanish classes and to make sure they are in their native language but along the same theme. So all children are getting the same thing in their native language.”

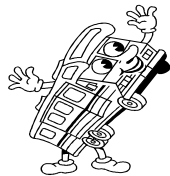
Teacher Expectations

Teachers expected all students to

Did You Know?

The following 13 states reported teacher shortages in bilingual education and/or English as a second language for the 1999-00 school year: Arkansas, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, Texas and Wisconsin (not all states filed reports).

– U.S. Department of Education, 2000



For more facts and statistics, go to the “Field Trip” on IDRA’s web site.

www.idra.org

succeed and were willing to do whatever it took to reach this goal. They valued diversity and drew on its strengths, creating an environment in the classroom and the school that was accepting, valuing and inclusive.

Teachers and administrators also reported a high commitment to their students’ educational success and cited this as a critical factor in academic achievement.

An IDRA researcher observed at one school: “All teachers are truly committed to preparing the students for high performance... Students are very aware that as they learn English, they need to follow certain paths that will lead them to college.”

A teacher stated: “During training we learn about not watering down the curriculum. We expect the same things for all students.”

An observer reported: “I tried to press them [teachers and staff] to talk to me about ‘problem students,’ and no one saw any student as such.”

Program Articulation

There were common programs of instruction across grade levels that had been aligned with developmentally

appropriate practices and student language proficiency levels in English and the students’ native language. This was accomplished in many schools through coordination and communication and through strong linkages across all levels (grades, principal and faculty, school and central office).

Teachers met frequently to plan collaboratively. This open and frequent communication, coupled with alignment across the curriculum and assessment resulted in a seamless, well-articulated curricular and instructional plan.

A teacher stated: “Action research [allowed us to look at] how we could bring our ESL and bilingual education students up to the level of all students. We collected state test data and found that not all students who fell through the cracks were ESL students but were actually Title I students. This resulted in grouping students and giving them additional support.”

At another school, an IDRA researcher observed: “There appears to be a great deal of coordination in the school. Teachers talk about ‘good’ faculty meetings that help them continue their mission. I thought this was quite unique – teachers actually

praising faculty meetings.”

Key Criteria

IDRA’s study resulted in a set of criteria for identifying promising and exemplary practices in bilingual education. At the classroom level, programmatic and instructional practices included the following.

Program Model – Teachers and community members participate in the selection and design of a bilingual/ESL program model that is consistent with the characteristics of the LEP student population. The program model is grounded in sound theory and best practices associated with an enriched, not remedial, instructional model. Administrators and teachers believe in the program, are well versed on the program, are able to articulate and comment on its viability and success, and demonstrate their belief.

Classroom Climate – The classroom environment communicates high expectations for *all* students, including LEP students. Teachers seek ways to value cultural and linguistic differences and fully integrate them into the curriculum.

Curriculum and Instruction – The curriculum reflects and values the students’ culture. The curriculum adheres to high standards. Instruction is meaningful, technologically appropriate, academically challenging, and linguistically and culturally relevant. It is innovative and uses a variety of techniques that respond to different learning styles.

Teacher Expectations – Teachers expect all students, including LEP students, to achieve at high standards and are willing to do whatever it takes to reach this goal. They value diversity and know how to create an environment that is accepting and inclusive.

Program Articulation – There is strong evidence of a common program of instruction that is properly scoped, sequenced and articulated across grade levels and has been aligned with developmentally appropriate practices

and student language proficiency levels in English and the students’ first language.

Example of a Successful Bilingual Program

The above are five of the indicators that IDRA found in the research sites. They comprise the final of five dimensions for assessing a school’s success in educating English-language learners:

- School indicators,
- Student outcomes,
- Leadership,
- Support, and
- Programmatic and instructional practices.

One example of such a successful program is found at River Glen Elementary School in San José, California.

River Glen Elementary School San José, California

River Glen Elementary School (kindergarten through grade six) is a public school of choice – parents apply and students are selected through a lottery process. Students in kindergarten, first and second grades are taught completely in Spanish.

All students receive increased amounts of English instruction each school year so that by the fifth grade, students spend half of their day in Spanish instruction and the other half in English instruction. At the end of the fifth grade, students understand, speak, read and write in both Spanish and English and meet high academic standards in all subjects.

River Glen Elementary School is a public school of choice in another way – the principal and staff chose to promote and nurture bilingualism despite California’s Proposition 227, which ended bilingual education instruction in most of the state’s schools. River Glen Elementary School applied for and received a waiver to continue its two-way bilingual immersion program despite the anti-bilingual sentiment in the

state.

The program’s goals are to:

- promote high levels of oral language proficiency and literacy in both Spanish and English,
- establish a strong academic base in two languages, and
- develop cross-cultural understanding between students.

The program has been granted *exemplary status* by the state of California.

The school’s underlying philosophy for its program design is valuing bilingualism and the benefits accrued. The program is designed so that strong emphasis on Spanish instruction in the early grades benefits both English and Spanish language groups.

For Spanish-language speakers, this early emphasis on their home language enables them to “expand their vocabulary and build literacy in their first language; study a highly academic curriculum in their first language; successfully transfer Spanish reading and writing skills to English in later grades; acquire high levels of self-esteem by becoming bilingual and playing a supportive role for their English-speaking classmates.”

English-language speakers benefit from “extensive exposure to Spanish, accelerating their absorption and usage of the language to achieve early Spanish literacy; a highly academic curriculum, taught in a second language; the ability to transfer Spanish reading and writing skills to English language reading and writing after the second grade; the confidence to speak Spanish, resulting from the self-esteem and pride they gain because they are bilingual.”

During the school site visit, the IDRA researcher noted a very positive school climate. The principal and teachers were proud of their work, and it showed. As a matter of course, the school is opened to visitors once a month.

The school building was clean and attractively decorated. All of the

information posted around the school was in Spanish and English. Everyone was friendly and made visitors feel welcome and comfortable. The friendliness and collegiality among staff was also evident. Parents, teachers and staff assistants were very comfortable with each other.

Many of the classrooms had about 30 students with a teacher and assistant in each classroom.

In one classroom, students debated the pros and cons of living longer than normal. In another, students discussed whether or not they would take it if they had the opportunity to make more money.

Students are provided with challenging course materials in both English and Spanish. Teachers use only Spanish or English during instruction. They do not translate but instead use other second language acquisition techniques and strategies to make the language and content understandable.

Teachers also exchange classes with each other at the kindergarten through second grade levels during the English portion of the day so that students learn to identify a particular teacher with a particular language, increasing the likelihood they will use the specific language in particular contexts.

Teachers provide direction and counsel to their students but always allow for student input and ownership.

The bilingual program is an integral part of the school. All of the teachers are expected to speak Spanish fluently. The IDRA observer reported: “‘Proud to be Bilingual’ should be the key phrase to describe River Glen Elementary School. Everyone there, from the teachers to the parents, recognize that bilingualism is a valuable asset. They are very proud of their stance on bilingual education, despite the state’s controversial Proposition 227.”

River Glen Elementary School teachers have courageously defended their advocacy of bilingual education despite opposition from the state, from many community members and from

their own teacher union.

Every classroom has a computer that students use throughout the day. The computer software in kindergarten through second grade is in Spanish. Students in the upper grades have a choice of the mode and language of instruction.

Teachers at River Glen Elementary School must be certified in bilingual education. There is very little turnover at the school.

All of the teachers commented on the high level of good and open communication with each other and with their principal. They usually meet on a weekly basis to plan, always focusing on instruction. The principal and teachers implement a structured curriculum where every teacher at every grade level knows exactly what is expected of them. This approach allows for any new teachers to become acclimated to the school and receive the necessary information and support.

Teachers usually participate in staff development at the beginning of each year. The focus of the last sessions was the issue of standards. School district and state academic standards are met or exceeded at each grade level.

All of the teachers have high expectations for their students. Students are expected to achieve at or above the state standards.

One teacher said: “We have our high expectations, but it is our colleagues who are pushing us to maintain and stay focused. I know if I lag behind, the teacher next year will come and talk to me and see what it is I am teaching.”

Student performance is assessed in a variety of ways from timed tests to portfolios to folders that students keep at their desks. They also hold themselves accountable for the success of each and every student.

During the classroom observations, IDRA representatives reported that each teacher knew the exact status (task and skill level) of every student. Student progress was constantly monitored with the teachers in the lower grades keeping a running record of the

How I Am

One student at River Glen Elementary School wrote the following poem illustrating the sentiment found throughout this program and the recognition and celebration of culture, ethnicity and languages:

*En el espejo
cuando me miro
en el espejo
como me gusta
asi como soy.*

*Soy morenito
Me falta un diente
Y toda la gente
Me dice chulito.*

*Como me gusta
Como me gusta
Como me gusta
asi como soy.*

*In the mirror
when I see myself
in the mirror
how I like
how I am.*

*I'm dark-skinned
I'm missing a tooth
And everyone
Calls me cute.*

*How I like
How I like
How I like
How I am.*

student’s progress. In the upper grades, almost all of the student work was posted on walls or displayed in some form.

Family involvement is an important contributor to the program’s success. While parents are not necessarily bilingual, they must be supportive of bilingualism. They must also be willing to make a long-term commitment to the

program to allow enough time for their children to succeed.

The IDRA researcher reported: "The school is successful because of the commitment and integrity that the teachers have toward the bilingual program at their school. They attribute their success to the clear and focused program that is articulated throughout the campus and to the support that the principal provides."

Resources

River Glen Elementary School. "Project Two-Way, Title VII Academic Excellence Project, River Glen Elementary School Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Program, Literacy in Two Languages," informational brochure (San José, California: River Glen Elementary School, nd).

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- ❖ leadership
- ❖ support
- ❖ programmatic and instructional practices

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