Adding or Subtracting: The Subtractive Nature of Schools and How Dual Language Programs Transform the System for Latino Student Achievement

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Table of Contents

Preface

I. Introduction
   Current Trends for Latino Students

II. History of Latinos in the U.S. Educational System

III. Subtractive Nature of Schooling

IV. Additive Alternative: Two-Way Dual Language Programs
   History and Definition of DLP’s
   Empirical Evidence
   Language
   Integration and Inclusion
   Culture: Funds of Knowledge

V. Implications and Challenges
   Textbooks and Curricula
   Teacher Quality and Commitment
   Parental and Community Support

VI. An Exploratory Study: Lessons Learned from a Local DLP
   Tristate Dual Language Elementary
   Support of the District and the Community
   Commitment of Teachers
   Language Use/Choice
   Curriculum and Learning Materials
   Testing
   Parent Engagement
   Suggestions for Tristate Elementary

VII. Conclusions

VIII. Bibliography

Appendix
   A. George Washington Carver Middle School, Miami, Florida
   B. Ada Merrit K-8 Center, Miami, Florida
   C. Francis Scott Key Elementary School, Arlington, VA
   D. Application for Expedited Review
      SUAPP Human Subjects Review
   E. Semi-Structured Interview Guide
   F. Informed Consent Form
Preface

My interest in Latino students and language education began when I was a youth mentoring coordinator at Brader Elementary School in Newark, Delaware. Brader is one of the bilingual schools for the Christina School District. Due to the fact that I speak Spanish, I was frequently asked to translate Spanish-speaking parents or students if the only Spanish-speaking paraprofessional was not available. I found myself drawn to the energy and atmosphere of one of the third grade bilingual classes and spent an hour each day working with students on their English and reading assignments.

As I started to look into federal language policy and the achievement gap of Latinos, I was appalled by how we consistently underserve this growing population, and how our educational system refuses to adapt to the changing demographics of our society. Through my initial research I discovered Dual Language Programs and how they are the only effective practice that closes the achievement gap for Latino students.

While my research interests remain focused on Latino Spanish-speaking students, I also support Dual Language Programs because of their focus on multicultural learning. I hope that when I have children I will also have the access and the opportunity to pursue Dual Language Programs so that my children would be bilingual, biliterate, and exposed to a diverse and accepting school environment.

I would like to thank the staff, students and the administration of both Brader and Tristate Elementary Schools. I would also like to acknowledge the support and guidance of Dr. Jeff Raffel and Dr. Rosalie Rolón-Dow as I developed this research over the last year.
I. Introduction

Current Trends for Latino Students

Schools are commonly referred to as the “equalizer” of the nation and can act as “a primary vehicle for the transmission of culture and a sense of national identity. They also serve as the gateway to participation in the political and economic arena” (Linton, 2004, 46). Nevertheless, schools do not serve all students equitably, and many groups are left behind academically, economically, socially, and as citizens. Students who are labeled as Latinos are consistently underserved in the academic arena across the United States (Fry 2005; Kohler & Lazarín 2007; Olsen 2000). The number of English Language Learners (ELL) enrolled in U.S. schools has increased substantially in the past decade, and this growing population’s lagging performance must be addressed on a variety of levels. This student population increased by 56 percent between the 1994-1995 and 2004-2005 school years, and nearly 80 percent of ELL students are Hispanic native Spanish-speakers (Kohler & Lezarín, 2007, p. 2).

While some Latino students flourish in school and the academic arena, unfortunately, the statistics show that this success is a rarity and not the norm. The reasons for school failure and low achievement that were historically, and to some extent still are, used to justify educational failure and low achievement align with a cultural deficit framework and include: genetics, a culture of poverty and laziness, and generally being of an inferior race and class. Such reasoning implies the problem is the individuals or the families, but not the system that constrains them. The genetic and inferiority arguments assume that nothing can be done to improve the situation; it is inevitable that these students will fail, even if the educational system changes and attempts to better
serve them. Despite the obvious arguments against such thinking, Latino students are caught in one of the largest achievement gaps in the United States. Yet, there are programs that are proven to close and, in some cases, even eliminate, the achievement gap for Latino students. Such programs must work against the subtractive nature of schools to meet the diverse needs of an ever-growing population of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States.

The individual students and their families are often blamed for the lack of achievement, and the students left behind become the visible consequences of an educational system that does not meet student needs. In combination with a variety of socioeconomic pressures, the misalignment of student needs and school structure is exemplified by the following statistics: Latino students drop out of school 28 percent of the time; this is more than double the national rate of 11 percent for all students, and English Language Learners (ELL) make more than three-quarters of the Latino student population (Allen & Franklin, 2002, p. 4). Up to 80 percent of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students are also raised by LEP parents, which radically changes the resource students are able to access at home (Fix & Passel, 2003, p. 4). Also impacting the home environment is the fact that up to 56 percent of Hispanic parents are functionally illiterate (in English), while 46 percent of Black parents and only 16 percent of White parents are functionally illiterate (Brilliant, 2001, p. 4).

Other minority and immigrant populations face similar issues, yet Latino students’ ability to succeed is compounded by poverty, the politics of language, migrant labor, as well as other socio-economic and cultural factors. It is important to note that “the statistics showing that the average Latino has only slightly improved mastery of
English, educational levels, and incomes are actually evidence of substantial gains, for overall statistics that average in the huge numbers of new arrivals mask the progress that preexisting immigrants have made” (Barone, 2001, p. 189). In effect, as some Latinos learn English or graduate from high school, the percentage of Latinos making such progress show that the numbers are decreasing instead of increasing due to the new immigrants impacting the data. A similar problem is noted when ELL students achieve a certain level of English proficiency. These students are then removed from an ELL program and placed into regular classes. In effect, as ELL students who achieve proficiency are removed from the ELL category and new immigrants are labeled as ELL and placed in the program, the school’s ELL population will rarely demonstrate the true growth that is occurring in the classroom.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is key to a student’s academic success, yet Latino students enter school far behind their peers, as ECE is not always accessible to the populations who need it the most. Kohler and Lezarín (2007) state that there has been significant growth in the number of Spanish-speaking Head Start Participants (from 17.5 percent in 1993 to 23 percent in 2004); Latino children are significantly underrepresented in ECE programs. For example, the Migrants and Seasonal Head Start program only reaches 19 percent of eligible children of farm-workers. Similarly, the Early Head Start program for infants and toddlers only reached 2.8 percent of eligible Latino families during the 2003-2004 program year (Kohler & Lezarín, 2007, pp. 3, 4). While this shortfall of adequate ECE programs impacts all Latinos, adding language proficiency to the mix only compounds the barriers that ELL student must endure.
Latino students tend to live in low-income urban or extremely rural portions of the country. A study from the Pew Hispanic Center (2005) states, Latinos “are more likely than blacks and whites to attend public high schools that have the most students, the highest concentrations of poor students and highest student-teacher ratios.” (Fry, p. 1). Such schools do not have the basic resources they need to serve their students. The books and supplies are outdated, classrooms are cramped, students are isolated from their peers, and teachers are not necessarily able to meet the emotional or academic needs of their students. The progression of this achievement gap continues as the practical and day-to-day insufficiencies for these students is combined with the gross structural practices that separate minority students from the mainstream educational system (Fry 2005; Kohler & Lazarín 2007; Olsen 2000).

It is important to note that Latino immigrants in the U.S. have a diverse range of language needs amongst themselves, and speak a range of dialects of Spanish, Creole, indigenous languages, Portuguese, French, and other languages. Barone (2001) cites national identity writer, Gregory Rodriguez, as he denounces “the absurdity of pretending that there really is some monolithic ‘Latino community,’ or that all Latinos snugly fit into one cultural, economic, or political mode. Quite the contrary. Latinos make up what can be described as a vast, dispersed, heterogeneous, multilingual, and multi-class population” (p. 187). In effect, it is important to note that the critiques and analysis of current and historical language pedagogies may not apply to all Latinos or Latino ELLs. Each Latino student has a different unique family history and this presents itself in various ways in a school environment.
It is important to note that there are a variety of pedagogies that are used to teach ELLs English in school. Transitional Bilingual Education is one of the most common forms of language education and is used to teach the students English quickly and transition them into mainstream classrooms as rapidly as possible. The education may begin in both Spanish and English, but Spanish is rapidly phased out and the child is then in an English-only environment. English as a Second Language (ESL) usually groups students with a variety of heritage languages into one class and English is the only language used by the teachers. This pedagogy is often used in schools or districts where there are many different heritage languages, but only a few students in each language category. Submersion or total immersion is used when an ELL student is placed in an English-only class with native English speakers. Dual Language Programs can either be composed of one native-language group, or of two native-language groups. The curriculum is taught in both languages and the students are able to assist each other out as they each learn the second language.

The National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) groups the various models into the following three categories:

- Sometimes the transition to the all-English mainstream is rapid (one to three years), sometimes gradual (five to six years).
- Classrooms may be composed entirely of ELLs, or they may include native English speakers who are learning Spanish, Chinese, Navajo, or some other language.
- Students are sometimes taught a full curriculum in their native language and in English. Elsewhere ELLs may receive only native-language support – periodic translations or tutoring – with lessons conducted primarily in English.
NABE also recognizes that “one size does not fit all.” A program that may work for some students learning English may not work for other students. State policy may also impact which pedagogies a state is able to use. For example, an ever-growing number of states have banned bilingual education and English-only programs are now used in California, Arizona, and other states (NABE).

For the purpose of this paper, I specifically examine two-way dual language programs (DLPs), which are programs that are ideally composed of 50 percent native English speakers (usually Anglo or Black Americans) and 50 percent native Spanish speakers (usually Latinos). Half of the academic subjects are taught in English and the other half are instructed in Spanish, with greater emphasis on English in the elementary years. In effect, every student in the school is in the process of becoming proficient in two languages. DLPs also focus on other languages, but I exclusively look at English and Spanish programs due to the need to offer quality education to Latino ELLs and the predominance of this type of program.

I use secondary data and analysis compiled by a variety of researchers to frame my argument that the ELL students perform better academically in a two-way dual language program due to the fact that such programs are additive in nature and work against the subtractive nature of public school design. In addition to the research completed by others, I observed a two-way dual language program for two days in the winter of 2007. While at the school, I also interviewed several teachers and administrators. My observations and interviews were used to compare and contrast the reality of one school’s environment with other schools and the DLP theory in practice.
This comparison is important as each school and its’ student populations are different and a model in theory may be adapted to the school environment for implementation.

In this paper, I explore a brief history of the U.S. school system and its subtractive nature of schooling. I then examine how two-way dual language programs are additive in nature by specifically looking at the practices and policies regarding language, integration, and culture. Finally, I discuss my exploratory case study and how it compares and contrasts with the additive practices researched by others. In conclusion, I recognize the implications and challenges for such programs as I recommend changes to language programs and to the schooling system as a whole.
II. History of Latinos is the U.S. Educational System

The very nature of the U.S. educational system is based on subtractive ideologies. Schools were initially developed to promote patriotism, democracy, and citizenship. Yet, Latino students have not been treated equally as Anglo students, nor are they currently provided equitable resources (funding, time, instructional support) needed to acquire the skills they need to survive in a capitalist and democratic country (Fry 2005; Kohler & Lazarín 2007; Olsen 2000). Latino students are taught by a system that refused education to Mexican Americans (who were technically born in the U.S. and later deported “back” to Mexico), fired Puerto Rican teachers when the U.S. conquered the island and replaced them with U.S. trained teachers, and by a system that has a history of numerous racially oriented citizenship acts and policies (Spring 2004).

Latino students today enter into an educational system that still struggles with the definition of Latino versus Hispanic, which languages to teach, should illegal immigrants be taught to the same standards, what amount of English language knowledge constitutes proficiency, and if ELLs should be tested along with the native or proficient English speakers. Latino students might not be aware of the historical struggles that have occurred, but they experience the day-to-day results of those conflicts. Once colonies were established in the Native American Territories, in Puerto Rico, or on any other U.S.-controlled island, schools were built and began to teach the children a very limited knowledge base (Spring 2004). Many of the historical struggles between the Latino community and the local, state, and federal governments revolve around language policy and gaining recognition for bilingual education programs. Language acceptance and respect are central to identity formation in minority populations and especially in
children. In contrast, acculturation and socialization are central to public school systems' processes and goals (Linton 2004; Ovando 2003; Spring 2004).

Joel Spring (2004) explores how education was used as a method of social control "[by denying] a population the knowledge necessary to protect its political and economic rights and to economically advance in society. Similar to restraints placed on African American slaves, farmers wanted to keep Mexican laborers ignorant as a means of assuring a continued inexpensive source of labor" (p. 85). Early Latino immigrants were placed in a school system that had the goal of "[Americanizing] the child in a controlled and linguistic and cultural environment, and ... to train Mexicans for occupations that considered open to, and appropriate for them" (Gonzales in Spring, 2004, p. 86). The students were taught to function at a basic level to meet the labor needs of the Anglo community. This fact is exemplified by many school districts in California that did not enforce state and federal mandatory attendance policies and instead created a five-hour (from 7:30 AM-12:30 PM) migrant school day to encourage the students to work in the fields after classes (Spring 2004).

Similarly, "U.S. policy in Puerto Rico emphasized building loyalty to the U.S. flag and institutions, as well as deculturalization... [The policies in Puerto Rico] attempted to replace Spanish with English as the majority language and introduce children to the dominant culture" (Spring, 2004, p. 90). Not only was language a target for U.S. policy, but culture became a primary focus in certain territories, especially in Puerto Rico. San Miguel and Valencia (1998) also discuss the purpose of schooling as means of instructing an "American way of life" and schools were used as an avenue for acculturization of the entire population. Through school activities, students were used to
spread patriotism throughout the community through projects, parades, songs, and rigid classroom rules. In 1921, the Puerto Rican commissioner of education, Juan Huyke, exemplified such practices by supporting speeches entitled "American Patriotism—wear the flag on your heart as well as in your buttonhole," to coincide with American Education week. He later stated in a newsletter, “Our schools are agencies of Americanism. They must implant the spirit of American within the hearts of our children” (Spring, 2004, p. 94).

In effect, the students were stripped of their cultural and linguistic histories and were taught the "right" way to function, speak, and learn. Not only did such practices occur subconsciously, they were also used as formal policies for invasion and garnering support from a conquered territory. Samuel Lindsey, the second commissioner of education, wrote in his 1902 annual report that "colonization carried forward by the armies of war is vastly more costly than that carried forward by the armies of peace, whose outpost and garrisons are the public schools of the advancing nation" (Spring, 2004, p. 90).

Spring (2004) cites six factors that are used as methods of deculturalization of a population. The methods include:

- Segregation and isolation;
- Forced change of language;
- Curriculum content that reflects culture of dominant group;
- Textbooks that reflect culture of dominant group;
- Denial of cultural and religious expression by dominated groups;
- Use of teachers from dominant group.
As a result of both direct and indirect deculturalization, the history of Latino schooling in the U.S. implies that children must be taught to support the policies of the government, fight for freedom and democracy, and yet they may only aspire to work at levels so desired by the ruling classes. While this practice may not be as apparent today, the fact that students and schools with the greatest needs often have the least qualified teacher and the most underfunded programs implies that all children in the United States do not have the same opportunities available to them.
III. Subtractive Nature of Schooling

Subtractive schooling (Valenzuela 1999) expands the concept of schools as a place of deculturalization and assimilation. Many policies and practices are developed using a subtractive pedagogy. Subtractive schooling is founded on the knowledge base of the majority (Anglo) student, and if a student does not have that base he is placed at an enormous disadvantage within the educational system. The student is blamed as the problem, and he must change his cultural, educational, and social practices to meet the requirements of the systems. A lack of validation of, or working to dissolve or eliminate a person’s own experiences is also related to a cultural deficit mentality. The students are blamed as the problem, and the system is not examined for its negative impacts on the students. Valdés (1997) furthers this argument and writes, “The root of the problem is seen to reside in the shortcomings of the immigrants themselves” (p. 403). Valenzuela (1999) writes that the subtractive process of schooling “divests these youth of important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure.” (p. 3). The structure is designed for either their complete assimilation or their utter failure.

Barone (2001) supports the view that America is a “melting pot.” He reiterates that many immigrants come to the United States to become Americanized, to earn money, to offer their children a better future than that available in their home country, and to assimilate. While I support this claim, I also believe that all immigrants have a right to maintain their heritage and culture. As Barone (2001) claims Latinos are a relatively “young” immigrant population and it will simply take more time and more generations of Latinos in the United States to become fully integrated into society and to
achieve increased statistical levels of success, such as graduation rates, college
attendance, income per capita, and the employment rate. While this may be true, all
immigrants, Spanish-speaking students deserve to be educated through the pedagogies
that will best educate them while not harming their identities. This is especially true for
Spanish speaking-students due to our proximity and ties to Spanish-speaking countries.

Latino students are one of many minority groups who have been harmed and
disenfranchised by the educational system. By looking at the true historical trend of
subtractive schooling framework, it is apparent that the system itself continues to fail the
students it intends to serve.

While Anglos in the system tend to believe that the Latino students “don’t care”
about school, Valenzuela (1999) argues that “[The students] oppose a schooling process
that disrespects them; they oppose not education, but schooling... [Their school is]
organized formally and informally in ways that fracture students’ cultural and ethnic
identities, creating social, linguistic, and cultural divisions among the students and
between the students and the staff” (p. 5). The structure and practices of schools create a
subtractive environment and pushes the very students who need the most support the
furthest away. The students recognize that education is needed for success, but after
struggling through the system and watching their older siblings fail, they rebel against the
structure in order to survive and protect their identities in their social groups and families.

The structure of the system is not the only subtractive aspect of current U.S.
educational practices. Basic resources are subtracted from the students as well. Due to the
funding processes of many school systems in the U.S., low-income and minority students
attend schools that are consistently underfunded by districts, states, and the federal
government (Funding Gaps 2006). The very students who need extra support and resources to meet the same basic requirements as majority students, receive fewer supplies, fewer extracurricular activities, teachers with less training, and generally inferior educations (Fry 2005; Kohler & Lazarín 2007; Olsen 2000). Valenzuela (1999) specifically cites a lack of counselors and access to information as a major barrier to student’s future success. This lack of mentoring from counselors or advisors to best align a student’s interests and needs with a rigorous curriculum results in many students being placed in the lowest academic tracks without being assigned to the very classes they will need to graduate within the traditional four-year period (Valenzuela 1999).

Schools serving Hispanic and other minority students offer fewer rigorous academic courses than schools that serve majority-Anglo populations. A study by Achieve, Inc., shows that 74 percent of minority girls want to enroll in advanced courses, but only 45 percent of their schools offer such courses. Similarly, although two-thirds of minority boys are interested in taking advanced mathematics courses, fewer than half attend schools that offer these courses (Kohler & Lezarín, 2007, pp. 5,6). Valenzuela (1999) writes, “The widespread disaffection with schooling among U.S.-born youth should thus be attributed to their experience of schooling as subtractive or as an implicit threat to ethnic identity that accompanies the demand that youth care about school. Rather than building on a students’ cultural and linguistic knowledge and heritage to create biculturally and bilingually competent youth, schools subtract these identifications from them to their school and academic detriment” (p. 25).

In essence, the minority students are subtracted from mainstream schooling through separate classes, limited resources, unprepared teachers, and Anglo-centered
pedagogies. The low expectations and the limited supports to meet basic educational requirements virtually set Latino students up for failure. Despite mainstream schooling functioning in such a subtractive way, there are alternative structures and pedagogies that can positively impact both language minority and language majority students. Next, I describe dual language programs and how such practices create an additive rather than a subtractive environment.
IV. Additive Alternative: Two-Way Dual Language Programs

As stated in the Introduction, there are a variety of different types of English-acquisition programs, from ESL to immersion. Many traditional bilingual programs “are often superficial interventions that allow the underlying dominant ideologies embedded in the public school system to go unchallenged” (Olivos and Quintana de Valladolid, 2005, p. 288). Barone (2001) adds, “A major reason public schools have not been effective for Latinos is bilingual education programs, which in many cases have been neither bilingual nor education—in which children are taught bad Spanish and kept from mastering the English language, the first rung on the ladder of upward mobility” (pp. x, 171). The variations of language programs are explored in the following paragraph.

In transitional bilingual education programs, the linguistic goal is to either eradicate a language (mother tongue) or substitute it with English. In the maintenance program, the linguistic goal is to maintain the mother tongue while adding the second. Enrichment programs aim to add a language to that which children already know, and foster children’s academic growth in both languages (Hornberger, 1990). This definition is in contrast to more traditional bilingual education programs, where the educational goal is to be able to function in all-English environments (Torres-Guzmán, 2002, p. 2).

In order to improve the outcomes of students, the system itself must be transformed. Olivos and Quintana de Valladolid (2005) elaborate that the “achievement gap” implies an individual’s ability or inability to perform academically and blames the student, as opposed to the structure of the system. The student must “fix” the problem instead of the system being fixed for the needs of the student. The terms “achievement trap” or
“expectation gap” are sometimes used to imply that students are left in a system without any real alternatives available to them. Dual Language Programs work against the subtractive structural ideologies by challenging the language, isolationist, and cultural assumptions of the educational system.

**History and Definition of DLPs**

Two-way dual language programs are based off a Canadian model for English and French acquisition. Cuban immigrants in Miami, Florida, who planned to return to Cuba with their children after the revolution was supposed to be overthrown by the U.S. government, first founded DLPs in the United States. Potowski (2004) writes that such language programs “[indicate] that languages are best learned as a medium of content rather than as the focus of instruction” (p. 75). Two-way DLPs vary in structure by the minority language taught, the proportion of speakers of each language (the ideal is 50-50), the amount of time spent learning each language, and whether the languages are separated by subject area, by day, or by another factor (Potowski, 2004). DLPs work against the predominant subtractive beliefs because “instead of regarding the children of immigrants as a liability with which schools must deal, dual-language programs validate and make use of these children’s skills by placing them in a position to help native English-speakers become bilingual” (Linton, 2004, p. 47).

Collier and Thomas (2004) state that the main components of a dual language program include:

- A minimum of six-years of bilingual instruction (with English learners not segregated);
• A focus on the core academic curriculum rather than a watered down version;
• High-quality language arts instruction in both languages and integrated into thematic units;
• Separation of the two languages with no translation or repeated lessons in the other language;
• Use of the non-English language at least 50 percent of the instructional time (90 percent in the early grades);
• Use of collaborative and interactive teaching strategies (p. 13).

Similarly, Torres-Guzmán (2002) recognizes “the dual language program design follows consistent and clear linguistic, sociocultural, and educational policies, which include a variety of features” that are adapted to fit into the following table (p. 4).

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<tr>
<th>Sociocultural</th>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th>Pedagogical</th>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciation of cultural diversity</td>
<td>Strict language separation</td>
<td>Academic achievement for all children</td>
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<td>Culturally relevant teaching</td>
<td>Equality in language distribution</td>
<td>Math and literature follow distinct linguistic policy</td>
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<td>Development of self-esteem</td>
<td>Avoidance of simultaneous translation</td>
<td>Developmental level team teaching structures</td>
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<td>Mix of language minority with English-speaking and mainstream students</td>
<td>Language taught through content</td>
<td>Thematic organization of units of study</td>
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<td>Cooperative group learning structure</td>
<td>Whole-language instruction</td>
<td>Teachers as monolingual models</td>
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<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>Goals of bilingualism and biliteracy</td>
<td>Ongoing staff development</td>
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<td>School/community support structure</td>
<td>Heterogeneous language grouping</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Language**

Language is commonly thought to be the main focus of the program in a DLP, when in essence language is the vehicle for academic transmission, but acquiring content
knowledge in a multicultural environment is a more realistic goal held by DLPs.
Numerous studies (Potowski, 2004; Collier & Thomas, 2004; amongst others)
deemonstrate that content acquisition occurs at a faster rate in the native language and can
then be transferred over to a second language. Allowing students to learn in both their
native language and in a second language provide content growth in a variety of subjects,
while also encouraging proficiency in both languages.

Due to the composition of the students and to the language of instruction by the
teachers, how language is used, divided and emphasized becomes a central aspect of
DLPs. The integration of the students also impacts the language acquisition and is
discussed by Genesee in Potowski (2004),

Spanish-speaking students’ English is also thought to benefit from dual
immersion, because these students are integrated with native English
speakers throughout the school day instead of being separated from them
during English as a Second Language pullout classes commonly used in
bilingual education programs. Likewise, native English-speaking students
learning Spanish are thought to benefit from dual immersion because they
have native-speaking peers in the classroom instead of relying on the
teacher as the sole source of input as in one-way immersion (p. 76).

Using students as resources and as peer tutors helps with the language acquisition of all
students while also increasing the self-esteem of the students.

Potowski (2004) recognizes that while in theory dual language programs should
provide equal focus and access to second language acquisition, the students (especially in
the upper grade levels) tend to prefer using English in social relations. In effect, the
minority language is usually reserved for academic purposes for all students and at home
for the native Spanish speakers. This “leakage” due to the power of English should be monitored in DLPs, and the programs should continue to focus on equal acquisition of the languages at school, while it is inevitable that external pressures will support English proficiency over Spanish.

*Integration and Inclusion*

Transitional bilingual and English as a Second Language classes tend to pull students out of regular classes or isolate the students altogether and the curriculum tends to be remedial (Barone 2001; Collier & Thomas 2002). In effect, the Spanish-speaking students understand that they are different and that they need extra help to achieve any success in school. A main component of DLPs is using student’s skills to help each other learn. Since every student is an expert in one of the languages of instruction, all students are able to act as peer tutors. Through integration, the students native-Spanish speakers become part of a larger social network of students and are no longer treated as inferior students.

Thomas and Collier (1998) comment that DLPs are viewed more optimistically than traditional ESL or bilingual programs because when the “focus of any special school program is on academic enrichment for all students, the school community perceives that program positively, and students become academically successful and deeply engaged in the learning process” (p. 23). Not only do both the native Spanish-speakers and the native English-speakers benefit from being integrated into a diverse class, but the general stigma associated with non-English speakers also decreases, as the school program is seen as a benefit for all students, the teachers, and the community as a whole.
While it is important for social purposes and for tutoring purposes for the students to be integrated, it is also beneficial for the native Spanish-speakers to have access to a challenging and age-appropriate curriculum. Many ESL Latino students underperform academically because they receive remedial content education, and they must make more academic progress each year to keep up with their mainstream counterparts (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 2). By integrating the classes, the native-Spanish speakers are guaranteed the same challenging curriculum as the native English-speakers and all students are more likely to make the same content progress throughout the year.

*Culture: Funds of Knowledge*

Too often a narrow definition of culture is embraced, and when a child or a family does not fit squarely into that block, he becomes isolated and disenfranchised. Culture “provides children with a sense of self-worth and ethnic identity. Moreover, when educators realize its functional workings, culture is also a source of strength for a school” (Soriano and Hong, 1995 p 31). Teachers must recognize and validate the cultural constructs of their students in order to best reach the children and the parents and to create the most academic and social growth of all children. Dual Language Programs often recognize a student’s culture, personal experiences and how the home life of a student impacts traditional academic learning. Recognizing, validating, and using this knowledge and these skills represents an additive framework.

The concept of funds of knowledge validates a person’s experiences, while recognizing that their experiences may vary from the predominant populations. Olivos and Quintana de Valladolid (2005) recognize that as teachers of English Language
Learners “we cannot alter the home environment or the level of poverty of our Latino ELL students, but we can understand and accept them for the experiences that they bring to the classroom” (p. 292). Recognizing that various cultures intersect for each person and each family in different ways, allows each person to develop personal agency to choose which traits she desires to maintain, while not necessarily succumbing to the cultural deficit approach that so many institutions force on culturally diverse individuals. Using the concept of funds of knowledge in school practices helps create new ways of developing curriculum that nurtures the needs of students, as opposed to those that remove their individual cultures before imposing another “proper” curriculum. The challenge is to encourage more teachers and students to increase the individual and group agency of minorities so that such practices become the norm rather than a rarity.

In *Subtractive Schooling* (1999) Valenzuela develops the concept of *educación*. Valenzuela defines *educación* as “[referring] to the family’s role of inculcating in children a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibility and serves as the foundation for all other learning. Though inclusive of formal academic training, *educación* additionally refers to competence in the social world, wherein one respects the dignity and individuality of others” (p. 23). *Educación* is a true additive approach to schooling. The students are recognized for their identities (however complicated they may be), they are encouraged to be respectful, inquisitive, and positively participate in society. Learning should occur in all life environments, at home and in school. Learning is a continuous process and respect is a central practice for learning to occur on a variety of levels. *Educación* is a true example of caring in school. The concept is additive and
rebels against the subtractive nature of current pedagogies, and it recognizes the social
capital that students bring to the environment and struggle with on a daily basis.

Dual Language Programs align with the concept of educación and Funds of
Knowledge by respecting individuals for their differences and by teaching a variety of
diverse cultural practices and lifestyles, in addition to focusing on two languages. Collier
and Thomas (2004) write, “Two-way bilingual classes taught by a sensitive teacher can
lead to context where students from each language group learn to respect their fellow
students as valued partners in the learning process with much knowledge to teach each
other” (p. 3). Some DLPs may even utilize these concepts to a greater extent by
encouraging parent participation and sharing amongst families during family nights. This
is encouraged by the fact that “Parents of both languages tend to participate much more
actively in the school, because they feel welcomed, valued, and respected, and included
in school decision-making” (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 12). Until educators and
administrators incorporate language, integration of students, and culture into everyday
schooling practices, Latino students and other underrepresented minorities will continue
to show an achievement gap founded by an expectation gap as teachers expect remedial
work and provide the students will insufficient materials and curricula.

The ways that DLPs embrace the additive framework through both funds of
knowledge and the concept of educación is demonstrated through the visions, missions,
and goals of current Dual Language Programs in the United States. For example, the
George Washington Carver Middle School highlights the following goals and mission for
their students and the school: parent engagement is essential to student success, high and
rigorous standards are upheld, the focus is student-centered and the ultimate goal is to
prepare students for a multicultural world (Attachment A). Similarly, the Ada Merrit K-8 Center’s website states that children always come first, high expectations are the norm, parents and other support systems in the community are valued, and all students and their backgrounds are nurtured, developed, and respected (Attachment B). The Francis Scott Key Elementary School outside of Washington, DC is one of the most researched DLPs and its mission highlights the celebration of cultures and a strong collaboration with families (Attachment C). Founding a school on a student-centered model with high expectations, rigorous curricula, parent engagement, and valuing diversity all embrace the concept of educación and Funds of Knowledge and should be encouraged in DLPs and in all schools.

Evidence

Bilingual education is extraordinarily controversial and opponents such as Christine Rossell (2000) claim “there is no consistent evidence available to support bilingual education as the best means for LEP children to learn English and other subjects that they will be tested on in English” (p. 215). Rossell believes that the government and the U.S. Department of Education have continued to support such education programs with little evidence that they work. She states that the Clinton administration “gave funding priority to programs that provide for the development of bilingual proficiency in English and another language” (p. 228). Rossell’s 2000 report compares a variety of language programs and shows that structured immersion (one-way and two-way) display higher student performance than transitional bilingual education programs, ESL, and other practices.
In contrast to Rossell’s claim of a lack of evidence, other researchers support the fact that Dual Language Programs are the most effective practice to close the achievement gap of Latino students (Collier & Thomas, 2004). It is also important to note that while closing the academic gap, DLPs also impact the language-majority students and promote multicultural appreciation. The effectiveness of DLPs is supported by a variety of research studies on the various aspects of the programs. Torres-Guzmán (2002) supports the use of DLPs for English Language Learners due to three key findings.

(1) It takes most individuals from five to seven years to acquire the second language well enough to function academically;
(2) One can transfer the knowledge and skills acquired in one language to the other; and
(3) By continuing to develop the two languages, children’s educational and cognitive development is enhanced.

In a review of evaluations of twenty-seven different programs, Mahrer and Christian (1993) found that “where comparisons [were] possible, students are on the whole doing as well as or better than their fellow students in other programs” (p. 46). The outcomes of these studies show that for the most part, both language minority and language majority students outperform their norming peers in their first language and, by the upper elementary grades, in the second language. (Torres-Guzmán, 2002, p. 10).

Thomas and Collier (2004) completed extensive research in fifteen states over two decades and found that even with variations (one-way 90:10, one-way 50:50, two-way 90:10, two-way 50:50) ELL students in any of the dual language programs
performed significantly better than students in transitional bilingual programs. The following graph from the researchers’ 2004 report display some of their findings\(^1\).

![Graph](image)

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In another report, Thomas and Collier (2002) found that ELLs in Houston performed better academically in programs that emphasized heritage-language development, compared to programs that did not. The students performed the best in two-way dual immersion programs where the classes were composed of both native English

\(^1\) As of 2002, 56 one-way (labeled developmental bilingual in Houston) and two-way (labeled bilingual immersion) dual language programs have been implemented, for grades K-8th. Because some schools were not yet ready to implement dual language, the Houston multilingual staff approved 90:10 as the model for transitional classes as well as dual language classes for consistency as students move from school to school. The 90:10 model provides intensive instruction in the minority language, in this case Spanish, for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and 1st grade gradually increasing academic time in English to 50% of the instructional time by 5th grade. (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 6).
and native Spanish speaking students. The researchers write, "Groups of English learners attending one-way bilingual classes typically reach grade level achievement in their second language by 7th or 8th grade, scoring slightly above grade level through the remainder of their schooling. With the stimulus of native-English-speaking peers in two-way bilingual classes, groups of English learners typically reach grade level achievement by 5th or 6th grade, reaching an average of the 61st NCE or the 70th percentile by the eleventh grade" (2004, p. 11).

Ramirez, et al (1991) followed 2,000 Spanish-speaking ELLs over a four-year period of time. The research demonstrated that students in developmental bilingual programs (which focus on a gradual transition to English) significantly outperformed similar students in quick-exit transitional bilingual programs or all-English immersion programs. Dual Language Programs are based on similar developmental bilingual pedagogies, as the heritage language is maintained and improved in order to further develop the second language. While language education policies remain controversial, I believe there is sufficient evidence to support two-way dual language programs and their importance in closing the achievement gap for Latino ELLs. Despite the evidence that DLPs are effective, implementing a successful program is a challenging process. Next, I explore the implications and challenges that DLPs must work with and against to encourage the success of their students.
V. Implications and Challenges

Dual Language Programs directly work against some of the methods of
deculturalization that Spring cited, while other deculturalization factors continue to impact
the educational structure of even the most progressive DLP programs. DLPs integrate
students based on their language skills so that students are not separated by language or by
race. A dual language focus forces all students to learn a foreign language, while each
student is also an expert in their heritage language. Yet, it should be noted that English
acquisition for native Spanish-speakers is expected so that they can adequately function in
society. In contrast, Spanish acquisition of English speakers is celebrated as a special skill
(Potowski, 2004). In effect, outside pressures prohibit a program from completely
equalizing the focus of two languages. Some DLPs are able to create and use curricula and
textbooks that focus on a multicultural approach but access to such curricula and
textbooks is limited. Many DLPs actively work to promote an open environment that
celebrates students’ cultural differences. And, DLPs tend to have more diverse teacher
populations than traditional mainstream schools. Not only do the teachers speak multiple
languages, but an increased number are likely of the minority population as well. As a
whole, DLPs work to actively create an inclusive and additive environment for their
minority and majority students, yet the programs are still constrained by the narrow
policies, practices, and beliefs of the greater educational system and the community.

Textbooks and Curricula

The school in which Potowski (2004) completed her research made an effort to
use a multicultural curriculum for all students. She states, “The homegrown ‘Curriculum
of the Americas’ used throughout the school was an impressive cultural model. Students focused on one culture per year through interdisciplinary units, including the Taínos in second grade, the Incas in third grade, the Mayas in fourth grade and the Aztecs in fifth grade” (p. 79). Despite this example of an additive and multicultural curriculum, the gross majority of textbooks and curricula used in schools are Anglo-centric and rarely recognize or respect a diverse range of cultures. Until educators force textbook manufacturers and curriculum developers to create multicultural resources, even the best additive programs will continue to include subtractive components.

Teacher Composition, Quality, and Commitment

Schools that openly commit to English and Spanish equality and acquisition may actually allow teaching practices may inhibit true commitment and dedication. For example, Potowski’s study (2004) it was found that “Despite the school’s official goals to value Spanish and English equally, many practices revealed that English was the dominant language. I routinely observed teachers using English during lessons that, according to the official classroom schedule, were supposed to be in Spanish” (p. 79). When Potowski questioned the teachers about their English use, the teachers responded that the textbooks for the topic were in English or that the standardized tests for the content were in English, therefore it was more important to teach certain lessons in English rather than Spanish. This is an example of how the structure of state and federal regulations can act as a barrier to programs that work to promote additive pedagogies. While some standardized tests in Spanish (or other languages) are used and are becoming more common, the results of these tests rarely affect student promotion (Potowski, 2004,
The Clinton Administration advocated for a change in the testing protocol in 1999. The proposal states that there should be “tests written in Spanish for Spanish-speaking students with limited English proficiency, if those tests are more likely than tests written in English to yield accurate and reliable information on what those students know, and can do in subjects other than English” (Rossell, 2000, pp. 242-243). Until standardized tests and measures of student achievement are completed in multiple languages, or more assistance and exemptions are allowed for ELLs, English will continue to be the focus, even in schools that are founded on multilingual acquisition.

As increasing numbers of Latino teachers desire to work in DLPs, mainstream schools risk losing potential diversity amongst their own teaching staff. Minority teachers are rare in all educational systems and as they congregate in specific programs, mainstream schools are left with an even greater lack of diversity. Latino students in those schools may feel more isolated as they continue to be taught in subtractive schools and are taught by Anglo teachers who may be new teachers and have not learned how to best teach a diverse range of students with a range of language needs.

In a review of research, den Brok and Levy (2005) explore the association between the cultural makeup of a class and teachers. They found that “several of the studies investigating the effect of ethnic makeup of classes on the perceptions of the teachers in these classes indicated that the number of [minority] students is positively associated with teacher dominance (or, the more [minority] students in a class the greater amount of perceived dominance) (p. 80). In effect, students believe there is a greater power hierarchy when they are the minority and the teacher is of the majority race/ethnicity. As common in DLPs a multicultural or diverse staff works against this
presumption of dominance on behalf of the students. Yet, it is important to note that professional development on multicultural acceptance and classroom composition should be continued for all school staff (homogeneous or heterogeneous) on a consistent basis.

Support of Parents and Community

DLPs are not legally mandated and are usually established due to the work of committed parents, teachers, or community activists. The programs are frequently started as magnet schools in more affluent communities so that Anglo students receive a higher quality education, or they are founded as charter schools in urban areas and the English dominant students are African American students rather than children of Anglo descent (Linton, 2004). This may limit creating a true multicultural environment but it also may positively impact the African American students, as being bilingual as a native-English speaker is a desirable skill in the long run, while acquiring English as a native Spanish speaker is expected (Potowski, 2004). Acquiring a second language early on may positively influence low-income black students ability to enroll in higher education and may help them find employment later in life.

Barone (2001) writes that polling results “show that overwhelming majorities of Latino parents—81 percent—want their children to be taught English. There is no substantial number of Latino immigrants who want their children to speak only Spanish. Barone elaborates on the historical importance of immigrants acquiring English by stating, “The immigrants understood that this was another country, one in which the language of successful people would inevitably be English” (p. 177). While parents want their children to perform well academically, Barone’s analysis lacks any understanding of
the socioeconomic, logistic, or cultural barriers that non-English speaking families endure.

A family’s commitment to dual language acquisition is extraordinarily important to student growth. Often times, even native Spanish-speaking parents emphasize English acquisition. One of the parents in Potowski’s (2004) study pushed her Spanish-speaking daughter in English to avoid the classification of “limited English” in mainstream schools. While this parent wanted her daughter to maintain her heritage language of Spanish, a greater emphasis was placed on English acquisition. In contrast, a native English-speaking student in the same study was encouraged by her family to learn Spanish. Her parents placed labels on items around the house with names of the items in both English and Spanish. The family also had picture dictionaries and children’s music in both English and Spanish (Potowski, 2004). Commitment by the families is imperative to success by the students. Nevertheless, it is likely more difficult for parents with limited second language skills or literacy in either language to assist their children in academic work.

As previously stated, schools are a place of aculturization and as a result, of Americanization. This use of schools is a fear of many immigrant or culturally diverse parents, because aspects of the family’s traditional culture may be lost. Teachers must understand this fear and then engage parents into the system. Soriano and Hong (1995) add, “While the intent may not be to undermine parental authority and cultural pride, the lack of cultural relevance may inadvertently do so. Parental authority is compromised when children see their parents’ culture as obsolete or irrelevant” (31). Dual Language Programs work to include parents, their skills, and their experiences into the classroom.
through a variety of classroom activities and a student-centered framework. By valuing parents in the school arena, children reflect on their parents as resources for their own academic achievement.

Barone (2001) writes, “Evidently Latinos are much less likely than other immigrant groups, and significantly less likely than blacks, to see education as an avenue upwards.” (p.170). But, this assumption is contradicted by primary research. While the expectations between ethnic groups may vary greatly, parents’ reports of their frequency of their efforts to help children with their schoolwork does not differ amongst ethnic groups (Okagaki & Frensch, 1998 p. 140). Parents want to be involved in their children’s educations and their success, but their involvement is restricted by knowledge of language, past school experiences, and other logistical barriers. While some parents may not be able to help their children with school work in the second language, providing either informal or structured opportunities for parent involvement can substitute for the distance felt by many language-minority parents.

Family literacy is a way to improve the lives of both the parents and the students. As the parents develop English skills, they are better able to find work and prosper in society. They are also more able to help their children with homework and other life needs. Daniel-White (2002) writes, “Through the socio-contextual approach to family literacy and the funds of knowledge paradigms, educators can empower parents and children in their home activities rather than making them feel inferior and worthless” (35). Family literacy programs also instill the attitude that learning is a life-long process and parents can learn just as much or more than the children. Valuing family engagement and family learning is frequently emphasized in DLPs and the schools stated goals,
missions, and visions (see Appendices A-C). Understanding that children may come from households where the adults are illiterate in both English and Spanish creates a hurdle for schools to overcome. Encouraging family literacy through schools is an important factor of some DLPs, especially those that serve high poverty communities where high levels of literacy may not currently exist.
VI. An Exploratory Study: Lessons Learned from a Local DLP

There is a great deal of research completed on bilingual education, dual language programs, deculturalization, and multicultural pedagogies. In essence, much of my analysis on how dual language programs change the environment for teaching ELLs comes from research and analysis completed by others. While this vast amount of data, analysis, classroom experiences and policy suggestions would have been sufficient for this type of study, I wanted to see if the best practice theories and cited problems transfer into the classroom. I spent three days at Tristate Dual Language Elementary School and interviewed four teachers and two administrators. I observed numerous kindergarten and fourth grade classes as each class worked through a variety of different content areas and used both English and Spanish.²

Over two days at Tristate, I observed four different classes, two kindergarten classes and two third grade classes. I sat in a corner in each of the rooms and observed student-student, student-teacher interactions, the classroom environment, and the work being completed. I took extensive field notes during the observations. I also interviewed four teachers and two administrators. I arranged interviews directly with the teachers or through the principal and we met during their planning periods or lunch. The interviews were semi-structured and the interview guide is included in this report (Attachment E). The questions focused around the major themes of DLPs, such as parent engagement, language choice and use, multicultural curricula, and identity. I also used the work of Potowski (2004) as a guide for specific interactions and environmental cues to look for in a school.

² Due to school district protocol, the school name and district are not disclosed in the study, neither are any identifying characteristics of the school staff.
My Role and its Impact on the Research Process

Despite being trained as a “silent observer” in numerous sociology methods courses, it was virtually impossible to keep my boundaries as a researcher in classrooms of elementary school students. While the teachers knew I was coming to observe their classrooms, and I hoped to enter their rooms as quietly as possible, the Assistant Principal announced my arrival and instructed the children to “Behave because we have a guest today and want to be extra good.” When one teacher had trouble disciplining her class, she told them “You all are giving our visitor a bad impression of us. We know how to behave better than this!” Curiosity abounds in an elementary school classroom, and the students actively wanted to know what I was writing in my notes, who I was, and why I was in their classroom. At first I tried to ignore their giggles and glances but when they began to pay more attention to me than their teacher, I would motion for them to turn around and do their work.

Despite having a decent student/teacher ratio at Tristate, a class of twenty energetic kindergartners is a handful for anyone. By the end of my first day of observations I found myself walking around from table to table assisting the children with writing their names and the word “dinosaur” (dinosaur) on their papers. The children hurled questions at me, first in English, and when I responded in Spanish, in both languages. While I probably should not have made my presence so apparent, working the smallest bit with the students helped me gain their trust, and it was the least I could do for the teachers who were so willing to give me an hour of their planning
periods. Being the silent observer is virtually impossible in such a setting and creates its own unique methodological environment.

At some point during my interviews with both teachers and administrators, each interview subject spoke of their fear for speaking out and giving honest responses to my questions. The topics that seemed to induce this hesitation include: the state standardized testing program, neighborhood school feeder patterns, and mostly the support, or lack thereof, of the school district. While I tried to dissuade their fears with the guarantee of anonymity, this issue of speaking the truth about benefits, risks, and problems with the school is a challenge for me as a researcher. This fear also warrants a larger question of what settings are provided for teachers and staff to honestly and truly reflect on their school, the community, and the district.

Despite the fear that many of the school staff openly revealed to me, I do think that I was able to gather open and honest interview responses. There was one time when an interview subject asked me to not report one of her comments, and I agreed to this contingency as requested. While I strive to comment on the realities of the school environment as I observed it and the pressures that influence teaching, I also believe that it is important to gain and keep the trust of the interview subjects.

*Tristate Dual Language Elementary School*

Tristate Elementary School is located in a city of approximately 70,000 people. African Americans are 56 percent of the population, 35 percent is White, and approximately 10 percent are Latino. Approximately 21 percent of the city population lives below the poverty line, and 30 percent of youth under the age of 18 live in poverty
(U.S. Census 2000). After desegregation, parts of the city were allocated to multiple school districts and most city-students were bused out to the suburbs. Tristate Elementary is located within the city limits and the majority of its native-English speakers reside in the neighborhood schools’ feeder pattern.

Tristate was originally the English as a Second Language school for the entire county, and eventually ESL programs were phased into each district. Through the work of committed teachers and administrators, Tristate evolved into a DLP approximately ten years ago. The kindergarten through fifth grade school strives to teach all students 50:50 English and Spanish, although increased Spanish is often used in the early years. Tristate utilizes team teaching so the students work through the curriculum (with no repetition in the other language) while swapping teachers for specific subjects. In the early years, the students remain with the same teacher all day and specific content areas are instructed in either English or Spanish. In effect, the exact language use may change depending on the grade of the students and the teacher. The school uses the standard curriculum provided by the school district.

**Tristate School Demographics (2005-2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Student Demographics</th>
<th>Teacher Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Teacher Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24% African American</td>
<td>60% ELL</td>
<td>10% African American</td>
<td>100% female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75% Latino</td>
<td>83% low SES</td>
<td>41% Latino</td>
<td>48% advanced degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1% Anglo/Asian</td>
<td>5% special ed</td>
<td>48% Anglo</td>
<td>Approx. 32 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. 500 students</td>
<td>35% choice</td>
<td>2% Asian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: All percentages are rounded; SES- socioeconomic status
It is important to note that the native English-speakers include students of African American, Anglo, and also Latino descent. While the assumption may be that the Latino students are all part of the Spanish-speaking population, one of the administrators pointed out that many parents and families have children that are second or third generation U.S. citizens yet they do not speak their family’s heritage language fluently and instead speak English predominately. Dual Language Programs provide an opportunity for these families and children that are not available to them in other public schools. Unfortunately, this information is not tracked at Tristate Elementary, so it is unknown how many Latino native-English speakers are currently enrolled.

Over two days at Tristate Elementary, I observed kindergarten and third grade classes; two of each grade level. I arranged the classroom observations by working with the school principal who then emailed information about my research to the teachers. Interested teachers then responded to her or directly worked with me to set up observations and interviews during their planning periods.

*Classroom Environment*

The Tristate classrooms were arranged similarly to other elementary school rooms I have previously observed. In each class, students were seated in heterogeneous groups of four to six students. These groups were arranged by the teachers and were based on skill level, first language, gender, and social relations. The teachers would shift the seating arrangements for specific lessons to differentiate skill levels. In both kindergarten classrooms there was also a large carpeted area for group lessons, reading, and other “circle” activities. In all four classrooms and in the hallways of the building, student work
and school announcements and rules were listed in either English or Spanish. A sign in the kindergarten classes was flipped over to designate either English or Spanish for each lesson and subject area. With the exception of text in multiple languages, Tristate resembled many other elementary schools I have either worked in or visited.

Support of the District and the Community

All of the interview subjects stated that they do not feel that the school board, the district or the community supports them or the work they do. One administrator stated that many of the problems experienced at Tristate are common in all of the city schools. She continued, “I think it’s difficult for the school board to understand the different cultures of each school.” She believes the majority of the school board members have good intentions, but as a whole the board does not necessarily recognize or support the needs of the school. One of the teachers stated, “The school doesn’t have the unilateral support of the board to leverage the community and this really hurts us.” The school is located in a relatively impoverished area of the city, and the principal and the teachers noted that they must deal with the extra social and emotional problems that are caused by poverty. Yet, despite this reality, the school does not receive extra financial help from the district or the state and the principal seeks grants from local businesses and organizations for support.

Commitment of Teachers

I asked each teacher why she works at Tristate. While most of them first said, “Because they gave me a job and I speak Spanish,” they then elaborated their answer into
a deep commitment to the children, the fellow teachers, and the school. One teacher responded, “I feel most of the students will go back to their home countries, and I want them to keep their language and culture too. So many of them also help out their parents with translating, it’s very important for them to learn both languages.” Another teacher commented on the school environment with the following statement. “The Latino students have a tradition of respecting teachers, and they’re kids. There’s just this sweet gravity about many of them that results from the fact that their lives aren’t easy, but there’s a real warmth to them. The have real concern for each other.” One teacher commented, “Some of the students exhibit a preference for English and they’re ashamed on speaking Spanish. So I try to tell them how culture is different for everyone and why Spanish is important. I fear that if they lose their culture in this country, they’ll drown.”

As a whole, the teachers showed undying commitment to both their students and their families. Many of the teachers will go out of their way to help the families work through problems as well and to gain a better understanding of their students.

*Language Use/Choice*

When asked if an equal emphasis is placed on both English and Spanish, the principal replied, “I sure hope so!” Most of the teachers stated that they work extremely hard to use both languages equally. While this may be the intention, I observed multiple instances in which the lesson was supposed to be in Spanish, but English was used instead for clarification purposes or to reprimand students. One teacher stated that she emphasizes English more often. She stated, “It’s supposed to be 50:50, but I do 60:40. I push the English, because I know they need it to survive. The tests are in English, life’s in
English. They need it.” Another teacher stated that she pushes Spanish in school as so
many of the students use English outside of school and they need the extra practice. And
yet another teacher stated that she used Spanish to help focus her native-Spanish speakers
as a way to access knowledge in a more immediate way.

Curriculum and Learning Materials

One of the reasons for specific language choices is the lack of learning materials
in both languages. The district provides the curriculum and while the bilingual supervisor
in the district office works to acquire textbooks and materials for Tristate, there is still a
gap. The principal states that the music teacher created her own curriculum that brings in
a variety of different cultures and types of music from around the world. One teacher
created numerous class lessons about holidays that integrated geography, reading, and
social studies. The students were able to talk and learn about holidays in their heritage
countries, while also learning about holidays around the world, such as the Chinese New
Year. One teacher first laughed when I inquired about the effectiveness of the prescribed
curriculum. She then stated that she does not use the science curriculum as the books are
at a much higher level than the kids can understand. “They need the vocabulary and
reading, so I design my own lessons and make them hands on and more applicable to the
students.” This teacher also emphasized cross-curriculum lessons and believes that they
should be used with much greater frequency. Upon reflection of the curriculum and the
lack of multicultural focus from the district, the principal stated, “I guess we do it in-
house. It really is a must. We need to move towards more formal ways of integrating the
multicultural aspect of our students. We should lead the troops as we already do it ourselves.”

Testing

As frequently cited in the literature, standardized testing remains a highly contentious issue for DLPs. The principal stated that No Child Left Behind changed the testing environment. She reflected, “We were showing growth every year, but each time the cut scores increase, we have a hard time meeting those requirements. No matter how much growth we make, our scores don’t show that progress, and it’s frustrating.” One teacher showed a great deal of frustration with the district emphasis of testing. She commented, “I was trained that no professional teachers teaches to the test, but that’s all we do. The kids love the computer testing, but we’re encouraged to tell the kids what their scores are and what their target scores should be and that they’re lagging behind.” She continued, “They’re third graders! They’re supposed to learn because they want to. It’s a growth process. They don’t learn at the same rate- every student has value and their tests should show their growth and their strengths.”

Parent Engagement

All of the interview subjects desired greater contact with parents in a variety of ways. Most asked for basic communication between the teachers and the parents, while others wished that they had more parent volunteers in the classroom. One teacher specifically commented that she really needed extra help in the classroom, but she understood that most of her students’ parents worked multiple jobs and struggled to be
with the children as much as possible. During the observations, a classroom assistant was present in one of the classrooms. The grandmother of one of the students volunteered on a regular basis and was called abuela (Spanish for grandmother). The teacher commented that with her classroom and no aides to assist, she would not know what to do with that extra set of eyes and ears.

In order to boost the academic performance of some of the highest need students, the teachers and the principal started a Saturday Academy. The Academy focuses on the basic curriculum subjects of English, math and writing and is funded by the local city council. Many parents, mostly mothers, travel on the bus with their children each week to ensure their children receive the extra help they need. In effect, these parents show commitment and a prioritization of education for their children. The next phase of development for the Academy is to develop a program for the parents of the students as well. This program could cover topics such as how to best help your child read and how to create a stable home environment for homework and reading. The school staff understand the restraints of the families they serve, yet still aspire to provide the students and their families as many opportunities to grow as possible.

*Tristate’s Alignment to the DLP Model*

Tristate Elementary is a vibrant and welcoming environment, but is the school truly able to support the Dual Language Program model? By using the sociocultural, linguistic and pedagogical framework created by Torres-Guzmán (2002), I analyze the various aspects of a model DLP in relation to Tristate Elementary’s practices. It is important to note that I only observed Tristate Elementary for two days, and those
observations guide my analysis. For example, the school could offer wonderful in-depth programs for student self-esteem development, but I did not observe such programs during my observations, nor were they mentioned during the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociocultural</th>
<th>Tristate</th>
<th>Suggestions/Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of cultural diversity</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Could be strengthened, but well established currently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant teaching</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Could be strengthened on a more systematic basis- curriculum and materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of self-esteem</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>I did not observe specific practices to develop self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix of language minority with English-speaking and mainstream students</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Needs additional support from school district to re-attain magnet status and recruit more diverse students and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative group learning structure</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Good use of both diverse and differentiated groupings for specific lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Needs to be increased by finding a way to better reach working parents and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/community support structure</td>
<td>Lacking</td>
<td>Needs additional support for public relations, recruitment, materials, and general funding for at-risk students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strict language separation</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Could be more strict based on teacher use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality in language distribution</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Well divided based on grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of simultaneous translation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No observed repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language taught through content</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Major strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-language instruction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Well done based on grade level and language needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals of bilingualism and biliteracy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Staff very supportive and committed to both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterogeneous language grouping</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Due to racial/ethnic makeup of school, this is difficult in some grades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement for all children</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The majority of NCLB subgroups consistently meet AYP targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math and literature follow distinct linguistic policy</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Due to testing in English, less Spanish on certain content areas- based on teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental level team</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Strong use of team teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic organization of units of study</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Well designed curriculum, but some teachers adapt for their students’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers as monolingual models</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some teachers (especially in the early years) switch languages frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing staff development</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Could always increase and strengthen PD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggestions for Tristate Elementary

Tristate Elementary is an intimate environment when you walk in the door. There is a welcoming feel, the building is clean, student work is displayed on the walls (in multiple languages), the children walk in orderly lines and one can usually hear laughter through the halls. The teachers are committed, the students want to learn and they care about each other, the staff rely on each other for help, and despite high poverty rates and high need students, the students produce decent academic results and the school consistently meets AYP targets set by the state. Nevertheless, the school is not perfect, and I recommend specific changes at the school, district and state levels.

While consistently impressed with the administration’s commitment to the students, the teachers, and the ideals of a DLP, I was slightly shocked to learn that the principal does not speak Spanish. While she states that she tried to learn, I question how this impacts the school environment and her ability to effectively communicate with parents and students. In contrast to Potowski’s study, Tristate intercom announcements were completed in English and many official looking district documents were only visible in English. In order to truly represent the DLP model, all documents, signs, and announcements must be made in English and Spanish.

The teachers and the administration of Tristate must stay committed to high academic standards. As one teacher stated, “It’s not about watering down the curriculum,
it's about scaffolding the content to the varying levels of English proficiency. I want my standard for these kids to be just as high as for any other kid.” By teaching through the curriculum with little to no repetition, the students receive a much greater content-level curriculum than they may receive in a traditional transitional bilingual program.

If the school district does not step in and offer greater support to this school, I worry about the future of the program. The school has lost its status as a magnet school, and very few (if any) native-English speakers come into the city to attend Tristate. One of the reasons Tristate remains popular is that it offers all-day kindergarten. As all-day kindergarten is phased in throughout the district and the state, the native-English speaking enrollment may drop again. One teacher stated, “We’re no longer a DLP by virtue of our population. Unfortunately, we more closely resemble a partial immersion program with a diverse mix of minority kids.” The district should help Tristate regain its magnet status by better educating parents across the district about the options for their native-English speaking children.

The district should also utilize the skills of the teachers of Tristate. The teachers adapt the district curriculum to best meet their students needs in a multicultural environment, and this should be completed at the district level. One teacher reflected, “There are teachers in the district who have no idea how to work with a diverse group of kids. It requires professional development, possibly even a cluster at the state level, but definitely systematic on-going PD.” The teachers at Tristate could be used to assist other schools throughout the district adapt to the ever-growing diverse student populations.

On the state level, ELL students require more funding to meet the same basic standards as other students. A Weighted Student Funding formula should be enacted
statewide to ensure that the students at Tristate (ELL, high poverty and minority) receive the equitable funding they deserve. Tristate Elementary is the only DLP in the state, and I worry about how language is maintained after the students move on to middle and high school. In cities such as Miami, there are numerous DLPs at all grade levels and this ensures that students are able to maintain their language skills and become completely fluent with high levels of academic content knowledge. Adding more DLPs and providing programs at various grade levels should be explored.
VI. Conclusions

Dual Language Programs will continue to work against the mainstream structure of education, especially as the federal government encourages monolingualism. As a result the achievement gap of Latino students will continue until drastic changes are made to the subtractive practices in schools. After a twenty-year study was completed by Collier and Thomas (2004), the authors conclude that DLPs are “the only program for English learners that fully [close] the gap; in contrast, remedial models only partially close the gap” (p. 1). Despite this knowledge, DLPs are rare and many communities struggle for their funding and establishment. DLPs are known as one of the only ways to close the achievement gap for Latino students and much of this may be due to the change from the subtractive nature of schooling to an additive approach that recognizes students’ strengths while also teaching a challenging content-oriented curriculum. Educators and policy makers must recognize the limitations of our current policies and pedagogies and work to replicate DLPs as a best practice that benefits not only Latino native-Spanish speakers, but also native-English speakers and the entire community.

Further research should be completed on a variety of factors that impact DLPs. First, the majority of research on DLPs focuses on ELL and the implementation of program, I was unable to find any research on how DLP enrollment impacts native-English speaking students. This research and the benefits or risks of DLP enrollment would be especially interesting for those students who are minorities and have high rates of poverty. The long-term impact of DLPs on ELLs should also be studied to examine how students maintain their heritage and second languages if after leaving the program, they are no longer in a structured dual language environment.
With an increasing number of states passing laws that prohibit bilingual education, Dual Language Programs may be one of the only options for native-Spanish speaking students to maintain their language and have their cultures respected simultaneously. Dual Language Programs are extraordinarily popular in some cities and in some countries, but have yet to be embraced by the public or the majority of school districts. As long as Dual Language Programs hold rigorous academic standards for their students, teaching a multicultural curriculum in a diverse and respectful environment is a benefit for all students, staff, teachers, and families involved. Until policy-makers and school boards understand that the educational system needs to adapt to better meet the needs of our students, we will continue to underserve students who deserve equitable opportunities for success.

As previously stated, Linton (2004) believes that schools are a “primary vehicle for the transmission of culture and a sense of national identity” (46). If this is true, then educators and the general community are transmitting a culture of isolation and subtractive practices and a national identity that is pro-Anglo. In order to truly represent the diversity of the United States, schools need to respect cultures, languages and the social differences that make the United States the democratic and open country that it aspires to be. Dual language programs are an example of how we can better meet the needs of our diverse students, while also better educating all students to become global citizens in a multicultural society.
VII. Bibliography


Torres-Guzmán, M. (2002). Dual Language Programs: Key Features and Results. Directions in Language and Education. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education 14(Spring).


