

*Full Length Research Paper*

## Going Big!: The Case of a Large District's Effort to Maximize the Benefits of Dual Language Programming for their Children<sup>1</sup>

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The Abstract is provided in Four Languages: (a) Arabic; (b) English; (c) Mandarin, and (d) Spanish.

English:

Dual language (DL) programs have been held up as a promising means by which to reach student achievement goals across demographics (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Yet, the social and political risks associated with implementing DL programs are significant. This paper analyzes one large metropolitan school district's rationale and preparedness for initiating its DL program, as well as the outcomes of its efforts to scale up the DL program to reach thousands of students, most of whom are children of color. The findings suggest that the district personnel used three pillars to rationalize their decision to implement their DL program: legal, research, and student demographics. In addition, the school district administrators, teachers, and parents showed varying levels of preparedness for the mass implementation of the DL program. While a young program with few quantitative data points to showcase its success, the qualitative data revealed that the program's structure and professional development efforts for the teachers and principals benefited from a clear and ambitious vision and the unwavering support of the district's executive leadership. In addition to the extensive data compiled from interviews with key stakeholders, case studies of two schools from the district are provided in order to highlight emergent tensions and showcase how the district's efforts have materialized into intentional and dynamic DL learning environments.

**Keywords:** Dual language, program design, practices, bilingualism, biliteracy, Spanish, ELL, English

العربية

ان اللغات المزدوجة تعد من الوسائل الواعدة والتي من خلالها يمكن الوصول الي أهداف التحصيل العلمي للطلاب مهما كانت شريحته السكانية (كولير وتوماس، 2004). ومع ذلك، فإن المخاطر الاجتماعية والسياسية المرتبطة بتنفيذ برامج DL كبيرة و واسعة. ان هذه الدراسة تتناول وتحلل الأساس المنطقي لمنطقة (ادارة تعليمية) حضرية كبيرة والاستعداد لبدء برنامج DL وكذلك الجهود نحو تحقيقها ونتائج محاولة توسيع نطاق برنامج DL لتصل إلى الآلاف من الطلاب ، الاطفال اللذي ينتمي معظمهم الي الاقليات العرقية من. وتشير النتائج إلى أن العاملين بالادارة التعليمية يستندون في قرارهم لتنفيذ برنامجهم DL علي ثلاث ركائز: الركيزة القانونية، والبحوث، والتركيبة السكانية للطلاب. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، فلقد اظهر مسئولو الادارة التعليمية والمعلمين و كذلك اولياء الامور مستويات متفاوتة من الاستعداد لتنفيذ البرنامج DL. في حين أن برنامج صغير مع عدد قليل من التحليلات الكمية اظهر نجاحها. ولقد كشفت البيانات النوعية الهيكل البنائي للبرنامج والتنمية المهنية للمعلمين ومديري المدارس عادت بالنفع الكثير نتيجة وجود الرؤية الواضحة والطموحة والدعم غير المحدود من القيادات التنفيذية في الادارة التعليمية. بالإضافة إلى المجموعة الكبيرة من البيانات التي تم تجميعها من خلال المقابلات الشخصية مع المهتمين و اصحاب المصلحة الرئيسيين، و من خلال اجراء دراسات حالة لمدرستين من الادارة التعليمية من أجل تسليط الضوء على التوترات الناشئة فيهما وعرض لجهود المقاطعة لتحقيق بيئات التعلم DL الديناميكية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: اللغات المزدوجة، تصميم البرنامج، الممارسات، ازدواجية اللغة، الناطقي باللغة الاسبانية، اللغة الانجليزية

Mandarin:

双语教学项目作为有前途的方式可以用来提高来自不同族群学生的成绩(Collier & Thomas, 2004)。然而，实施双语教学项目所涉及到的社会和政治危机也是不容忽视的。本文分析了一个大都市学区的发起双语教学项目的理由，准备工作和为此作出的相应努力，以期来扩大项目的影响和效果来帮助数以千计的学生，尤其是其中包含了大量的有色人种学生。调查结果显示，该地区的人员使用三大支柱理顺他们的决定来实施双语教学计划：法律，研究和学生的人口统计数据。此外，学区管理人员，

教师和家长表现出来的实施双语计划的准备程度各有不同。虽然只有为数不多的定量数据显示这个新项目的成功，但定性数据显示学区领导者的清晰且雄心勃勃的视角和坚定的支持 – 这为项目的结构和职业发展提供支持，并使得教师和校长也受益其中。本文包涵了与关键利益人访谈的数据。除此以外，本文还分析了来自本学区的两间学校的个案，以突出该学区如何化解项目中的紧张，并将此融入为有意识的动态双语学习环境中。

关键词: 双语, 项目设计, 举措, 双文, 西班牙语, 二语学习者, 英语

## Spanish

Los programas de lenguaje dual (LD) han sido presentados como un medio prometedor para alcanzar los objetivos de rendimiento académico de los estudiantes pertenecientes a grupos minoritarios y basados en los actuales cambios demográficos. (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Sin embargo, los riesgos sociales y políticos asociados a la implementación de programas duales son significativos. Este artículo analiza la preparación de este tipo de programas en uno de los distritos más grandes llevado a cabo en una área metropolitana. En este estudio se presentan los resultados de los esfuerzos llevados a cabo para ampliar el programa y expandirlo a miles de estudiantes donde la mayoría de participantes son niños de grupos minoritarios. Los resultados obtenidos sugieren que el personal del distrito escolar usó tres pilares para justificar su decisión de poner en práctica estos programas duales. Estos pilares fueron basados en el aspecto legal, las investigaciones y la procedencia demográfica de los estudiantes. Además, este estudio presenta como los administradores del distrito escolar, los maestros y los padres mostraron diferentes niveles de preparación para la implementación masiva de los programas duales. Mientras que un programa con pocos años de implementación incluyendo poca información cuantitativa para mostrar su éxito, los datos cualitativos revelaron una estructura y desarrollo profesional donde los maestros y los directores se beneficiaron de una visión clara y ambiciosa y el apoyo incondicional de la dirección ejecutiva del distrito. Además de los numerosos datos copilados a partir de entrevistas con participantes claves, en este estudio se proporcionan los estudios de caso de dos escuelas del distrito con el fin de poner de relieve las tensiones emergentes y muestran cómo los esfuerzos del distrito han materializado en entornos de aprendizaje Dual en una forma intencional y dinámica.

Palabras clave: lenguaje dual, diseño de programas, prácticas, bilingüismo, alfabetización bilingüe, español, Estudiantes que aprenden inglés e, Inglés '0'.

## **Introduction**

Ms. Acuna<sup>ii</sup>, who teaches in a 3rd/4th combined classroom at Lawrence Elementary, emphatically whips off her scarf and waves it in the air while speaking. “Ahorita, vamos a la transición a la lectura,” she tells the children. (“Right now, we are going to transition to Reading.”) Her actions are consistent with the district’s goals to not compromise the designated amount of time committed to each language – Spanish and English – at the given grade level, as well as to clearly mark transitions to the other language so as to maximize the fidelity of the language allocation. The walls of her room are also layered with numerous student-generated texts, including brief biographies, poems, and short stories.

In Ms. Tapia’s Kindergarten class at Grand Elementary School, the children work diligently on their creative projects highlighting sonidos iniciales (beginning sounds). The walls of the classroom around them are covered in Spanish artifacts that represent the tremendous amount of growth – in both the Spanish language and content areas – that has occurred in the prior months. Paula, the district’s director of Dual Language (DL) programs, informs us that the DL teachers are working to be more intentional with their classroom displays in an effort to have the proportion of artifacts in Spanish and English mirror the proportion of each language used in the classroom at a particular grade level.

Ms. Virginia, another teacher at Lawrence, reads a non-fiction book about dinosaurs to her all-Hispanic 4th grade students, who are seated in front of her. The class is in the middle of their Readers’ Workshop, and the purposeful selection of this text represents an effort to integrate content-based literacy into the Literacy block. She later reports that she felt well supported by the resources and protocols provided by the district’s Office of English Language Learners, which oversees the DL programming.

These snapshots provide a glimpse into some of the ongoing efforts by River Bend, a large school district in Illinois, to refine its approach to DL instruction. These efforts are part of a larger transformation on the part of the district to provide bilingual education services to more than 6,000 bilingual students<sup>iii</sup> in the district’s elementary schools. Prior to 2011, River Bend largely operated transitional bilingual education programs, with the exception of a small DL program at one elementary school. After years of advocating for the myriad of benefits that DL programs can provide to an array of students, the district leadership, working closely with community members, committed to the implementation of DL programming at 30 of its 40 elementary schools, a social and political endeavor that comes with associated risks (Bekerman, 2005; Pena, 1998).

Field (2011) outlined the precarious situation in which DL teachers and schools – and entire districts, in the case of this study – find themselves in: DL popularity is on the rise, but, in the era of educational reform driven by data and accountability, it is incumbent that educators have a comprehensive plan for the implementation of DL programs and that this implementation be supported by adequate resources and oversight. DL programs rightly focus on leveraging non-native English speakers' primary learning resource, their native language. Yet, most accountability systems are built around the students' performances on standardized tests in English. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly apparent that, in order to yield the maximum benefits of a DL program, students must participate in the program for at least five years (Center for Applied Linguistics [CAL], 2011; Field, 2011). Therefore, it is a mistake to judge and penalize schools for data that, on a given year, might not be deemed acceptable to data analyzers, but is likely to be trending upward at a rate that surpasses most schools.

Moreover, given the goal of DL programs to support academic achievement in two languages and a dearth of standardized assessments in, say, Spanish, it seems particularly disadvantageous to limit accountability to only standardized test data in English. Unfortunately, in the case of DL programs, it takes years in order to showcase the students' successes, not to mention the development of a battery of tests in the target language to assess growth in the content areas.

These two issues – a longer-than-usual amount of time to demonstrate proficiency and the need to show achievement in two languages – speaks to a need to broaden notions of accountability. As Field (2011) pointed out, this requires DL educators not only to focus on program improvements similar to those improvements completed by their general education counterparts, but also to “respond to these calls strategically and systematically, with particular attention to what is meant by data and accountability” (p. 10). In other words, there is an additional need for the district to devise a portfolio of data that documents the achievements of students, teachers, and schools – one that serves as an alternative to the traditional accountability measures – and promote this portfolio as legitimate; indeed, this is a laborious and political feat.

Furthermore, the design and implementation of DL programs reflects specific ideologies about diversity that differ from the basic goals of transitional bilingual education programs, which are designed to lead students ‘quickly’ from one language to fluency in English. This ‘accelerated’ transition does not necessarily help with a mastery of English, and is generally intended to assimilate speakers of other languages into English. On the other hand, DL programs are conceptualized to create proficiency in both languages. Field (2011) argued that DL programs are guided by pluralistic ideologies and, according to DeJong (2011), these programs are characterized by four norms: the assumption that linguistic and culturally diversity are desirable; holistic perspectives that view bilingualism from

a communicative competence perspective; a general rejection of the standardization of approaches in order to embrace more constructivist teaching; and an embracing of additive rather than subtractive outcomes in language maintenance and acquisition.

In this study, we aimed at capturing the history (including the various roles of stakeholders), current efforts, and emergent tensions of a major DL program implementation from the perspective of various stakeholders (i.e., parents, teachers, building administrators, district-level administrators) in order to document and showcase a successful story of a school district that is responding to demographic shifts in its community with fundamental changes (Hesbol, 2013) in the education they are affording children. The story of River Bend, which includes focused case studies of two DL schools, offers inspiration, logistical guidance, and a working framework for progressive districts interested in rethinking educational programming and structures for a multilingual population – particularly Hispanics – in order to invest in students' identities as capable, bilingual learners aimed at forwarding democratic and pluralistic values. Being that River Bend is located in the Midwest, this venture and launch of DL programs can be considered a bold and pioneering endeavor.

### Research Questions

Specifically, this study aimed to address four key questions pertaining to the evolution and implementation of the district's DL goals:

1. What were the factors that led River Bend to invest in expanding its DL program?
2. How did the district plan for and support the implementation of the DL program?
3. What does the DL program look like, in the early stages of implementation, in classrooms in the two schools?
4. What has been the role of the leadership in launching, sustaining, and improving the DL program?

Central to this story is the district's rationale for selecting DL as the most promising program to serve its students. As we will present, this rationale was rooted in a strong research base, which stood on a solid legal foundation, and was specifically aimed at capitalizing on the strengths and addressing the unique needs of the district's students. After presenting a profile of the district, including a description of the DL program, we will share the design of our research and provide additional contextual details. Then, we will unpack the case studies in order to highlight the a) preparedness and development of the DL personnel as the program unfolded, b) current practices and priorities for ensuring high quality DL programming, and c) specific tensions that arose when tackling a programming initiative of this magnitude in a hugely diverse district. We organize these findings according to various stakeholders (i.e., parents, teachers, and administrators). We

conclude with a discussion of the outcomes and learned lessons for those pursuing new frontiers of DL teaching and learning.

### River Bend School District and the Rationale for Scaling Up the DL Program

The River Bend School District serves about 42,000 students (Pre-K-12) across 11 communities that vary widely in terms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (see Table 1). Overall, however, the district’s demographics include a student population that is 50.8% Hispanic, 29.9% White, 8.5% Asian, 6.5% Black, 3.0% Multi-racial, and 1.2% American Indian as shown in Table 2. Of these students, 52% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and nearly 9,000 (21.7%) are designated as English Language Learners (ELLs). The district had 157 DL teachers and more than 5,960 students in 284 DL classrooms distributed across 30 elementary schools (out of the 40 elementary schools in the district) during the 2014 school year.

Table 1  
*School in River Rand*

Type	Schools	ELL Schools	Students
Elementary (Pre-K-6)	40	30	22,420
Middle (7-8)	8	4	6,063
Alternative Middle (7-8)	1	0	
High (9-12)	5	3	12,261
Alternative High (9-12)	1	0	
Early Childhood Centers	2	0	982
Totals	57	37	41,726

Table 2  
*Ethnic/Racial Diversity of the Students and Staff in School District*

Distribution by Race/Ethnicity	Students		Staff	
	#	%	No.	%
Asian	3,255	8	18	.9
American Indian	203	.5	4	.2
Black	2,726	6.7	36	1.8
Latina/o	19,938	49	343	17
Multi-Racial	1,017	2.5	24	1.2
White	13,549	33.3	1,590	78.7
Other	1,038			
Total	41,726		2,020	

The stated goals and objectives of the DL programs (DLPs) are organized around developing bilingualism and biliteracy as well as promoting cultural diversity and high academic achievement among the students. The district has both One-Way and Two-Way DLPs that uphold an initial 80:20 DL model; 80:20 DLPs are designed to identify and utilize the targeted language for instruction (Spanish, in this case) from Pre-K onward. The ratio, 80:20, signifies that, in Kindergarten, Spanish is the language of instruction 80% of the time, while English is the language of instruction for the remaining 20% of

the time. This ratio is altered gradually – by 10% each subsequent year – as the students progress through the grade levels. Eventually, beginning in grade three, the shift in ratios reaches and remains at 50:50 with the two languages being accorded equal time in instruction. One-Way DLPs are comprised of only students who are identified as ELL or who are eligible for ELL services, while Two-Way DLPs include both ELL and English-dominant students, where at least one-third of the class is made up of native English speakers. In Two-Way DLPs, native Spanish speakers eligible and entitled to receive ELL services are placed with native English speakers, referred to as English-dominant students in this article. The One-Way DLP does not pair ELL students with English-dominant students because, in some cases, there are insufficient numbers of English-dominant students enrolled in the DLP, as reflected in the school demographics, to maintain the optimal balance of English dominant with Spanish dominant students. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the students are enrolled in One-Way DLPs, while 53% are enrolled in Two-Way DLPs in this district.

### The Rationale for Scaling Up the DL Program

The district administrators interviewed for this study detailed the following narrative about the development of the DL program at River Bend, which emphasized three primary reasons for selecting and implementing their context-specific version of a DL program: student/community demographics, research base, and legal foundation. The community’s changing demographics (i.e., a majority native Spanish speaking children) were described above, so, in the following sections, we will outline the rationale in terms of the research base and legal foundation.

**Research Base.** In describing their rationale for the DL programming, the district administrators often cited the research results provided by Collier and Thomas (2004). In a longitudinal study that spanned more than 18 years and compared the performances of children participating in DLPs with those children who did not, Collier and Thomas (2004) found that DLPs assured long-term academic success for linguistic minority children. These programs were capable of entirely bridging the achievement gap between ELLs and their English dominant counterparts. African American students and students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in DLPs outperformed their counterparts in general education classrooms. Beyond academic performance, Collier & Thomas (2004) also found that the experiences and dispositions of parents, teachers, and administrators in schools that had DL programs were inclusive and supportive for all communities. In their publicity materials and presentations to their school district board and parents, the program administrators repeatedly cited this research with the following quote featured prominently:

Enrichment DL schooling closes the academic achievement gap in L2 and in the first language (L1) for students initially below grade level, and for all categories of students

participating in the program. This is the only program for English (language) learners that fully closes the gap (School District, Parents, 2010, p. 14).

This promotion of Collier & Thomas' (2004) research appears to assuage any concerns regarding the probable long-term results of the DLP. It positions the DLP as the best possible option to serve a diverse student population, including many sub-categories of historically "underperforming" students.

Indeed, DL programs have emerged as a viable model to support the learning needs of English Language Learners (ELLs), regardless of the students' first language backgrounds (Collier & Thomas, 2004). DL programs have proven to be particularly effective with children who are native speakers of other languages, presumably because they capitalize on the children's linguistic resources and promote meta-linguistic awareness (Collier & Thomas, 2004). In the following section, we will outline the key concepts and themes that constitute DLPs so that our readers might better understand the findings, analyses, and conclusions drawn from our experiences exploring the 80:20 Dual Language Program implemented by the district.

Most of the DLPs in the United States (U.S.) utilize English and Spanish in engaging students in both literacy and subject content instruction (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). Howard and Christian (2002) noted that there has been a general increase in the number of DLPs in the U.S. as more schools adopt dual language instruction. They attributed this increase in popularity to research that has highlighted the effectiveness of these programs for both English-dominant students as well as ELLs. Some of the general goals of DLPs include: (a) students developing high levels of proficiency in their first language and in a second language, (b) at or above grade level academic performance of English-dominant students and their Spanish-dominant counterparts, and (c) a demonstration of positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors by all students. Further, communities and society benefit from having citizens who are bilingual, biliterate, and positive toward people of different cultural backgrounds (Howard & Christian, 2002).

In yet another study, DLPs were found to be effective in regard to prompting high levels of language proficiency, academic achievement, and overall positive attitudes toward learning (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Other studies have also found that parents and teachers of children in DLPs are generally enthusiastic about the programs and often recommend their expansion, as the programs have been found to raise achievements for both language dominant and language minority children (Christian, 1994; Baker, 2006).

### **Ideology and Legal Framework**

The mandate for DL instruction in Illinois was derived from the state's openness and flexibility to allow districts to choose from a plethora of instructional approaches, what would be their most preferred bilingual education program. In school districts with a certain critical mass of learners, legislation

seems to provide for schools to offer some form of native language instruction. As such, the state guidelines confer upon the school district a mandate for the current DL program.

Under the state's law, school officials are required to determine whether students speak another language while at home and measure how well they understand and speak English. The law then requires that, if a child meets the ELL criteria and there are at least 20 students who share the same language, then the students must be offered transitional bilingual education preschool classes. The legislation also required that, by 2014, all lead teachers in bilingual preschool classes be certified in ESL or bilingual education as well as in early childhood education; some concern existed as to how school districts would meet this requirement given that some were facing financial challenges (Malone, 2010). In addition, schools were mandated to offer DL immersion programs or developmental bilingual education programs based on decisions by their local leadership.

With regard to accountability when developing English language proficiency, the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* legislation makes specific reference to holding schools accountable for developing language proficiency for ELLs by monitoring the scores of ELLs on standardized English language proficiency tests (Wright, 2010). This accountability requirement has been upheld despite the many arguments that countless language educators have raised regarding the validity of testing ELLs before they have developed proficiency as well as the reliability of such scores (Abedi, 2004; De Jong, 2011; Menken, 2008; Wright, 2010).

The design and implementation of DL programs reflect specific ideologies about diversity that differ from the basic goals of transitional bilingual education programs (Field, 2011), which are designed to serve as a 'bridge' to lead students 'quickly' from their home language to fluency in English, thus allowing them to join their English speaking peers in inclusive classrooms. This transitional provision serves the primary ideology of assimilating speakers of other languages into English. The central idea is to "transition" children into mainstream English classes as quickly as possible in order to increase the probability that they will earn a passing score on the state's standardized tests. Needless to say, this practice is not necessarily designed with the child's best interest in mind, but rather is a practice that has materialized in the face of intense accountability pressure, especially in urban or diverse communities such as the one presented in this case study.

On the other hand, DL programs are conceptualized to create proficiency in both languages. Field (2011) argued that DL programs are guided by pluralistic ideologies and, according to DeJong (2011), these programs are characterized by four basic norms. The norms include: an assumption that linguistic and culturally diversity are desirable, bilingualism is approached from a holistic perspective that views bilingualism from a communicative competence outlook, a general rejection of the standardization of approaches so as to embrace more

constructivist teaching, and a rejection of the more subtractive outcomes of language maintenance by embracing of additive aspects of acquisition.

In the case of River Bend, it is clear that the leadership believes that DL programs have the ability to improve learning for both Spanish speaking students and their English dominant counterparts. The additive rather than subtractive mindset in conceptualizing this program aligns it closely with many DL immersion programs. With the goal of creating students who can speak both languages, the program focuses on reading and writing in both languages as well as fostering cultural understanding among the diverse groups of students. Proficiency in English is just one of the many goals of the program.

### **Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Underpinnings**

This research is designed, analyzed, and understood from a sociocultural perspective. From this perspective, we conceptualize teaching and learning as an activity inherently rooted in human interactions. Similarly, we view program development and administration as a dynamic and productive endeavor, or activity system (Engstrom, 1999), based on human interactions. In such activities, individual and collective identities matter because the decisions that the actors make are inherently personal and based on our individual and shared histories and experiences. In this study, we are interested in situating the district's rationale, development, and scaling up of the DL program within the broader sociopolitical context, which necessarily takes into account (language) ideologies, discourses, legislation, and activism. We also aim to understand the meaning that the various stakeholders make of the DL program and their roles within it.

To implement an educational program of this magnitude cannot be done single-handedly and it cannot flourish as the result of a directive from a single person or office. In the case of the DL program within River Bend, the implementation and success of the program required the participation of thousands of actors, including students, parents, teachers, principals, community stakeholders, and district administrators. Each of these participants, has a unique role within, and constructs particular meanings of, the entity we're referring to as 'the DL program.' As such, it is helpful to think of the broader DL program as an *activity system* (Engstrom, 1999), or a *social learning system* (Wenger, 2000), where "knowing [about DL programs] is an act of participation in complex 'social learning systems'" (Wenger, 2000, p. 226), and knowledge accumulates over time and is dependent on historical, cultural, and social systems that help an individual or organization construct meaning.

Given the emphasis on participation, meaning making, and knowledge construction (i.e., skill-based or conceptual learning in a variety of settings), it logically follows that identity(ies) can be a useful conceptual and analytical tool. Following Wenger (2000), we can understand identity in social learning

systems as how we "define who we are by what is familiar and what is foreign, by what we need to know and what we can safely ignore" (p. 239). In the DL context, Palmer (2008) argued that

[b]ecause two-way classrooms explicitly share the goals of 'academic achievement for all' and 'bilingualism and biliteracy for all,' they are settings in which attention is more likely to be given to the details of discourse that enhance opportunities for academic identity construction (p. 648).

She pointed to the inherent and explicit goals of DL programming for groups of children with widely varying social statuses and to the politicized nature of DL classrooms. It follows, then, that the adults leading the design and implementation of DL classrooms would also be motivated by certain (political) goals and, thus, identity construction becomes an equally appropriate construct by which to understand their roles as equity-oriented change agents.

Finally, the case studies and data presented in this article are best understood in light of the array of goals that the district has for its DL programs. In addition to achieving academic competence in the content areas in both languages as well as achieving bilingualism and biliteracy, district personnel were explicit in articulating a shared goal for the students, by means of the DL program, to live harmoniously in a diverse world. Cognizant of the fact that the schools in River Bend represent various degrees of diversity – economically, racially, linguistically, and ethnically – educators at all levels maintain hope that bringing the children together, and not only utilizing each other as language models in the quest for bilingualism and biliteracy, but also that children can confront, learn about and appreciate difference as an important aspect of our society. From this perspective, a comprehensive and holistic curriculum doesn't promote simplistic acceptance and tolerance of others, but moves toward genuine understanding and appreciation for difference. As such, River Bend educators saw themselves as acting in a morally responsible way in that they, with the children and families of the community, are taking steps toward building a more democratic and just society through a pluralistic program model and delivery. Not discussed with district personnel, but worth pointing out, is how such steps necessarily involve deconstructing White dominance and racial hierarchy (Bonilla Silva, 2010; Leonardo, 2010); this component is elaborated on below, specifically, in regard to the discussion of the discourse around Black children in the DL program.

### **Methods and Data**

This study utilized ethnographic and case study methods for three reasons: a) a desire to understand the complexity of large school districts and the processes involved in designing and implementing key initiatives, b) a need to place boundaries around a specific phenomenon to be explored from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, and c) a dearth of rich descriptions and analyses of DL scale up efforts by a district in

a region where DL does not have deep historical roots. In this section, we describe the data collection and analysis efforts that allowed us to understand the sociocultural context, history, and practices of River Bend educators, as well as the tensions that surfaced in the early years of the DL implementation. We were particularly attuned to the meaning that the different actors made of the DL program.

The participants in this study included teachers, administrators, students, and parents. The study was conducted over a period of two years and included an initial review of pertinent background documents that were identified in collaboration with district personnel. The researchers collected and reviewed a variety of DL resource documents that were contained on the district's intranet and were designed to orient teachers to the DL structures and practices and guide them through curriculum implementation. The researchers were also provided with a plethora of documents pertaining to the historical vision and development of the DL program, including agendas and minutes of meetings, presentations (to the school district board or other audiences), mission statements, school improvement plans, reports, proposals (i.e., program, funding), and stories and reports from media outlets. In addition to providing the researchers with insights into the conception and management of the program, these documents were integral in regard to guiding the initial design for the study and identifying the important data points and themes to explore.

We began the investigation with individual interviews with district administrators in order to clarify the nature of the DL program, including its conceptual framework and subsequent implementation. These interviews led to the identification of all the other participants to be interviewed. Over the course of the study, three formal, in-depth interviews were conducted with the two bilingual education administrators most centrally involved in the efforts to take up and implement DL programming at scale; the researchers spent a considerable amount of time speaking with these administrators at each site visit as well as in between physical visits. These formal and informal conversations provided much of the background information about the program and helped the researchers adjust their methods and procedures. Cordial interactions with the coordinators also facilitated access to teachers, given the coordinators' supportive role to, and positive relationships with, the teachers.

In collaboration with the district administrators, two schools, Grand and Lawrence, were identified to be the case schools based, in part, on the following factors: a need to observe both One-Way and Two-Way DL programs, school demographics, achievement data, school dynamics/culture, leadership, and personnel. To learn more about the operations, goals, and DL implementations at the case schools, we conducted in-depth interviews with the principals and, in one case, the assistant principal, too. The DL coordinators helped identify focal classrooms and teachers at each school, and we conducted numerous classroom observations that involved spending at

least two hours of observation in each focal classroom over two visits. A total of nine classrooms were visited (out of 284 DLP classrooms); five of the classrooms visited were at Grand, while the other four classrooms were at Lawrence.

Additionally, the researchers interviewed the nine classroom teachers individually at least three times, including both pre-observation and post-observation interviews. The initial interviews sought to understand who the teachers were and how they had come to work in the DL program. The subsequent interviews served to clarify previous information and were more detailed and focused on perceptions of the DL program and DL practices. A final debriefing interview was conducted following the last classroom observation and served to help the researchers ascertain the meaning that the teachers made of particular practices and incidents. The debrief sessions also gave the teachers a chance to ask the researchers any questions they may have had or to clarify what they may have said in the other interviews.

We also conducted focus groups with parents in order to ascertain the perspectives and experiences of the families who opted to participate in the DL program. In these focus groups, the researchers inquired as to how the families first heard of the DLP and how they came to understand their goals and processes. The researchers also discussed any particular concerns that the parents had encountered with the DLPs, such as struggles to support their children with homework in Spanish. The parents provided insights into the value associated with the DLP and their general sentiments around their children's participation in the DLP.

All of the interviews and focus group sessions were captured by retrievable audio recording devices. During the interviews, the researchers also took judicious interview field notes in order to facilitate easy analysis of the data and determine follow-up questions. Interviewing the different stakeholders was intended to give the researchers a clear understanding of the role that each group played in shaping the DL procedures and practices as well as their sentiments around the current status of the DLPs.

Similarly, video data collected from the classrooms were used to clarify emergent themes and issues. The data were subjected to partial transcription, a process that guides researchers in transcribing only key passages, while notes are taken for the rest of the data (Bell, 1993). The team of researchers was careful to continually consult one another during the study as they sought to make meaning of the data, including at the time of writing the report of the study's findings, which was submitted to the district superintendent and to other school officials. This process of peer debriefing (Carspecken, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as a key pillar of this ethnographic research as it served to lessen bias and, thus, enhance the identification of key findings from the study. As the study progressed, the researchers had opportunities to seek clarification from some of the study participants on questions that arose during the data analysis. This process of member

checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) also served as a reliability check for the data; participants, especially the district's bilingual education leadership, offered many points of clarification throughout the entire research design, implementation, and writing processes.

### Findings

The findings from this study are organized around particular practices and structures of the DL program, as they were interpreted by various stakeholders. First, we present the teachers' and administrators' views on the structures and resources that make the DL program scalable, uniform, and manageable, with particular attention committed to the recruitment and development of novice DL teachers and principals. Second, we attend to current practices and priorities for ensuring high quality DL programming. Finally, we highlight an emergent tension that arose when transitioning from a transitional bilingual education program serving Spanish-speaking students exclusively to DL programming serving new populations. This analysis is viewed in light of Valdes' (1997) and Palmer's (2008) cautionary notes about DL programs and the work that still needs to be done in order to achieve equitable, bilingual learning arrangements for student groups that are not equal in the larger society.

#### Teachers' and Administrators' Views on DL Program Development and Resources

Of particular importance to this case study was how various stakeholders perceived the district's coordination and outreach (to employees and children's families) efforts as well as their respective readiness in regard to representing and enacting the DL program. Teacher and principal preparation programs do not typically train educators specifically for DL settings. The data presented here showcases some of the attitudes, outlooks, and comfort levels of the district staff members as they journeyed together through the, for them, uncharted territory of DL programming in their community. Three points are highlighted in this section: community outreach efforts, human resource practices, and principal preparedness.

**Community outreach efforts.** One of the most important aspects of the district's design and implementation efforts was community outreach. Predictably, the first step toward DL program implementation and success was the strong support of the superintendent, Dr. Guzman, both philosophically and financially. From our perspective, it seems as though there was a knowledgeable and steadfast leader at the helm of the Office of English Learners, Olga Valdivia. Olga reported that she conveyed to Dr. Guzman that success of the program would depend upon thorough and thoughtful planning, which would involve multiple community stakeholders and require a director-level position committed exclusively to DL programs. The director of DL programs, Paula, had served in various capacities within the Office of English Learners prior to this leadership role.

The initial phase of community outreach was the creation of multiple advisory and leadership committees to support the short- and long-term goals of program implementation and children's success, particularly children of color, who, according to standardized test data, were not achieving at levels comparable to their White counterparts and may not have been afforded equitable classroom opportunities to demonstrate their brilliance. To involve the community and accomplish the initial work of sketching out the DL program goals and structures, River Bend's leadership assembled two advisory committees, one made up of a diverse group of community stakeholders, and one made up of bilingual parents. Each group was charged with slightly different, but complimentary, tasks.

For long-term growth and community engagement efforts, Dr. Guzman also made investments in Hispanic and African American parent leaders, in a style similar to the *Grow Your Own* teacher pipeline. Since 2009, the African American and Hispanic Parent Leadership Institutes have recruited parents and delivered Saturday institutes over the course of the years. According to district documents, the goals for these institutes were to "provide leadership training and help parents become more active participants in their children's education." This is directly related to other district efforts to build widespread community support for its DL programs and, according to Olga, this effort to strengthen the program was reflective of Dr. Guzman's unwavering support of this initiative (Olga, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

Finally, the Office of English Learners has and continues to coordinate and deliver dozens of DL information sessions to prospective parents. Olga and Paula describe these efforts as "critical" in conveying a very specific message about why the DL program exists and what it is trying to accomplish with the community's children (Olga, personal communication, February 27, 2013). The primary goal of these informational meetings is to teach parents about DL education, including the research, non-negotiable, and benefits of the DL program. The meetings focus specifically on the 80:20 DL program at River Bend, so that "parents [are] able to make well-informed decisions based on the best instructional program for their child" (Paula, personal communication, February 27, 2013). This seems to have been affirmed by parents who spoke to the fact that they had received information about the DL program during information sessions.

Of particular import is the Parent Contract. As Olga and Paula described it, the Parent Contract was formally designed and is presented to ask parents to take the time to understand the DL program and make a commitment to have their children participate in the 80:20 DL program until (at least) the sixth grade (Olga, personal communication, February 27, 2013). Given the longitudinal goals of the DL program, it makes sense to request this commitment in order to see the outcomes of the DL program materialize with each child.



**Human resources practices: Recruiting and developing DL teachers.** Naturally, when a district decides to scale up its bilingual education services to include nearly 3,000 additional (language-majority) students, this decision affects many aspects of human resource operations. Specifically, this study exposed the extent to which River Bend needed to work with regional institutions to ensure that it could fill its teaching positions with strong, bilingual candidates and provide mentoring and professional development opportunities for these teachers as they learned the intricacies of being a DL teacher within the district. In terms of teacher recruitment, Olga reported that there has not been a need to rely on, say, the Spanish government in order to fill bilingual teacher vacancies. She stated that working collaboratively with the universities in the region, including community colleges, helped produce a pipeline of DL teachers. In fact, many of the DL teachers attended school within the River Bend school district. Of the nine teachers we interviewed and observed, three had attended River Bend schools.

Novice DL teachers participated in an induction program along with new teachers in the general education classrooms. They received additional support, however, in the form of classroom observations and release time to observe their mentors' teaching. This induction program for DL teachers benefited from the appointment of Paula, the DL director, to the advisory board of the induction team. From conversations with Paula, the researchers learned that she advocated for this appointment, knowing that there is much to learn about being a DL teacher in River Bend and much to lose should the district have a high attrition of DL teachers. As is alluded to above, the district invested heavily in the recruitment of quality DL teachers from the region.

Through an opportunity to meet teachers involved in the Teacher Mentoring Program (TMP), the researchers became familiar with what this program consisted. The TMP consisted of a mentorship program, where experienced teachers were identified and invited to serve as a mentors for new teachers. As the new teachers became oriented to teaching in the district, they were required to observe their mentors teach at least twice in their first year of teaching. In addition, the mentor was required to observe the mentee teach as well.

For this particular school district, a special TMP for DL teachers did not exist. However, it was encouraging that a DL administrator served on the committee that oversaw the TMP operations. In the mentorship, this meant that the DL administrator was able to identify a mentor teacher candidate who, arguably, was not only successful in the DL classroom, but also maintained a positive disposition toward mentoring. Given that mentor teachers likely received limited training toward being effective mentors, an intrinsic positive disposition toward mentoring appears to have been an important component for successful mentorship and, thus, successful teaching by and retention of new teachers.

Finally, the professional development of DL teachers was guided by the work of the Dual Language Education of New Mexico organization, which recommended two bilingual education consultants to assist with the professional development. During the two years that the researchers worked with the district, the DL teachers' professional development was geared around the book *Teaching for biliteracy: Strengthening bridges between languages* (Beeman & Urow, 2012). The sessions were designed to cover a range of DL issues, including 1) understanding our own and children's language backgrounds and pathways to bilingualism; 2) understanding and using the linguistic bridge – the instructional moment when the teacher brings the two languages together (Beeman & Urow, 2012) to maximize new content knowledge across languages and build metalinguistic awareness; 3) establishing physical, linguistic environments that reflect and honor the allocation of languages (across the curriculum and for a respective grade level); and 4) developing methods to work with horizontal curriculum maps and balanced literacy guides in a way that is faithful to the language goals of the DL program and also aligns with evolving academic standards. It is important to note that at least half of the professional development was conducted in Spanish, which reiterated the value and importance of Spanish and allowed the DL teachers who had experienced subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999) to reclaim their academic Spanish.

**Administrator preparedness and support.** The interviews with the principals revealed that the majority of the principals responsible for the introduction, maintenance, and development of the DL programs did not initially have expertise in this area. As such, some of the principals were reluctant or cautious to take on DL programs. Insecurities about their DL knowledge bases and abilities to lead the DLP, however, appear to have been overcome by support from the DL program's central administrators. In the case of Mr. Lenihan, a White, monolingual principal at Grand, involvement and participation in La Cosecha, a DL conference for practitioners and administrators sponsored by Dual Language Education of New Mexico (DLENM), served as an exceptional conduit/induction into the DL world. One thing he gained from La Cosecha was a familiarity with DL research: "Research is clear: Students in DL outperform kids not in DL programs" (Lenihan, personal communication, May 16, 2013). According to one DL administrator, Mr. Lenihan has become more knowledgeable and has "owned" the DL program, which matters when talking to parents.

It is also worth noting that the district has also drawn on local DL expertise from a reputable resource center – the same center that provided the majority of the professional development for the teachers – to provide specific DL professional development for the principals. This investment in leadership appears to, at the very least, have helped the principals develop a level of comfort and confidence in engaging in DL issues. Both principals involved in this study

expressed what seemed to be genuine appreciation for the opportunity to have focused and substantial professional development on a topic that will directly translate into increased capacity to serve as an instructional leader, despite their personal lack of credentials to work as a DL teacher.

### **Current DL Practices and Priorities for Ensuring A High Quality DL Program Across Schools**

As evidenced by our interactions with district personnel, a commitment seems to exist to understand the research literature on DL models and practices; invest in and develop resources to ensure the fidelity of the implementation of the program, and DL teacher growth; and, generally, try to “do this right” for the children in the DL program (Olga, personal communication, May 16, 2013). This finding pertains to the practices enacted in the classrooms we visited and specifically promoted by Paula, the director of DL Programs. These practices might not represent significant innovation, but they do provide insights into what the DL staff were doing *in the moments* we were present, which indexes their collective, top priorities as they work through continual program improvements in what can be considered the early years of the DL program’s existence. Here, we focus on two, high-leverage DL practices: time allocation and the linguistic environment of the classroom, and the language of communication.

**Time allocation for target language instruction and commensurate classroom environments.** In the design of the 80:20 DL program, the district took much care to ensure that the teachers were allocating the appropriate amount of time in a given language in order to accomplish the goals of biliteracy and bilingualism over the long-term. DLP administrators reported that, for example, the structure of the Kindergarten day was carefully thought out to select a language with a content area or activity, according to various criteria, such as how long that activity was and which language made more sense for that activity. This was deliberate in order to maintain the 80:20 ratio and optimize the probability that the children would acquire and develop the languages over the years.

The time allocation document appeared to be helpful in a number of ways including acting as an anchor for conversations about curriculum planning; it also provided guidance regarding which language was used at any given point in the year. Furthermore, when time allocation did not break down neatly by subject area in the middle elementary grades (e.g., third and fourth grades) when literacy and language development required equal attention in English and Spanish, a specific schedule for writing units was created with the language of instruction allocated to each unit. Many teachers reiterated the notion that it was important to be viewed from a “bird’s eye” perspective, meaning that, over time, the writing time allocated to each language would even out to 50:50, even if it appeared to be heavy in a given language at one particular time. Again, these support structures appeared to be helpful resources for upholding the central goals of the DL program.

All of the observed classrooms abounded in texts in both English and Spanish languages. The balance between the displayed English and Spanish texts varied between different classrooms with some having more Spanish displays than English and vice versa. Regardless of the variation, the classroom displays reflected the language allocation ratio for that particular grade level. Moreover, the displays mirrored the three linguistic spaces: Spanish, English, and bridging (between the two languages). The displays consisted of both student-generated and teacher-developed materials. In some cases, the displays covered most of the wall space and there were additional student-made artifacts hanging from the ceiling or from lines strung from wall-to-wall. Displaying student-generated texts appears to be an important practice among DL teachers.

Also noteworthy was that the class materials and displays in the classrooms were laid out to favor the separation of content in the two languages. The separated arrangement was intended to facilitate the children’s organization of and easy access to linguistic resources. The consistency with which this was upheld across the classrooms was attributed to the implementation of practices learned from the professional development activities for the DL teachers. In addition, all of the classrooms contained support for “bridging” between the languages, a concept emphasized in professional development activities aimed at leveraging the knowledge of individual languages for the growth of bilingualism/biliteracy.

Regarding books that were displayed in the classrooms, although most of the classes had both English and Spanish language texts, it seemed as though there were slightly more English language texts. There was no indication that this may have affected the teaching and learning within the classroom. The program administrators explained that there were other resources available in both English and Spanish that were accessible to the teachers as well as students and, in some cases, even the school libraries were available to families during the weekends. They noted that this was the result of more than \$1 million having been invested in resources, including multimodal and internet resources.

**Language of communication.** For most of the classes the researchers observed, the use of English was either non-existent or very minimal. The exclusive use of a single language in a DL classroom is a strong pillar of second language instruction and signals a high commitment to language learning, as teachers seek to create a rich, immersive environment. Such conditions have been known to work in favor of the acquisition of a new language (Baker, 2006; Krashen & Terrell, 1982). There were, however, times when the communication between the students shifted between Spanish and English, or was just in English, primarily among the native English-speaking students in the Two-Way Kindergarten and first grade classrooms.

While the ultimate objective is to support the students in speaking exclusively in the target language, the students were

not necessarily prohibited from speaking in the language with which they were the most comfortable. At the same time, the teachers explained that, regardless of which language the students spoke to them, they were compelled to respond in the language of instruction. Teachers were asked how they made the decision to push children to speak the target language. Generally, teachers agreed that they first started by requesting that students use phrases that were frequently used in the classroom (e.g., Can I go to the bathroom? Where do I turn this in?). Gradually, then, as the children's skills and confidence developed, they encouraged more advanced forms of communication in the target language. It was commendable to observe that language use in higher classes (grades three to six) was consistently in the language of instruction, which, in the case of Spanish as the target language, may be taken to affirm the acquisition and maintenance of the Spanish language as well as an evolving identity of a child who is either a) comfortable using their first language (i.e., Spanish) in academic settings or b) comfortable using their second language in academic settings. In the former situation, this speaks to the undoing of the degradation that Hispanics have historically endured in innumerable institutions through which their children pass daily, or this speaks to the augmented utility with which Spanish holds; neither of these implications are insignificant in light of the deprived educational opportunities that have been historically afforded to Spanish-speaking Hispanics in the U.S. (Valencia, 2002).

Another notable "language of communication" practice that was being promoted was reading the morning announcements in two languages. At the time of the school visits, Olga had just released a memo encouraging principals to consider the overall culture of the school in order to ensure that it reflected the core values of DL. (The building administrators in the two participating schools wholly-supported the overall goals of the DLP and, although we inquired often and in a variety of ways, there was no evidence to indicate resistance to the transition to DL programming.) In one of the schools, we observed the morning routine and it seemed to deepen the spirit of the DL program, especially when the (primarily English-speaking) principal began the morning announcements with a greeting in Spanish and then invited two students to make the day's announcements in Spanish and English, side-by-side. This protocol was promoted by DLP administrators to support principals in acculturating the DL school communities in intentional ways and reflects the instructional practices of the DLP. Not insignificant, it also has the simultaneous function of elevating the status of Spanish in an English-dominant society and, arguably, strengthens the use of two languages within the school.

### **Emergent Tension: Racial Consciousness and Preparedness to Teach African American Learners**

Another emergent issue in the move from Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) to DL was the changing demographics of the students served by the programs. For

example, the TBE program historically served students who qualified to receive services as ELLs. DLPs, however, integrated both ELL students and English-speakers, many of whom were White or African American. Given that some of the teachers indicated that they did not have experience teaching African American students, there may be an opportunity for professional growth for these teachers and other teachers as well. One administrator expressed a desire to support working with youth who they perceived to be "hyper active": "Regarding hyper active African Americans, teachers aren't prepared. They [the students] are coming with different socio-emotional needs that teachers are not equipped to deal with..." (Mr. Lenihan, personal communication, May 16, 2013).

This statement is problematic in that it signals a type of generalizing that (presumably) would be intolerable should it have been in reference to White or Latina/o children. However, in the eyes of the administrators – there were three present at the interview and none of them refuted this statement – there is a problem that is represented in the African American children in the program, and, based on scholarship on deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010) and common perceptions of African American learners (Ladson-Billings, 2009), that "problem" is often explained by abnormal or insufficient home lives that produce socio-emotional baggage. From this statement, it is clear that the staff, in their relatively new acquisition of African American students in their bilingual program, have not developed the practice of looking inward and accounting for various forms of Whiteness and institutional racism when trying to assess and account for particular behaviors.

At the same time, however, one interviewee pointed out that one of the children was making good progress in learning Spanish, as evidenced by the fact that he now responds in Spanish when [the administrator] speaks to him, even though he is "off the wall." In a similar vein, one administrator shared:

I think one challenge, at least Ms. Morelos expressed to me, is support, it's how to work with those African American children who don't get support at home. And, I think that's one challenge that at least she expressed, and we're talking challenges because one piece is where the parent educator would come in and really try to get that parent involved, and I know it's not only one child; and not even necessarily has to be African American. It could be other parents who are struggling financially, who are working two or three jobs, and they just can't help. For them, putting food on the table is more important than helping with homework and Spanish (Lenihan, personal communication, May 16, 2013).

These sentiments appear to depict an additional layer around the struggle to guide the learning of a student population that has changed rather dramatically in the last 10 years. (According to Mr. Lenihan, the neighborhood has changed from 40% to 70% Hispanic, and the school serves the second-largest African American population among the elementary schools [about 18%.]) The demographic changes mean that

teachers need to make various adjustments, as they are experiencing students who bring new, or different, ways of interacting to the classroom.

Conclusions are being drawn about, or connections being made to, the child's home life and what that means for the child's classroom performance. While not the same as the cautionary note put forth by Valdes (1997) concerning different students' social statuses and success, it does point to the racial hierarchy that exists in today's diverse DL classrooms and the emergent priorities of DL administrators and staff. That is, DL is an improved version of transitional bilingual education for Latinas/os, and an attractive opportunity for affluent White children/families. At the same time, it is important to DL leadership to reach out and include the district's African American families; yet, developing and incorporating culturally relevant approaches to teaching African American students has not surfaced as a top priority. In fact, the discourse has suggested institutionalized marginalization of members of African American community. If equitable learning arrangements for African American are to be achieved in the DL context, then educators need to look both outward and inward to evaluate the complex racialized experiences of Black children.

### Discussion and Implications

Numerous indices exist that point to initial successes and continued improvement efforts among the DL staff. While as researchers we acknowledge our limited purview and accept that significant incentives exist to showcase the altruistic and benevolent work they are doing individually and collectively, it is striking how the team operates as a united and collegial social learning system, for better or worse. First, we can assess the positive features, and infer the benefits that will be gained by the children, of a district-wide social learning system that is connected, well-organized, and productive. It is clear that River Bend's leadership and teachers have excellent intentions and are committed to thinking through and forging 'new' approaches to bilingual education. Their rhetoric around serving the community's children through thoughtful DL programming is impressive. Upon review, and after listening to the satisfaction of the teachers, it appears as though the DL resources they have developed are beneficial and eliminate much of the ambiguity that might reside in terms of how optimal DL instruction should be implemented. It is notable that River Bend's DL leaders have argued for and acquired financial support for these efforts and engaged DL teachers in the development of these resources. Having made multiple visits to the classrooms in the two case schools, it is easy to reconcile what the leadership proclaims and what is being enacted in the DL classrooms; this alignment is not insignificant.

Still, however, it appears as though widespread susceptibility exists to institutional racism and tokenism as well as an acute focus on those who they have historically served: Latinas/os. As noted above, discussions with principals

and administrators revealed that new challenges seem to have emerged with the additive layer of working with new demographic populations within the DL program, and there was a striking shortage of ideas and productive discourse to mediate, or address, this issue. While the district has put in place mechanisms for recruiting African American families into the program, district personnel continue to contemplate reasons why few African American families have enrolled in the DL program and, as such, the district has been exploring opportunities for outreach. One principal noted that African American families tended to sign-up for school late (August), by which time decisions around DL classes have already been made, which, in turn, led to difficulties in accommodating the students due to the limited number of places. This appears to be an excuse or a distraction from the real issue: a lack of consciousness and critical reflection. Innumerable ways exist by which to mediate these challenges, one being to enlist key district or school personnel, such as the parent educator. Alternatively, or in addition to, the district might support teachers who create innovative new approaches or ways of interacting with and the engaging children, based on enhanced understandings of and appreciation for the assets that all students bring to schooling contexts and the ways in which these can be leveraged to support the students' learning. However, as long as the social learning community remains insular, the issue of educating all DL children effectively – especially African American children – will not fix itself.

We see this case study as a rich source of ideas and actions aimed at improving the educational arrangements for diverse students. It shows promise for a curriculum and pedagogy committed to doing more than developing the attractive (and essential in the case of Latinas/os) attributes of bilingualism and biliteracy: it represents a means by which to address larger social and racial injustices by demonstrating a model of working together and leveraging assets. Sometimes, this type of exposure, or mirror, is exactly the type of catalyst to prompt change, both at River Bend and in other districts facing tough decisions around the design and implementation of bilingual education models that simultaneously honor children and provide them with essential skills for the future.

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<sup>ii</sup> All proper nouns are pseudonyms in an effort to protect the anonymity of the participants.

<sup>iii</sup> We use the term "bilingual learner" to give due credit to individuals engaged in the process of learning an additional language, to emphasize the value of developing and maintaining bilingualism for non-Native English speakers, and to de-center English as the primary, or prerequisite, goal of non-Native English speakers in U.S. schools.