Successful Bilingual Education Programs: Development and the Dissemination of Criteria to Identify Promising and Exemplary Practices in Bilingual Education at the National Level

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Abstract

In 1999, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) to identify 10 promising and/or exemplary bilingual education programs in schools across the nation as determined by participating limited English proficient (LEP) students' academic achievement. Using these programs, IDRA identified 25 common characteristics and criteria that are contributing to the high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs, thus helping others identify successful programs or raise the bar with their own bilingual education programs.

Introduction

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

In 1999, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), was asked to conduct a research study that would yield common characteristics found in 10 promising and/or exemplary bilingual education programs in schools across the nation as determined by participating LEP students' academic achievement.

The purpose of this study was not to examine whether bilingual education works—there are years of rigorous research that proves bilingual education does work when implemented with integrity. Instead, the purpose of this research study was to identify those characteristics that contribute to the high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs.

Significance

It is the law of this land that all students, including the 3.5 million estimated LEP students, be educated. The intent of the 1968 Bilingual Education Act was to help states and school districts develop and implement quality education programs for LEP students—programs and approaches that would accelerate their academic achievement and performance and hold all students to high standards.

In fact, the 1968 BEA states that LEP students will be educated to:

> meet the same rigorous standards for academic performance expected of all children and youth, including meeting challenging state content standards and challenging state student performance standards in academic areas by (a) developing systemic improvement and reform of educational programs serving limited English proficient students through the development and implementation of exemplary bilingual education programs and special alternative instruction programs; (b) developing bilingual skills and multicultural understanding; (c) developing the English of such children and youth and, to the extent possible, the native language skills of such children and youth; (d) providing similar assistance to Native Americans with certain modifications relative to the unique status of Native American languages under federal law; (e) developing data collection and dissemination, research, materials development, and technical assistance which is focused on school improvement for limited-English-proficient students; and (f) developing programs which strengthen and improve the professional training of educational personnel who work with limited-English-proficient students.

Quality bilingual education programs remain the best way for LEP students to learn English and to succeed academically. Some of these excellent programs have been featured in other studies by Texas Education Agency (2000) and The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (2001). While there are many such programs across this country, time and resources dictated that IDRA identify only 10 and use their lessons learned as a guide for developing criteria that others can use to assess their own programs.

Methods

Research Questions

IDRA had one primary research question: What contributed to the success of a bilingual education classroom as evidenced by LEP student academic achievement? "Success" was operationally defined as evidence of academic achievement (compared to district and/or state standards) for LEP students in bilingual education programs. Bilingual education program models varied from transitional to late exit to dual language. Student outcome indicators included oral and written language proficiency and content area mastery in English and the native language. Prior to site visits, schools submitted for review their most recent achievement data (1997–98) disaggregated by LEP and non-LEP status. Longitudinal data (three years or more), if available, were also provided. Assessment measures, as expected, varied throughout the country. Additional research questions that guided the IDRA study included the following:

School outcome indicators

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

In addition to these questions, qualitative and contextual research questions for other indicators emerging from a review of the research guided our instrument development and site visits. These indicators and questions, like the preceding ones, were based on a strong theoretical framework that previous research has found to be conducive to successful programs for LEP students. In the review of the literature the following indicators emerged as significant to effective bilingual programs.

Student outcome indicators

1. What are the student outcomes for oral and written language proficiency (by LEP and non-LEP percentages)? (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 1999)
2. What are the student outcomes for content area mastery in English and the native language (by LEP and non-LEP percentages)? (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 1999)

School-level indicators

1. Leadership: How evident is leadership at the school level, and what are the characteristics? (Carter & Chatfield, 1986; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990)
2. Vision and Goals: How evident are the vision and goals at the school level, and what are the characteristics? (Villarreal & Solís, 1998).

3. School Climate: What are the characteristics of the school's climate? (Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1997; Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986)
4. Linkages: What links exist between central office and school level staff, and how are they characterized? (McLeod, 1996)
5. School Organization and Accountability: How is the school organized? (Villarreal & Solís, 1998; McLeod, 1996)
6. Professional Development: What are the demographic characteristics of professional staff, and what opportunities for professional development are provided? (Milk, Mercado, & Sapiens, 1992; Villarreal, 1999)
7. Parent Involvement: What is the type, level, and quality of parent involvement in the school and the bilingual education program? (McLeod, 1996; Robledo Montecel, Gallagher, Montemayor, Villarreal, Adame-Reyna, & Supik, 1993)
8. Staff Accountability and Student Assessment: How does staff hold themselves accountable for student success, and how are students assessed? (Berman, McLaughlin, McLeod, Minicucci, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Valdez-Pierce & O'Malley, 1992)
9. Staff Selection and Recognition: How are the staff selected and recognized? (Maroney, 1998)
10. What is the type, level, and quality of community involvement in the school and the bilingual education program (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992)?

Classroom level: Programmatic and instructional practices

1. Program Model: What are the characteristics of the bilingual education program model? (Lucas & Katz, 1994; Villarreal, 1999)
2. Classroom Climate: What are the characteristics of the classroom climate? (Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994)
3. Curriculum and Instruction: What are the characteristics of the program's curriculum and instruction? (McLoed, 1996; Wong Fillmore, 1985)
4. Teacher Expectations: What are the teacher expectations regarding student success? (Lucas et al., 1990; Berman et al., 1995)
5. Program Articulation: How is the program articulated across grade levels? (McLoed, 1996; Valdez-Pierce & O'Malley, 1992)

These guiding research questions and their extensive research base rigorously shaped our classroom observations, interviews and surveys.

Selection of 10 Bilingual Education Programs

IDRA used its extensive national network of contacts (created after 26 years of cutting-edge work and advocacy in bilingual education) to identify successful bilingual education programs, based on student and school outcomes. Several state education directors, OBEMLA staff, comprehensive

regional assistance center staff, bilingual education directors at the state and local levels, and others, provided the names of 20 programs that met the criteria.

In addition to these factors, IDRA ensured that programs selected for on-site visits reflected the diversity of U.S. schools and included elementary and secondary schools, different language groups, LEP concentrations, and Title I targeted assistance and schoolwide programs as well as Title VII grantees (current and former). The 11 schools with promising or exemplary practices in bilingual education were located in Texas, Oregon, Illinois, Utah, Florida, Massachusetts, California, New York, and Washington, DC.

Instrumentation and Protocols

IDRA's instrumentation reflected the use both of quantitative and qualitative methods. In addition to the review of quantitative student and school outcome data, school demographic data, surveys of principals, teachers and administrators, and structured formal classroom observations were other sources of quantitative data. Qualitative data included structured interviews with the school principals and the administrators and focus group questions for teachers, parents, and students (whenever possible). Additional qualitative data were elicited from school profiles. A framework was provided for describing each site visit, thus providing a context and background for the visit. All of these data were gathered, analyzed, and synthesized. Results were then triangulated to provide a rich and accurate picture of each program. Patterns and trends across programs were also identified.

School Demographics

The school demographics reflect, by design, a diverse landscape. Eight elementary schools, two high schools, and one middle school participated in this research study. The student enrollment for the 10 schools ranged from 219 to 1,848 students. By geographic location, there were seven urban schools, three rural schools, and one reservation school. There was also diversity in ethnic representation: Hispanic students ranged from 40% to 98% of students enrolled; Asian students made up 2% to 41% of the schools; Russian students ranged from 12% to 32% of the schools; and Native Americans comprised 3% to 98% of the schools.

Five of the 10 schools implemented dual language or two-way bilingual programs.The languages used for content area subjects included Spanish, English, Russian, and Navajo. All of the schools were committed to maintaining the students' primary language and culture while learning English. This commitment was also evident in the school administration and staff, the majority of whom were proficient in two languages. Most of the office staff were also bilingual, allowing for open communication between the school personnel and the students and families.

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

School Profiles

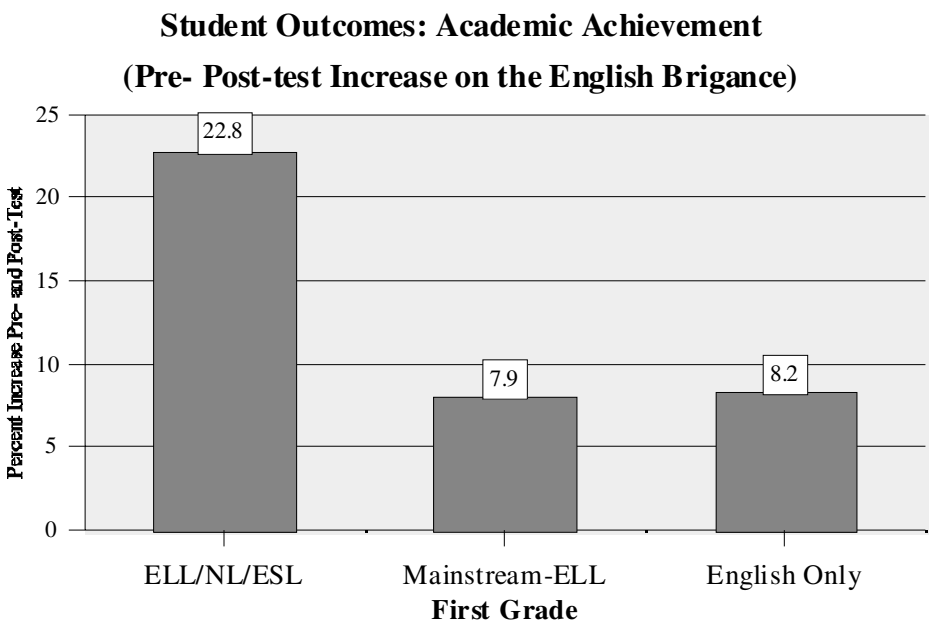
The 10 schools participating in this study had similar profiles, including:

1. High poverty: Ten schools had at least half of their students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch program, a poverty indicator.
2. High average attendance: All of the schools had high (86% to 98%) attendance.
3. High percentage of their students participating in the bilingual education programs: Most of the schools had at least a third of their enrolled students being served by bilingual education programs—one school served all (100%) of their 219 enrolled students.
4. Low retention rate: Most of the schools had low retention rates—four schools retained 1% or less.
5. Low annual dropout rate: Nine of the 10 schools had a 0% annual dropout rate.
6. Low percentage of migrant students: More than half of the schools did not serve migrant students. Of the five that did, three served less than 10%. However, in one school, two out of five students were migrant.
7. LEP student representation in gifted and talented programs: Most of the schools with gifted and talented (GT) or advanced placement (AP) programs had LEP students fully participating.
8. Low LEP student representation in special education program: Most of the schools had few LEP students in their special education programs.

All of the 10 selected sites reflected significant progress (statistically and educationally) for the students served by their bilingual education programs during the program year (1997–98). While, in some cases, there was a notable gap in the achievement of students served by the program and the regular students, especially when they were compared to the state's standards, the majority of students reflected a narrowing of the achievement gap over time. In fact, in many cases, the improvement rates for the students served in the program sites exceeded the rates of improvement for the comparison groups included in the reports. In a few instances, the growth rates were extraordinary, reflecting accelerated improvement rates over relatively short time frames.

In one school year, one school showed a pre- and post-test improvement for their students in the bilingual education program that exceeded all expected gains:

Figure 1



Criteria to Identify Promising and Exemplary Practices in Bilingual Education

The research yielded 25 criteria, or indicators of success, that may be used by researchers and practitioners to identify promising or exemplary practices in bilingual education. The first 5 items are clustered in Table 1 as "school outcome indicators."

Table 1

School Indicator	Outcome Standard
Retention rate	Ninety-eight percent or more of all students, including LEP students, are not retained in grade; retention is only allowed for extenuating circumstances.
Dropout rate	Ninety-five percent or more (longitudinal rate) of all students, including LEP students, graduate with a high school diploma. The outcome standard success at an elementary school is: Ninety-eight percent or more of all students complete the elementary curriculum.
Enrollment in gifted and talented and in advanced placement programs	LEP students, as compared to non-LEP students, are not under-represented in gifted and talented and in advanced placement programs.
Enrollment in special education or remedial programs	LEP students, as compared to non-LEP students, are not over-represented in special education or remedial programs.
Test exemption rates	No students, other than special education students exempted by their Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committees, are exempted from tests.
Program exiting standard	Students in bilingual education programs are not exited before the third grade but are exited only upon demonstrating full English proficiency and being on grade level in all content areas.

Table 2 clusters the student outcome indicators.

Table 2

Student Outcome Indicator	Outcome Standard
Oral language proficiency	Students participating in bilingual education programs since kindergarten are fully proficient in speaking English and their native language (on level) by the fifth grade; secondary level students fully proficient in their native language in ESL programs are fully proficient in speaking English after three years in the program. This is not to be considered an exit criteria.
Written language proficiency	Students participating in bilingual education programs since kindergarten are fully proficient in reading and writing English and in their native language (on level) by the fifth grade; secondary level students fully proficient in their native language in ESL programs are fully proficient in reading and writing English after three years in the program. This is not to be considered an exit criteria.
Content area mastery in English	LEP students' performance in content areas (language arts, mathematics, science, social studies) meet and exceed the state and/or district standards.
Content area mastery in native language	LEP students' performance in content areas (language arts, mathematics, science, social studies) meet and exceed the state and/or district standards.

The remaining 15 criteria are clustered in the categories of school level indicators for leadership and for support and classroom level indicators. Each is presented here with some discussion from the study's surveys and onsite observations.

At the School Level: Leadership

Leadership

The indicator for success is: Program leaders are well informed of the rationale for bilingual education and share an active commitment to bilingualism. They pro-actively involve teachers, the community, and private sector in the design and development of the bilingual program and are open to innovation.

IDRA's on-site observations showed that all of the schools had strong and visible leadership. While the principals varied in their leadership styles, all had some common traits:

1. Total and unwavering commitment to their students' achievement and to an excellent bilingual education program that was fully integrated into the school;
2. Open and frequent communication between the principal, faculty, and staff;
3. Pro-active involvement of faculty, staff, and the community in the bilingual program;
4. Professionalism, skills, and knowledge;
5. Well informed on the rationale for bilingual education;
6. Valuing of all individuals—students, faculty, and staff;
7. An ability to inspire, motivate, and validate;
8. Open to innovation and change;
9. Access provided to current research and best practices;
10. An ability to identify, secure, and mobilize resources; and
11. Support for faculty and staff.

Surveys (N = 36) from the 10 schools showed that teachers and administrators believed that the schools' administration supported teacher autonomy. Also important was the involvement of ESL and bilingual education teachers in the schools' decision-making process as well as their autonomy in the decisions they made in their classrooms.

Vision and goals

The indicator for success is: The school has published and disseminated statements of expectations to the school community that create a vision and set of goals that define the achievement levels of all students, including LEP students. Staff, parents, and students, including language-minority parents and students, can state the purpose of the school in their own words.

One school is described by its' principal as a school of excellence: "Our purpose is to empower our students through a strong instructional program in which it will enable us to prepare them to meet the demands of the 21st century." This school's curricular and instructional practices are designed so that students maintain their culture while learning English. All of the school's resources are dedicated to supporting them in this goal.

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

School climate

The indicator for success is: The school climate is safe and orderly. A safe and orderly climate is a shared goal that is articulated by educators,

students, and community members as a whole. Everyone feels responsible for maintaining a safe and orderly school climate for all students.

While 10 school locations varied greatly—from inner city urban to rural and isolated—the intrinsic character and climate of the schools shared some common traits:

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

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

Linkages

The indicator for success is: Clearly articulated roles and responsibilities, dynamic two-way communication, and focused and sustained supports between central office and school level staff provide strong leadership, credibility, and respect for the bilingual program.

For the 10 schools, the central office staff provided strong leadership and respect for the bilingual program. There were clearly articulated roles and responsibilities among central office staff as well as frequent and open communication between central office and school staff. All of the schools reported strong support from someone in central office for their program and their school.

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

Teachers and administrators reported a high degree of collaborative work between faculty and staff. An IDRA observer stated:

> This school's high expectations of excellence for all learners includes teachers and staff, as well as students. The principals, teachers, aides and staff work collaboratively, through continuously planning and re-evaluating the school's program and each student's progress to ensure that no student is left behind.

School organization and accountability

The indicator for success is: The bilingual program is an integral part of the school's academic plan and is widely respected by the school's administration. There is strong accountability for the success of all students, including LEP students.

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

At one school, all of the teachers were expected to speak Spanish fluently. The IDRA observer reported that "proud to be bilingual" should be the key phrase to describe this school. Everyone there, from the teachers to the parents, recognize that bilingualism is a valuable asset. They are very proud of their stance on bilingual education, despite the state's controversial Proposition 227. The observer added, "The teachers have courageously defended good teaching practices despite opposition from the state, many community members, and even their own teacher union."

At the School Level: Support

Professional development

The indicator for success is: Fully credentialed bilingual and ESL teachers are continuously acquiring new knowledge regarding best practices in bilingual education and ESL and other best practices in curriculum and instruction and receive appropriate training in the students' native language. All teachers in the school regularly receive information about bilingual education, ESL strategies, and students' cultural and linguistic characteristics that serve as assets to their academic success.

Bilingual teachers were fully credentialed and continuously acquiring new knowledge regarding best practices in bilingual education. All teachers in the schools received information about bilingual education. Teachers took a pro-active interest in keeping up on best practices and sharing their lessons learned with others. One non-bilingual education teacher, who did not speak Spanish, began taking evening classes to learn Spanish on his own time and at his own cost, so that he could communicate with Spanish-speaking students. Ultimately, teachers were committed to learning and sharing for the sake of their students. Professional development was perceived as a means to that end.

Teachers and administrators reported substantive, appropriate, and inclusive professional development with all teachers providing input into professional development. An IDRA observer commented:

> Most teachers have been in this school for a number of years. Rather than recruit new teachers, the current staff is prepared through professional development and certification initiatives of the district.

> There are three designated ESL teachers and one designated bilingual teacher. There is also a plan in place to have Heritage Language (HL) teachers bilingually endorsed.

Another reported:

> Both the district and the Title VII project have developed an action plan for teacher training and certification. Priorities for this training include Heritage Language literacy, bilingual endorsements for all HL teachers, and teacher certification for all aides with HL skills. The Title VII program is involved in a cooperative effort with the Navajo language program at a nearby college to deliver a comprehensive professional development package for the Navajo language, literacy and culture teachers. Costs are paid by the project and the district. Additionally, the campus houses distance-learning facilities and a remote facility for a state university, where courses and other educational activities are provided for teachers and other professionals. Inside the school, the principal and teachers learn from each other through a program that requires them to do demonstration teaching before their colleagues. The school also has its bilingual program expectations clearly spelled out in the language development plan.

Parent involvement

The indicator for success is: All parents, including parents of students in bilingual and ESL programs, know the rationale and the critical components of bilingual and ESL programs and are strong advocates of the programs.

Parents were strong advocates of the bilingual programs and were welcome in their children's schools, not as "helpers" but as partners engaged in meaningful activities within the school structure. Parents' experiences were validated and honored in the classrooms, irrespective of their social or economic backgrounds. Some businesses facilitated parent involvement, with flextime for work so that parents could participate in school activities during the day. Parents felt they belonged at their children's school and were very positive about the administration, faculty, and staff, saying they believed them to be truly concerned for and committed to their children's success.

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

Staff accountability and student assessment

The indicator for success is: Staff hold themselves accountable for the academic success of all students, including LEP students. The school uses appropriate multiple assessment measures to describe academic success for all students, including LEP students. Rigorous academic standards apply to

all students, including LEP students. Assessment measures include measures in the students' native languages. All measures are aligned with the approved curriculum and related standards.

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

An IDRA observer reported about one school:

> All teachers and staff are involved in action research. This shows a commitment to the premise that student learning is the job of everyone at the school and keeps each member of the teaching and support staff accountable to the school's goals. Everyone looks to each other for assistance in areas where improvement is needed. Each grade has guidelines based on state criteria, and the school has developed its own benchmarks that align with the state's. Standardized testing, state tests, and open-ended assessments are used to measure compliance. Data is shared at staff meetings and specific sessions are scheduled for data analysis. There is ongoing assessment and intervention to assure that all students reach end-of-year benchmarks. Yearly plans for each grade level are built on those results and continuously updated, and checklists and quarterly assessments are shared with parents. Data analysis is also presented at staff meetings and district planning meetings.

Staff selection and recognition

The indicator for success is: Staff selection and development includes screening to ensure full written and oral proficiency in both languages and training for teachers to adjust the program to ensure that all teachers are able to serve LEP students. Teachers feel strongly supported and free to innovate. Teachers are frequently recognized for their successes.

Staff were selected based on their academic background, experience in bilingual education, and language proficiency. They were also selected for their enthusiasm, commitment and openness to change, and innovation. Teachers were strongly supported, often recognized for their students' successes, and were part of a team that was characterized as loyal and committed. Many of the staff stayed in their schools. One group followed their principal from one school to another, implementing a successful program

in both. Teachers and administrators reported positive reinforcement of their students' academic progress.

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

Another stated: "Teachers are all very well prepared with their lessons. All teachers are certified to teach LEP students in order to teach in the school and all are multilingual. Teachers seek out professional development, with some being provided by the district and school."

Community involvement

The indicator for success is: Community members know the rationale and the critical components of bilingual and ESL programs and are strong advocates of the program.

The communities were well aware of the bilingual education programs and were strong advocates of the programs. Community members formed strong linkages with the schools, sharing staff, and building resources and expertise. One notable exception was the California school, which was struggling to survive in the context of Proposition 227. There, the community was divided, and the school isolated, left to survive despite the political context. These dynamics appeared to have resulted in a united stand among the administration, faculty, and staff and have mobilized many to actively fight for their students' rights to an excellent and equitable education.

An IDRA observer said:

> This high school is within the Navajo Reservation. Although it is on the reservation, it is a public junior and senior high school serving students from the surrounding communities. The school opened in 1983, nine years after a community group organized to assist the school board in planning the school. Before this, students either attended boarding schools, lived with friends and family in other communities to attend school, or rode the bus to a high school, approximately 80 miles from the area. Having a school in the community finally allowed Navajo children to attend school and participate in school activities and still be home with their families in the evenings. It also permitted parents to become involved in their children's education.

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

At the Classroom Level: Programmatic and Instructional Practices

Program model

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

All of the program models—transitional, late exit, dual language—were grounded in sound theory and best practices associated with an enriched, not remedial, instructional model and were consistent with the characteristics of the LEP student population. Administrators and teachers believe in the program and consistently articulated its viability and success.

An IDRA observer reported about one school:

> The design of the bilingual program specifies the amount of time devoted to each of the three components: an ESL component called English language development, instruction in the native language, and sheltered English techniques. Initial reading instruction is provided in the native language, with English literacy usually introduced in the third grade. The content areas are provided initially in the native language with a carefully planned introduction into each grade of specified subjects using sheltered English techniques. From the beginning of the program at the kindergarten level, students spend a portion of each day with English speakers. Russian and Spanish speakers are also grouped together for English language development. The staff reported that this accelerates English acquisition because both kinds of students were forced to use English to communicate with each other. Students remain in the program through at least the fifth grade.

Classroom climate

The indicator for success is: The classroom environment communicates high expectations for all students, including LEP students. Teachers seek ways to value cultural and linguistic differences and fully integrate them into the curriculum.

The classrooms strongly reflected the school climate—different styles but common intrinsic characteristics, such as high expectations for all students, recognition and honoring of cultural and linguistic differences, students as active participants in their own education, parents and community members actively involved in the classrooms through tutoring, sharing experiences, reading, planning activities, etc., and heterogeneous grouping.

Curriculum and instruction

The indicator for success is: The curriculum reflects and values the students' culture. The curriculum adheres to high standards. Instruction is meaningful, technologically appropriate, academically challenging, and linguistically and culturally relevant. It is innovative and uses a variety of techniques that responds to different learning styles.

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

IDRA observers noted that all the instruction was uniformly of high quality and reflected best practices recommended for mainstream and second language-learners. Students often worked in cooperative, heterogeneous groups or with partners. Student-to-student and teacher-to-student interactions were frequent, meaningful, and focused on instructional tasks. Activities were hands-on, and teachers used a large variety of materials: bilingual books of many genres and types as well as visual, audiovisual, and art materials. Many students were observed receiving individual or small group assistance from additional teachers, bilingual educational assistants, and parents. This extra help was provided inside their classrooms or in quiet, cozy corners in the halls outside.

Writing assignments tended to reflect the cultural background of the students and always began with a class-wide discussion of the topic. Sometimes, the teacher assigned students to write a group story. For example, one class was prompted, "*Te he premiado $2,500. ¿Como vas a compartir este dinero?* [You have been awarded $2,500. How are you going to divide up this money?]." One student began discussing how his uncle had won some money, and that if this had happened to the student, he would give the money to certain groups of people. Other students joined in the discussion, and after 10 to 15 minutes, the teacher asked them to come to a consensus. The students decided that they would help out their family, their church, and the poor children of Mexico. The teacher then proceeded to model the writing process, and as a whole the class wrote a group story.

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

Teacher expectations

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

Teachers expected all students to succeed and were willing to do whatever it took to reach this goal. They valued diversity and drew on its strengths, creating an environment in the classroom and the school that was accepting, valuing, and inclusive. Teachers and administrators reported a high commitment to their students' educational success and cited this as a critical factor in academic achievement.

An IDRA observer reported:

> This high school is clearly a multicultural school that honors all of the students' cultures and languages. There is an impressive array of content area classes available in most of the students' languages. All teachers are truly committed to preparing the students for high performance. This school has established a culture similar to a college preparatory school. Students are very aware that as they learn English, they need to follow certain academic paths that will lead them to college. The school is innovative in the way it is able to deal with a multitude of languages and cultures and preparing students for transition into a new country and a new language. This school values differences and acknowledges potential in every student. There is no such thing as a 'problem student.'

Program articulation

The indicator for success is: There is strong evidence of a common program of instruction that is properly scoped, sequenced, and articulated across grade levels and has been aligned with developmentally appropriate practices and student language proficiency levels in English and the students' first language.

There were common programs of instruction across grade levels that had been aligned with developmentally appropriate practices and student language proficiency levels in English and the students' native language. This was accomplished in many schools through coordination and communication and through strong linkages across all levels (grades, principal, and faculty, school and central office).

An IDRA observer commented:

> Teachers learn from each other through their weekly team planning and team teaching in inclusion models. Teaming develops the curriculum for teaching English-learning students important academic skills. As an example, regular teachers work closely with the ESL teacher to pick out content area vocabulary, which is then studied in classrooms. The vocabulary is presented in both English and Spanish, and a concerted effort is made in all subjects to use the vocabulary words. Such support in planning and instruction ensures English-learners' skill and knowledge development.

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

Conclusion

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

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

In the final analysis, student academic achievement is the ultimate criterion that determines the effectiveness of a program model. Using this criterion as a starting point, this research study has found specific characteristics that contribute to student success. These 25 indicators of success provide outcome standards that researchers and practitioners can use to assess the effectiveness of bilingual education programs, highlighting areas that need improvement as well as areas that meet or exceed the established standard.

These indicators emerged from 10 bilingual education programs with diverse educational landscapes—from a reservation school in Utah to an urban school in Washington, DC, with students from Hispanic, Russian, Native American, Asian, and other ethnic backgrounds, almost all in high poverty schools. Among such diversity, it was possible to find commonalities across sites which, in turn, yielded indicators of success. All of these programs were committed to maintaining the students' primary language and culture while learning English. All celebrated and valued diversity, viewing it as an asset rather than a challenge or limitation. And yet, while most of the schools were also classified as high poverty, family income was never used as an excuse for low expectations or low student achievement.

It is these characteristics common to promising or exemplary bilingual education programs that can serve to guide teachers and administrators in their ongoing assessment and improvement of bilingual education programs.

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