

Full Length Research Paper

Expanding Immersion Programs: A Leadership Perspective

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How best to educate recent immigrants has become more important over the past 30 years as the number of immigrants in our k-12 schools increases. This article presents a phenomenological study of an urban principal in the US who expanded her school's Spanish immersion program to respond to the needs of immigrant families. This study provides considerations for other school systems looking to expand their immersion programs and implications for school principals leading the change effort. While this study is based on the needs of recent immigrants in the US, the findings apply to schools in other countries working to successfully educate recent immigrants.

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

العربية

أيجاد أفضل السبل لتعليم المهاجرين الجدد أصبحت من أكثر الموضوعات أهمية على مدى السنوات الـ 30 الماضية حيث حدث ازدياد مطرد في عدد المهاجرين الملتحقين بمرحلة التعليم ما قبل الجامعي. تقدم هذه المقالة دراسة الظواهر من خلال دراسة حالة لمديرة مدرسة في المناطق الحضرية في الولايات المتحدة التي عملت على توسيع برنامج دمج اللغة الإسبانية في مدرستها، وذلك للاستجابة لاحتياجات الأسر المهاجرة. وتقدم هذه الدراسة مقترحات لأنظمة المدارس الأخرى التي تتطلع إلى توسيع برامج الدمج، وتعرض الآثار المترتبة عليه لمديري المدارس الذين يطمحون إلى تحقيق التغيير. ففي حين تقوم هذه الدراسة على احتياجات المهاجرين الجدد في الولايات المتحدة، إلا أن هذه النتائج تنطبق على المدارس في البلدان الأخرى التي تعمل على توعية المهاجرين الجدد بنجاح.

الكلمات الأساسية: اللغة المزدوجة، وتصميم البرامج، الممارسات، ثنائية اللغة، تعليم القراءة والكتابة، الإسبانية، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية (ELL)، اللغة الإنجليزية

Chinese

摘要 2

与 30 年前相比，随着中小学移民人数的增加，如何更好的教育这些学生成为了越发重要的议题。本文从现象学的角度描述了美国某城区校长如何为满足移民家庭的需求而扩增了该校的西班牙语浸入式教学项目。该项研究不仅可为其它试图拓展浸入式教学项目的学校提供参考，也为这些学校的校长提供了建议。虽然该研究是为服务美国新移民学生而进行的，但其结果也适用于其他致力于成功教育其新移民学生的国家。

关键词：雙語，程序設計，實踐，雙語，雙語，西班牙語，英語學習者 (ELL)，英語

Spanish

Por los pasados 30 años y a medida que aumenta el número de estudiantes inmigrantes en nuestro sistema escolar K-12, nos preguntamos cuál es la mejor forma de educarlos. Este artículo presenta un estudio fenomenológico de un director urbano en los Estados Unidos que amplió el programa de inmersión en español de su escuela para responder a las necesidades de las familias inmigrantes. Este estudio provee consideraciones para otros sistemas escolares que buscan expandir sus programas de inmersión y las implicaciones para los directores de escuelas que lideran el esfuerzo de cambio para estas familias inmigrantes. Si bien este estudio se basó en las necesidades de los inmigrantes recientes en los EE.UU., los resultados se aplican a las escuelas de otros países que trabajan con éxito para educar a los inmigrantes recientes.

Palabras claves en este estudio: Lenguaje dual, diseño de programas, prácticas, bilingüismo, bilingüismo, español, estudiantes que aprenden inglés e inglés.

Introduction

Despite evidence indicating immersion programs are effective with first-generation immigrants, as well as children of immigrants, US and European school leaders struggle to

expand immersion programs. Because of the impact of one's educational attainment on financial, personal, and community health, it is in everybody's interest to have schools in which all students thrive. This paper begins by presenting the societal

costs of not educating immigrants, followed by a theoretical framework for change leadership applied to schools with significant immigrant populations. Next, this paper examines one principal's work to expand immersion programming in a US school. The paper concludes with a synthesis of leadership lessons for those working to expand immersion programs.

Societal Costs of Not Educating Immigrants

The cost of failing to educate immigrants is high. In the US, Spanish continues to be the second most common language spoken in the home, after English (Shin & Ortman, 2011). While second and third generation Latino students are more likely to speak English, Latino students in the US have a lower high school graduation rate (US Department of Education, 2015), resulting in a 47 times greater chance of incarceration and an additional societal cost of \$292,000 per lifetime (Northeastern University, 2009). Total federal poverty costs due to high school dropouts are estimated at \$500 billion a year (Coley & Baker, 2013). European countries, where 1/3 of the population has an immigrant background (Gogolin, 2002) have corresponding educational and economic disparities. In Germany alone, 30% of first- and second-generation Turkish immigrants do not have a diploma of any kind, with an estimated cost to the German social support system of \$20 billion a year (Elger, Kneip, & Theile, 2009). Of those at risk of unemployment in Germany, only 3.3% of those with higher education were at risk compared to 16.4% of those with a 10th grade diploma (European Commission, 2011). The recent Syrian immigration crisis demonstrates the urgent need for the European educational system to respond to the needs of their most recent immigrants, an opportunity that should be guided by research demonstrating the success of immersion education with immigrant youth (Gogolin & Pries, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Change Leadership In Immersion Programs

Thomas and Collier's (1997) seminal study indicates an immersion education provides significant academic benefits for recent immigrants, as well as for students who speak the target language. While researchers may agree on the value of immersion education, research on a specific change process to initiate or expand immersion programs is limited. Leading any change effort in schools is complex (Heifetz & Linsky, 2007). The context of each school will determine the complexity of a specific change process (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015; Fullan, 2016). Successful change leaders must understand the exceedingly unpredictable and chaotic nature of change (Fullan, 1993, 2016; Kotter, 2007; Wheatley, 2001). Leaders must also have a sense of moral purpose and corresponding courage to successfully change educational

organizations (Fullan, 2003; Hagstrom, 2004; Hall & Hord, 1987; Palmer, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1996). Kotter recommends creating a sense of urgency around change efforts, forming coalitions of leaders to drive the change,

communicating the vision supporting the change, empowering others, ensuring short-term wins, and then engaging in systemic change. Tyack and Cuban (1995) and Fullan (2016) report that when administrators and teachers propose the reforms, they are more likely to be successful than when they are designed and imposed by those outside the system.

Fullan (2003) reports eight key "lessons" regarding change, including the moral dimension of change leadership: (a) The pace of change will be fast; (b) coherence is everybody's responsibility; (c) the changing context is critical; (d) clarity too soon is dangerous; (e) the process must be transparent; (f) bottom-up reform is a trap; (g) moral purpose, relationships, and knowledge will accelerate change; and (h) charismatic leadership is negatively associated with sustainability. Fullan (2003) notes the importance of stakeholders engaging in the change process, and understanding that "change is a journey; not a blueprint" (p. 24) with the change process being more important than the plan, the policy, or legislation (Fullan, 2016).

Because implementing or expanding immersion programs is often resisted by the dominant group, due to a perceived loss of power (Cummins, 1995), leaders working to expand immersion programs must be adept at managing change processes. As Fullan (2016) explicates, the variables that contribute to the success or failure of change initiatives require context-specific strategies by skilled change leaders. Fullan presents what he describes as a simple theoretical framework for implementing change that is simultaneously complex, "snarled," "detailed," "continuous[ly] interactive" and "a process, not an event" (pp. 57-58). The three stages of change are as follows:

1. Initiating a change process: A change is initiated by someone or by a group for a particular reason.
2. Implementation: The change, which is more or less defined at early stages, moves toward implementation.
3. Institutionalization: The change is continued beyond the initial year or two of implementation.

The factors of beginning a change process in this theoretical framework are displayed in Table 1. As noted previously, initiating change is not a linear process, nor is it predictable. Any of the factors will be implemented, visited, revisited, or impactful at random phases of initiating the change process.

This study examines one school leader’s experience expanding an immersion program in a public k-5 elementary school and analyzes leadership lessons learned using Fullan’s (2016) framework of initiating a change.

Methods

This phenomenological study seeks to “understand the lived experience” through a detailed description of a phenomenon (Creswell, 1994, p. 12). The findings in a phenomenological study are presented as a coherent story or narrative about the experience, a phenomenon bounded by time and activity (Creswell). This study is bounded by a 12-month period of time in which I led an effort to expand our Spanish immersion program. The theoretical foundation of studying one’s self has been examined by Theoharis (2007) who notes that self study was at one time the largest interest group in the *American Educational Research Association* and such studies contribute to meaningful scholarship through reflection, which can increase our understanding of a phenomenon.

Context

Our district, like many others, was experiencing increased pressure from families to expand our Spanish language immersion programs. It was clear that neither student demographic changes nor family pressure would determine if programs would be expanded. In our context, school principals were directed by one senior administrator to follow the district’s plan for limiting the number and the size of immersion programs while administrators in the English as a Second Language (ESL) Director were supporting an expansion. While school districts are often slow to adjust their programs to meet their students’ needs, school principals often feel a sense of urgency to meet the needs of children and families they work with daily. At the time my school’s immersion program was developed, there were only two other Spanish immersion programs in our district, despite a rapidly growing population of Spanish-speaking students (Daggett, 2014; Peterson, 2004). Predictably, the first Spanish immersion program opened in 1986 at an elite school in a

keep the school from closing due to declining enrollment, federal desegregation dollars were used to bus children from poorer parts of the city where many children of color lived. White families of economic means maneuvered their way through a complex school choice transfer process to enter this prestigious program. Despite using desegregation funds to provide free transportation, the program attracted primarily White students.

The second Spanish immersion school in the district opened in 1994 in a school serving many recent immigrants and families receiving free and reduced lunches (Daggett, 2014; Peterson, 2004). It was what is commonly called a “90-10 two-way dual immersion program” (TWDI) in which kindergartners learn in Spanish 90% of their day and in English 10% of the day, receiving increasingly more English instruction as students progress to 4th grade where they receive instruction 50% of the time in English and 50% in Spanish. The program is called TWDI as half the students are native speakers of Spanish and half native speakers of English.

The third Spanish immersion program was opened in 1997, designed by a courageous principal who had neither sought nor obtained district permission to convert her school to a 90-10 TWDI school. This immersion school had a significantly different model than the elite immersion school. Theirs had mostly monolingual English-speaking students. Ours had 50% of the students who were recent immigrants from Latin America. Theirs taught half the day in English and half in Spanish; ours was a “90-10” model where students learned 90% of the day in Spanish in kindergarten and then decreased the Spanish part of the day by 10% per grade level until they leveled off at 50% Spanish in the 4th grade. Theirs received desegregation funds to bus in children from around the city; ours received no desegregation funds despite 45% of the children qualifying for the federal free and reduced lunch program, half of the children being recent immigrants from Latin America, and half of the students living in other neighborhoods in our city. The elite school’s achievement outcomes were on par with schools with similar wealth; ours exceeded outcomes of schools with similar economic levels. Theirs had no social justice focus; ours was known for its dignity-rich language programs and sustainability initiatives.

Just as our program models differed significantly, so did the story of how our schools began. The elite immersion program began when the school was slated for closure due to low enrollment. Their Spanish immersion program was a way to keep the school open by bussing in children from across town. Our school’s immersion program began when an innovative principal, bilingual in Spanish and English and with a strong social justice orientation, worked with his teachers and the community to obtain a \$1 million Title VII federal grant. Our immersion program was developed without district blessing or permission, causing significant organizational conflict. There was a price to pay for this principal’s courageous actions to develop this immersion school; within two years of its

Table 1
Factors in Initiating Change: Fullan’s (2016) Theoretical Framework

Factor 1	examining the variety and quality of innovations schools can implement
Factor 2	access to information about innovations
Factor 3	ensuring advocacy for the change at the building and/or district level
Factor 4	teachers engaging as partners in the change process
Factor 5	change agents from outside the school stimulating or supporting the change
Factor 6	communities instigating educational change
Factor 7	new local, state, or federal policy or funds provide support for change

wealthy part of town with predominantly White families. To

founding, he left the school district to successfully lead a bilingual school in a neighboring district. I was appointed to the role of principal, despite my limited communication skills in Spanish. This was my first principalship in a large, public school; however, my experience as the founding director of a German immersion school and in leading a district redesign effort to benefit English Learners (ELs) was helpful in leading this Spanish immersion school.

Prior to sharing leadership lessons from expanding the immersion program, I want to share a few of my leadership successes in order to provide additional context. Before my appointment as an immersion principal in this district, I had worked with the school district and a committed group of German-American families with ties to major German businesses in our city to develop a public German immersion school. Numerous attempts to convince the district leadership to add this language immersion option resulted in their suggestion that we lobby the state legislature for additional school funding for the entire state and, when successful, to return with our request to add a German immersion option. Recognizing the futility of influencing state school funding within a tight timeframe, we instead started the non-profit German-American School of Portland, which went on to become an official German school in a foreign country.

Nor was I new to leading change in school districts. Also prior to my appointment as an immersion principal, I was appointed to a leadership position redesigning the EL program for all middle school students, under the guidance of the Office for Civil Rights. I hired and trained our program's EL teachers, educational assistants, and community engagement experts. Together we redesigned our professional development, program model, and curriculum. Despite several influential teachers demonstrating open hostility to our newest immigrants from Mexico and the former Soviet Union, within two years, our team was honored with an award from the Washington Association for Bilingual Education for our innovative program. Teachers embraced our students and our model, and student achievement increased dramatically.

In addition to these prior leadership successes, while serving as principal at this TWDI school, I was recognized with two statewide leadership awards by the Oregon Elementary School Principals Association. One award was for providing leadership as we ensured language instruction was given to every child in our school in Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, or Spanish. The other award was for providing leadership as we developed our sustainability education programs through learning gardens: an international garden, a butterfly garden, shade tree garden, and an outdoor learning classroom. Our students far exceeded the academic successes of students with similar demographics, and we were particularly proud that 100% of ELs with whom we had worked with for four consecutive years had attained reading proficiency at or near grade level. Our teachers examined student achievement data disaggregated by race and language,

as well as student growth data, long before the federal law known as *No Child Left Behind* required it. We used our analysis to examine the impact of our teaching strategies on students. Family satisfaction surveys indicated strong satisfaction with my leadership and the school's programming. Our school's enrollment was high despite the declining neighborhood student population. These successes changed the lives of children in our care, the outcome that means the most to me as a leader.

The Change Process: Expanding the TWDI Program

In a democratic society, our school leaders should ask what they are doing to ensure that all our children, of every socio-economic background, of all linguistic backgrounds, and of all races, ethnicities, and religions are thriving in our schools. This means leaders should seek the perspectives of those who historically have had no voice and no power in the school system. They should act to ensure their programs benefit all children, not just those of status and economic means. Leaders in public schools cannot simply represent wealthy, well-educated families with influence. Our superintendents, school boards, and community leaders must ensure that school leaders have structured support and autonomy to create conditions where all children thrive in their schools (Calkins, Guenter, Belfiore & Lash, 2007).

In my school's case, leading for equity in my school meant expanding our immersion program to meet the learning needs of our most recent immigrants. While Fullan's (2016) framework for initiating change does not explicitly include an examination of data, Fullan (2003) does emphasize the moral imperative for change, which is often driven by data (Johnson, 2002). Achievement data clearly showed the success of our immersion model. In addition, when I first became the principal of this school, it was a regular occurrence for moms to drop by school to tell me (through an interpreter) that they had heard our immersion program would be great for their Spanish-speaking children. They had heard that our school would take care of their children. Everybody at their friends' apartment building had said our school would help their children thrive. Could they enroll today? I routinely shared the district's transfer deadlines, required application procedures, and district policies. Essentially, I had to tell families that unless they immigrated in the year their child turned four, moved to the school's neighborhood, and applied by winter term of the previous school year, we could not enroll their child. Sharing this disappointing news never felt right. I was failing to serve the children who needed our program the most.

In my second year as principal, I noticed that we had an enrollment blip and needed to add a split kindergarten/first grade class and hire an additional teacher. Many of the children in the new k/1 class were native Spanish-speakers. Going against all recommendations for collaborative leadership, I unilaterally decided to make the additional k/1 class an immersion classroom and communicated to families that they could opt out of this k/1 immersion classroom if they preferred

English-only instruction. Because of the perceived high prestige of the immersion program for English-speaking families, no families opted out. For reasons still unclear to me, this change process happened with little positive or negative response from English-only teachers. Native Spanish-speaking and English-speaking families were thrilled for the opportunity for their children to learn in their native language or to acquire Spanish. Teachers respected the k/1 teacher I hired. She was a first-generation American whose parents had been migrant workers from Mexico; she understood the experience of immigrant and migrant children. She was widely recognized as a talented teacher, whether she taught in Spanish or in English. Because of her success teaching reading to children in her class, I moved her into a literacy leadership role the following year.

It was in September of my third year as principal that my interpreter brought Esperanza (pseudonym) in to see me. It was a warm fall morning and Esperanza's daughter was hiding behind her mom's legs. I invited her into my office with my interpreter. Mom quietly shared her story. She had just arrived in our country. She had two kids. They did not speak any English. Could she enroll her children in our immersion program? I shared the required information about district policy, application deadlines that had passed months earlier, wait lists, and birth date requirements. I was embarrassed by our district's slow response to develop additional TWDI programs for our recent immigrants. But even more, I was disappointed that I had not done anything to expand our program in a thoughtful, systematic way.

After three years of turning away families like Esperanza's, families who were willing to take two buses to get their kids to our school and who had risked everything to get their kids across the border, I decided to try another approach in my fourth year as principal. I could not bear to look another mom in the eye while my interpreter shared that her child would have to go to a school that offered limited interpretation and translation services, and no bilingual classes.

White, middle class, native English-speaking families were also being turned away from our program, and while they had been aware of the admission numbers, district policies, and procedures for admission to our immersion school, I also thought it wrong that we were not creating the schools the parents wanted. In one year alone, we had 118 applicants for only 42 available spots. Our wealthier families would figure out a way for their children to acquire Spanish through summer immersion programs, or a family sabbatical in a Spanish-speaking country, or private Spanish lessons. However, our families of limited financial means and our immigrant families were counting on my advocacy.

Hoping to avoid the political challenges my predecessor faced when he started the immersion program without district approval, I sought and received the support of our English as a Second Language (ESL) Director. Fortunately, her child was in our English-only side of the school and she appreciated that every child in our school had at least 30 minutes a day of

language acquisition in Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Russian, or Spanish. She knew the research on immersion program effectiveness. She had also worked with the immigrant families who longed for their children to have strong immersion experiences. I also met with our ESL administrator to ensure an expanded program would meet all requirements for our federally required EL plan, as well as our district's staffing and funding model.

Next, I began a months-long process involving the ESL administrator, ESL director, and all our immersion teachers. While Fullan (2016) explicitly recommends including fewer teachers at the initiation stage, I included every immersion teacher. I convened regular meetings of the immersion teachers where we examined the research on immersion programs and program models. We evaluated the impact of immersion programs in which children do not start in kindergarten; they enroll in the immersion program when they immigrate (if they are native Spanish speakers) or when a space opens up (if they are native English speakers). We kept copious notes of our deliberations. We used timed protocols to ensure every voice was heard. The use of protocols was particularly important as half our immersion teachers were female, native Spanish speakers who regularly deferred to the White, native English-speaking, bilingual teachers during discussions. The White, male teachers often asserted their positions more authoritatively than others, occasionally limiting the participation of others. The protocols were one way to support equitable participation in discussions. District ESL leaders provided resources and research, and they witnessed our discussions. We took careful notes during each meeting and distributed them to the immersion team.

In November some ideas surfaced from our teachers who had met with the district immersion coordinator and had attended a national immersion conference. Most immersion teachers supported moving the program to a new school where the entire school could be an immersion school. In December, members of the newly formed Latino Parent Advocacy Group began meeting with my administrative intern and attending transfer application meetings, hoping to impact the expansion of immersion programs. Also in December my administrative intern and I met twice with immersion teachers to clarify our goals, analyze a survey of immersion teachers, and discuss the outcome. We all wanted to expand our program, but we disagreed on the timeline and on how to expand. Our immersion teachers wanted to either start their own public school or add a full second strand. I did not support adding a second full strand that would have served 180 additional students, not wanting to displace current teachers who were monolingual English. Putting the needs of the English-only teachers ahead of the needs of our recent immigrant students was a leadership error I later came to regret.

In January, The ESL director, ESL administrator, and district immersion coordinator met with our immersion team to identify recommendations for expanding in our school, as well

as expanding immersion schools in the district. I floated the idea of developing blended k/1, 1/2 and 2/3 immersion classrooms. Because of previous concerns that expanding the immersion program with a full second strand would displace existing monolingual teachers, I shared how this blended model would ensure we did not displace current teachers due to the anticipated retirement of several English-only teachers. I hoped this fact would cause teachers from both the immersion program and our non-immersion program to support our expansion model. In late January, the Latino Parent Advocacy Group again toured our school, hoping to help us expand. Knowing how challenging the politics of expansion were, I was thrilled to have their support. In January, our immersion teachers did not reach consensus on the expansion model within our school or within our district. Some continued to advocate for starting a new public school; others wanted a full second strand of immersion within our school, serving an additional 180 students; others supported a blended immersion model.

In early February, I held the first of three evening meetings where I shared the process for the school choice application process for families interested in joining the lottery for the immersion program. About 70 families attended, and we presented information using simultaneous interpretation in Spanish. The next day our immersion team met to discuss how the budget would allow for expanding our program. Later that week, our team met again to identify budget sources and staffing implications for expanding. In mid-February, I had developed a budget, knowing that we would have a retirement, and I could hire a teacher for the English program or a bilingual Spanish teacher if we expanded the immersion program. I surveyed my immersion team, asking if they would support expansion with a blended 2/3 immersion class in the following year. I was surprised that the immersion team wanted to slow down and hire a non-Spanish speaking teacher, even if that meant that if we expanded our program in another year, this teacher would be released, according to the rules of our union's collective bargaining agreement.

At our final immersion team meeting in late February, one of the most experienced immersion teachers suggested we expand our immersion program while we had the hiring opportunity to include a 2/3 late-entry immersion teacher. In this way, children who immigrated in the 2nd or 3rd grade would have the chance to be educated in their home language and families with English-only children would have the choice of putting their child in the classroom, knowing they would need to provide extra support academically while the child acquired Spanish. Despite previous disagreement with this concept, his proposal received unanimous support from the immersion teachers. I asked each immersion teacher and district representative to verbally respond that they supported this decision. Each person orally affirmed the decision and we agreed on several tenets of our work:

1. Our two-way dual immersion program is growing and changing and is in high demand by both English-speaking and ESL families.
2. Our program is research-based and has highly trained, effective teachers.
3. Just like families in the English side of the program can choose between straight grades or blended classrooms, the immersion program will also have that option. We are confident that the additional choice of blended classrooms will provide the highest quality education available.

We will follow all district procedures for the school choice transfer process and will consider family, student, and teacher input when placing children in straight grades or blended classrooms (Peterson, 2004).

While I was developing the communication strategy on this decision, I held two more parent information meetings, each of which again had more than 70 family representatives attend. This meant that over 200 family representatives had attended a meeting expressing interest in applying for our transfer lottery into the immersion program in which we had 30 open spots. At this most recent meeting, parents were angry and very vocal. Why would we not expand our program to accommodate the demand for immersion programs? Parents spoke out in English and in Spanish.

Districts generally give their principals their staffing projections in the late winter or early spring; these projections guide principals in their staffing decisions. In some districts principals are directed to have at least a part-time physical education teacher, a music teacher, and a child development specialist. Some districts restrict the class size of primary grade classrooms. Our district did none of this, and so while I was empowered to create a staffing model based on what our school wanted, I was not officially authorized to expand the immersion program despite support from the ESL leadership. To gauge family support for focusing on language acquisition, I asked our families and teachers to answer a brief survey. While Fullan (2016) endorses limiting involvement at the initiation stage, I increased stakeholder input opportunities to ensure I received additional perspectives. Because asking if families and teachers want PE in our school results in a vote on the PE teacher, I chose a strategy that ensured the dignity of our teachers. I wanted answers to what was important without asking who was important. The question I asked was "What is so Eagle Creek-like that without it, we are no longer Eagle Creek?" (pseudonym). I distributed this survey to all our families and teachers; respondents indicated support for all students having access to a language other than English in our school. This meant keeping our 30-minutes/day instruction in Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Russian program. I used the survey information to confirm the immersion team's support of expanding our immersion program.

The day came when I would share the staffing plan with all our teachers and the community. The staffing plan included music,

a librarian, language teachers in Vietnamese, Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish --- and we would expand our immersion program to add blended immersion classes without releasing any of our current teachers. When I shared this decision at an all-staff meeting, our union leader, who was a long-time, exemplary, monolingual teacher, expressed deep distrust of the process I went through to expand the immersion program. Another monolingual teacher supported her, "If we expand the Spanish immersion program, the English-only teachers will lose their jobs! That wouldn't be fair." The union representative then asked our immersion teachers, did you support this? I was not prepared for what came next.

Silence. Not a single immersion teacher spoke up to share that expanding the program had the unanimous endorsement of the immersion teachers. Perhaps it was long-held loyalty to teachers who did not speak Spanish. Perhaps it was immersion teacher fear of long-time teachers who felt the immersion program detracted from their success as teachers in the monolingual English program.

When union leadership pushed back on the expanded immersion proposal, I shared that I would make all our meeting agendas and notes available to all teachers for review. Even that did not help: it was rumored that I had fabricated all the notes and that the notes did not represent the will of the immersion teachers. The district administrators were confused; they had participated in all the meetings and knew the immersion teachers unanimously supported the decision. Several of the newer immersion teachers spoke to me behind closed doors, expressing fear about speaking up. They were angry at the silence of their more experienced immersion colleagues. They were dismayed about the rumors that I had fabricated meeting notes.

As the school year continued, teachers who had worked together and socialized for years no longer trusted one another because of the silence and outright denial regarding the unanimous immersion support for expanding our program. The integrity breach created a palpable tension. The next principal would need to create unity between the English-only and the Spanish immersion programs, would need to re-build trust among our teachers, and would have to navigate this healing process while keeping a focus on the needs of our children, not just on the needs of our teachers.

We did our best to end the school year on a positive note for our children and our families. Families were grateful for my leadership. Family satisfaction surveys showed strong support for my leadership; even years later, parents reported they chose to transfer to our school because of my leadership. Teachers continue to express deep gratitude for my leadership under complex conditions, writing public letters supporting my leadership. While I was proud of adding another strand to the immersion program, I was also simultaneously saddened by the conflict it created among teachers. I was disappointed I had not been a fierce leader for equity, rather that I had proposed and supported a compromise strategy.

As my fourth and final year as immersion principal wound down, and I prepared for a promotion to another role, teachers began packing up their rooms for summer cleaning, our families started their summer routines, and my administrative intern and I found ourselves in the main office in late June. We, too, were packing our materials to move to our new jobs, hers to serve as a Spanish immersion vice principal in a neighboring district, and I to the district office. It was late in the day, when the school office was officially closed, when two moms came in with four young children. They spoke in Spanish, telling us they were sisters and had just left Mexico City. They had abruptly left Mexico after witnessing several family members escape near-death violence. With my intern interpreting for me, they shared they had heard from neighbors that our school would help their children. Could they enroll their children in our program?

This time our answer was different than it had been all year and in the previous years. We shared we had just opened a new strand of Spanish immersion, a blended classroom. And yes, we had room for their children. Yes, we could start the enrollment papers that day. The moms had hope in their eyes. The kids hovered behind their moms' knees. My intern and I completed the paperwork and let the moms know we would send out more information over the summer. That moment confirmed we had made the right decision in expanding the program. The moms' dreams for their kids' futures and the comfort of their automatic enrollment affirmed why we had expanded the program.

Lessons Learned

The relief and joy that families exuded when we were able to enroll their children in the blended immersion classroom sustained my administrative intern and me through the sadness and disappointment of the rift among teachers in our school and our failure as leaders to fully expand our immersion program. Reflection on this change process provides lessons for other social justice leaders working to initiate or expand immersion programs (Theoharis, 2007). I will discuss the lessons I learned with Fullan's (2016) framework.

Examine Options and Research on Options

Fullan (2016) recommends that all options be examined and that information on the options be easily accessible; these were important components of our effort to expand the immersion program. As a team, we were fully engaged in examining the research from the Center for Applied Research for Language Acquisition and other language acquisition researchers on optimal TWDI that start in kindergarten; we should have examined more research on late entry immersion models. However, during this process, our team became known throughout the district for our expertise on immersion education.

Ensure Advocacy at the Building and District Level

Fullan (2016) also notes the importance of securing building and district advocacy for initiating any change. As the principal, I was fully committed to expanding our program. Hoping to avoid the political challenges my predecessor faced when he started the immersion program without district approval, I also sought and received the support of our ESL Director and ESL administrator. Their expertise and experience contributed greatly to my understanding of the issues, and they also provided support when conflict developed, which I will discuss more fully later in this paper. However, I did not secure the support of more senior district administrators as it had been made clear I would not receive it. I might have pushed more strongly for a full expansion of our TWDI program had senior administrators endorsed the expansion. District support for expansion continues to lag behind the high parent demand for the program.

Engage Teachers as Partners in the Change Process

I led three major changes at our school within a very short period of time: 1) developing a literacy model that would propel our students to exceptional success; 2) creating learning gardens that engaged families from diverse backgrounds; and 3) expanding our TWDI program. In all three initiatives, teachers were full partners in the process and had decision-making authority. The literacy and learning garden initiatives received widespread endorsement by teachers in the immersion and English program; the literacy model went on to produce strong achievement gains and the learning gardens received an innovation award. Perhaps because it was a small-scale change, the initial k/1 immersion expansion, which neglected all seven of Fullan's (2016) factors in initiating change, resulted in no negative response from the English-only teachers. However, the months-long process that fully engaged immersion teachers as partners and resulted in adding a 2/3 immersion class alarmed several long-time teachers who spoke only English. Perhaps the reason for their discontent was due to Cummins' (1995) prediction that those in the dominant culture will resist changes that result in their perceived loss of power. While adding one immersion class was not threatening to the English-only teachers, adding the second class was. Fullan's (2016) theoretical framework supports the process of not including all teachers in the school, noting "it is often better to increase participation during initial implementation than it is to load up involvement prior to implementation" (p. 67). However, as Reeves' (2009) noted, it is critical to bring union leadership on board early in the change process. While union leaders in this district were known for fostering rancorous leadership-union relationships and it was often challenging to collaborate on change initiatives, I should have included the union leaders prior to the day of announcing the change.

Partner with Change Agents from Parent, Community, and Advocacy Groups

Pressure from families to expand our Spanish language immersion programs helped me keep our focus on the expansion. In addition, when families overwhelmingly

endorsed our language programs when responding to the survey question, "What is so Eagle Creek-like that without it, we are no longer Eagle Creek," their advocacy helped me push forward. However, once I started getting pushback from English-only teachers, I shouldered the burden of the criticism alone. I should have shared with the Latino Parent Advocacy Group the pushback I was getting in order to have their public support. In addition, I should have engaged our traditional parent advocacy leaders such as the PTA president.

Provide Funding Support for Change

Fullan (2016) also recommends increasing funding for change initiatives. I used our discretionary funds to provide substitutes during meeting times so teachers were refreshed and energized. This signaled to teachers the importance of our discussions and also ensured full attention to the process. Because of our collective bargaining agreement, it was also cheaper to hire a half-day substitute than pay hourly rates for each teacher to work beyond the contract day. However, just as the initial creation of the immersion program was heavily funded by a federal grant, had I secured funds to expand the program, I believe the funding would have added credibility to the expansion, as well as much-needed resources. While our ESL administrator ensured us that an expanded program would result in her releasing additional EL funds to us, a large, federal grant would have carried more weight.

Additional Lessons When Initiating Change

This expansion effort also confirms the research of others: 1) context matters; 2) a social justice orientation or moral imperative must be the cornerstone of change efforts; 3) communication must be transparent and regular, and 4) sustaining the spirit of those leading through conflict is important.

Contextual challenges of each unique school and each school district make it hard to know definitively which decisions will successfully support children and how each community will react to change initiatives (Bryk, et al., 2015; Fullan, 2016). In our context, I should have anticipated and prepared for the conflict created by the strong union leadership and English-only teachers in the building. Because our families and teachers were known for their social justice orientation, I should have led more conversations among families and teachers about what that commitment would look like as we discussed expanding our immersion program. And as the leader, I should have focused on my moral purpose as a social justice leader (Fullan, 2003, 2016; Hagstrom, 2004; Palmer, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1996; and Theoharis, 2007). The compromise model I suggested put the needs of the English-only teachers ahead of the needs of our recent immigrant students, a leadership error I regret. I should have advocated for a full second strand for the immersion classroom, opening up 180 additional spots instead of 90. I should have stayed true to my moral imperative to ensure Latino children and recent

immigrants had access to their home language and to my personal vision of leadership for equity.

The next lesson I learned was regarding communication. While Fullan's (2016) framework does not include discussions about communication at the initiation stage, others note its importance, particularly regarding transparency (Reeves, 2009). I should have noted in each meeting where we were in the process and where we were going; what we would say to those not in the room when we leave the room; what we would say if we got pushback when we shared our decisions. Our immersion teachers unanimously agreed on the expansion proposal, yet I should have picked up on one prescient statement made by an immersion teacher when we reached unanimous agreement on expansion: "But I sure don't envy you having to share this with the [monolingual English-speaking, union leader] teachers." Thus began another leadership mistake on my part. I should have asked how they would support this proposal if or when the proposal received criticism from teachers, the teachers' union, families, or more senior district administrators. I did not ask that key question. Instead, I focused on developing the staffing and programming communication plan to the broader community. And based on our context, I should have realized that increasing transparency would be key. I should have communicated that, while the expansion would potentially impact English-only teachers, we have to put the learning needs of our Spanish-speaking immigrants over the desires of the teachers. I also should have publicly noted that conflict is a part of the change process (Reeves, 2009) and that while uncomfortable, our students were counting on us to be in a state of learning and changing (Fullan, 2016).

Finally, a lesson I learned is that, as a leader, I needed to prepare for and embrace the discomfort of conflict. While I had led several complex change processes in this school and in other schools and districts, nothing prepared me for this conflict. It is never good for teachers to be fighting among themselves; it distracts them from the real work of teaching our children. It distracted me as well, as I worked to keep our focus on our mission and creating a positive school climate for our children and families. Ironically, the compromise expansion produced the same or greater conflict than if we had added a full additional strand of immersion. If I had it to do over again, I would boldly proclaim that if we were to be true to our mission of teaching all our children, using the best research and developing the most effective teachers, then our entire school should become an immersion school. I would have invited constituents from all aspects of our school community into the process of converting to a 90/10 Spanish-immersion school: families who spoke English only and those who also spoke Spanish; union leaders; professors of immersion education; the faith-based community; immigration-rights organizations; teachers from the English-only and the Spanish immersion programs; and district administrators. I would have worked more purposefully to develop teacher leaders to co-lead the change process. I would

have shared the stories of the moms who were devastated when they heard, through an interpreter, that our school system set up unintentional barriers to prevent them from enrolling their children in our programs, hoping to change minds by changing hearts. I would have shared my personal commitment to ensuring children spoke their heritage language and the moral purpose behind my drive to expand our program. I would have publicly shared our process and current thinking every step of the way. I would have embraced the conflict publicly. I would have embraced with even more care the veteran teachers who fought hard to maintain the status quo due to fear they might lose their livelihood.

Noguera (2008) insists, and I agree, that schools should harness the optimism and tenacity of recent immigrants and create conditions for their success in school and beyond. The recent response to Syrian immigrants in which the European soccer community embraced new immigrants (Montague, 2015) provides a model for leaders who also have the opportunity to embrace, rather than summarily reject, recent immigrants. The leadership lessons in this study are important in the US, as well as in Europe and other communities experiencing a change in immigration patterns. Leaders who embrace recent immigrants and embark on expanding immersion education will need support as they lead the change process. They will need to understand the complexity of leadership for change, leadership for equity, and how to sustain the spirit of those leading transformational change efforts. Immersion education is unequivocally supported by research as the best schooling model for children who do not speak the dominant language in the community. Immersion education is also what is best for our children who speak the dominant language. Expanding immersion programs will allow all our children to thrive as productive, *bilingual* contributors to life in the US as well as in other communities. What we need is leaders who have the vision, the skill, and the moral courage to ensure that immersion programs expand to meet the needs of all school children, including recent immigrants.

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