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Building on the Strengths of English Learners via a Dual Language Immersion Program

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Introduction

Dual language immersion (DLI) programs integrate English language learners (ELLs) who speak the same first language and native English speakers (NESs) in the same classroom for the aim of bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism. Second language learning begins early, usually in kindergarten, and ideally continues through grade twelve. Models include 90:10, 80:20, and 50:50 with ratios identifying the percentage of instructional time spent in each language. For example, in a 90:10 model, instruction in kindergarten and usually first grade is 90 percent in the partner language and 10 percent in English. Instruction in the partner language decreases incrementally over the elementary grades while instruction in English increases until a ratio of 50:50 is reached, normally by fourth or fifth grade.

Effective long-term DLI programs result in high academic achievement and high levels of language proficiency for both language groups (Lindholm-Leary, 2008, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). Lindholm-Leary's (2008) research focused on Latino students attending low-income schools and compared students participating in DLI programs with those participating in English-

only programs. The researcher found that by the later elementary grades (usually fifth grade), the ELLs scored similar to or significantly higher than those students in the English-only programs on the English Language Arts portion of the California State Test (CST) (Lindholm-Leary, 2008). Thomas and Collier's (2002) longitudinal research focused on comparing different types of programs designed for ELLs. Findings showed that ELLs achieve at the highest levels when schooled in DLI programs, reaching the 50th percentile in both English and Spanish in all subject areas by late elementary grades. The most exciting advantage for students who are schooled in long-term DLI programs is that they achieve high levels of proficiency in two languages (Lindholm-Leary, 2008, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to formatively evaluate a DLI program (Spanish and English) currently in its fifth year of implementation at an elementary school in rural Oregon. The authors of this paper include a university professor and a DLI teacher in the program. The authors wish to share some benefits and challenges of operating a DLI program with few resources based on data collected from the evaluation. The university professor led the evaluation; the DLI teacher assisted in reviewing analyses and interpretations.

Three research questions were developed to guide the evaluation: (a) What kinds of progress have students in both language groups made in their oral, reading, and written proficiency in each language? (b) What are teachers' perceptions

of the effects and benefits of the program? (c) What instructional practices are used in the program? The evaluation began in April 2007 and results have been used to discover the overall quality of program implementation, to improve the program, and to inform administrators, parents, staff, and community about its effectiveness. The evaluation will continue over several years to document longitudinal student achievement data.

History of the DLI program

The number of ELLs in Oregon schools has substantially increased since the early 1990's. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) (2008-2009a) reported a 106.9 percent increase of Latino students enrolled in the state's public schools between 1998-1999 and 2008-2009. Spanish is the most common language other than English represented in Oregon's public schools, representing 9.2 percent of all students (ODE, 2008-2009a). In Orchard, a rural town situated in an agricultural area south of Portland, the number of ELLs grew 137 percent between 1995 and 2000 (ODE, 2008-2009a).

By 2003, Vista Elementary School in the town of Orchard had an enrollment of 175 ELLs who were native Spanish speakers (NSSs). Vista soon became a Title I school with an increase in students receiving free and reduced lunch. Faculty and staff were concerned about the education of their new population and decided to conduct a needs assessment that led to the conclusion to begin a DLI program. A steering committee began planning for implementation of the DLI program in 2004. The committee spent a year reading literature on DLI programs as well as visiting DLI programs around the state to decide the best program model to adopt.

Description of the program

The steering committee decided to adopt an 80:20 DLI program model. Although the committee desired to adopt a 90:10 model, funding was only available for half-day kindergarten, so the total number of minutes available for instruction would not allow 90 percent of instruction in Spanish. In an 80:20 DLI model, students in both kindergarten and first grade spend 80 percent of their academic day in Spanish. In second grade, students are instructed in Spanish during 70 percent of the day; in third grade, 60 percent of the day was taught in Spanish. At the fourth grade level, the students are instructed in Spanish for 50 percent of the day. Formal English language arts instruction for all students begins in fourth grade; however, ELLs receive English language development 30 minutes per day at each grade level.

Vista is a public neighborhood school, so parents have program choice when registering their children for kindergarten. The DLI program at Vista is a strand within the school. Enrollment in the DLI program is limited, so staff holds a lottery for families around and outside the district who would like their children to be schooled in the DLI program. Staff tries to balance the number of NSSs and NESs because it is important for students to have strong language models when developing a second language. Currently the program has two DLI classrooms of 25 students at each grade level, kindergarten through fourth. The faculty envision the DLI program to be a K-12 option. Currently, a steering committee is collaborating with a middle school to prepare for extending the DLI program to this level in two years.

The Evaluator's Toolkit for Evaluating Dual Language Immersion Programs (Lindholm-Leary & Hargett, 2006) was

employed as a resource (henceforth called “the toolkit”). The toolkit is designed to help schools create high-quality DLI programs and gives clear step-by-step suggestions and examples for developing evaluation questions, writing goals and objectives, choosing data collection instruments, setting up a data management system, analyzing data, and presenting evaluation findings to a particular audience. The toolkit is available free of charge on the Center for Applied Linguistics website www.cal.org.

Participants

The nine Vista DLI teachers (K-fourth grade), principal, and two ESL teachers participated in the study. All of the teachers and the principal are proficient in both English and Spanish. The principal and three teachers are Latino; the other participants are European American. All teachers have their ESL endorsement. Five teachers have a Master’s degree and two are close to completing it. All teachers have received training in the Guided Language Acquisition Design (Project G.L.A.D., 2009) model and/or Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2007) teaching framework. Both GLAD and SIOP feature research-based instructional techniques and assessment strategies for giving ELLs access to the core curriculum. The ESL teachers work collaboratively with DLI teachers to provide support for reading interventions with struggling learners.

Data collection

Results from The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA, 2006) and the Evaluación del Desarrollo de la Lectura 2 (EDL) (2007) were analyzed to determine students’ progress in reading proficiency in each language. These assessments measure reading fluency and comprehension in English and Spanish, respectively.

The DLI teachers administered the assessments individually with their students. First, the student read orally while the administrator timed the reading and marked miscues. Then, the student read the text again silently. The student then retold the story to the administrator. Students received scores on accuracy, fluency, phrasing, and retelling. Scores indicated whether students are reading above grade level, at grade level, below grade level, or far below grade level based on criteria set by the assessment publishers. Both the DRA and EDL are administered three times per year in grades K-3. In order to limit the amount of quantitative data, this study only used results of the end of year administration of both assessments.

The total DRA sample was 45. This sample represents the first group of students who participated in the DLI program, or cohort one, who are currently in fourth grade. Assessment data presented here were from assessments given to this cohort at the end of third grade. Data were disaggregated by first language; the sample size included 14 NSSs and 17 NESs. The total EDL sample was 49 comprised of students from cohort one. Data were disaggregated by first language; the sample size included 28 NSSs and 21 NESs.

In order to look further into students' growth in reading proficiency, results from the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) for the same group of third grade DLI students were analyzed with a sample size of 49. This on-line assessment measured students' annual progress in meeting state standards in reading and math. Scores indicated whether students exceed, meet, nearly meet, or do not meet the standards. Data were sorted by first language and compared DLI students with non-DLI students at Vista.

In order to determine students' growth in oral, reading, and writing proficiency, results from the state-required English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) were analyzed. This assessment measured ELLs' English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in an on-line format. The assessment is administered once per year kindergarten through grade 12. The state-adopted English language proficiency standards are used to place students at beginner, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced levels based on ELPA scores. The sample size was 180 representing the total number of ELLs at Vista.

Participants completed a questionnaire that is included as an appendix in the toolkit (Lindholm-Leary & Hargett, 2006), and took part in seven focus group discussions to indicate their perceptions about the effects and benefits of the DLI program. Participants used Likert scales on the questionnaire to rate themselves on their educational background, their satisfaction with the program, and their beliefs about teaching in a DLI program. Participants had the option of writing comments after each statement on the questionnaire. The university professor led the focus group discussions, creating questions beforehand and allowing questions to emerge depending on the direction the discussions took. Discussions lasted one hour, were digitally recorded, and transcribed on the computer. Participants were given transcriptions to validate information.

The university professor interviewed participants individually and conducted seventeen classroom observations in order to discover additional perceptions about the DLI program and document instructional practices. Interviews lasted 35 minutes, were digitally recorded, and transcribed on the computer.

Observations were spread across the four grade levels and were focused on teachers' instructional practices. In addition, observations were recorded through handwritten field notes that were word-processed and given to each teacher to validate information. In order to preserve anonymity of participants and the location, all proper names are pseudonyms.

Data analysis

Student assessment data were analyzed using Excel spread sheets. Data were disaggregated by language background. Since data yielded from assessment instruments resulted in performance levels, frequency counts were used, that is, the percentage of students who scored at different levels at different points in time, to show how many students in each language group placed at each level each year. Codes were assigned to each performance level to calculate percentages.

The questionnaire was comprised of two sections. The first section contained sixteen statements that required teachers to rate their level of training from one (no training; no knowledge) to five (training; very knowledgeable). The second section contained 31 statements that asked teachers the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement on a one (strongly agree) to four (strongly disagree) scale. Means were calculated for each statement.

Qualitative data (interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observation field notes) were analyzed using coding procedures recommended by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). First, "relevant text" were identified by reading through word-processed observation field notes and transcribed interviews and focus group discussions. Next, "repeating ideas" were sought. Auerbach and Silverstein state, "A repeating idea is an idea expressed in

relevant text by two or more research participants” (p. 54). This requires systematically reading through all relevant text, locating repeating ideas, and categorizing and naming ideas topically based on their essence. A master list of the names of the repeating ideas was created to develop “themes.” “Theoretical constructs” were derived from themes by organizing them into groups that shared similar characteristics. *The Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education* (Howard et al., 2007), herein called the GP (guiding principles), were used as a theoretical framework to clarify and analyze themes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Results

What kinds of progress have students in the different language groups made in their oral, reading, and written proficiency in each language?

Data from the DRA and EDL showed that at the end of second grade eight percent of the NSSs were achieving at or nearly at grade level in English reading and 36 percent were performing at or nearly at grade level at the end of third grade. These NSSs showed progress reading in Spanish with 60 percent at or nearly at grade level at the end of first grade and 96 percent at or nearly at grade level at the end of third grade.

At the end of third grade, data from the OAKS revealed that 41 percent of the third grade NSSs in the DLI program met the English language arts standards while none of the non-DLI NSSs at the school met the standards. In comparison, 68 percent of the state’s Spanish-speaking students met the English language arts standards and 87 percent of the state’s native English speakers met the standards (ODE, 2008-2009).

In analyzing results from the ELPA, we looked at Oregon's Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). One of the AMAOs states that 35 percent of ELLs need to increase their English language proficiency by one level each year. Comparing Vista with the other elementary schools in the school district that operate bilingual programs based on a maintenance model, 46 percent of the students at Vista achieved the state goal, while only 38 percent achieved the goal at two of the other schools and 34 percent at one of the schools. Another AMAO states that after five years of instruction 50 percent of ELLs will attain English proficiency and exit ESL programs. Forty-seven percent of the NSSs at Vista reached English proficiency while the other three schools had 40, 30 and 23 percent of their ELLs reach English proficiency, respectively. Eleven percent of the 198 school districts in Oregon met this target.

What are the teachers' perceptions of the effects and benefits of the program?

One repeating theme that emerged from qualitative data pertaining to the teachers' perceptions of the effects and benefits of the DLI program was that they described the program as an "exciting teaching environment." They defined an exciting teaching environment as having ownership of the program, prioritizing the students, and participating in high levels of collaboration. The teachers explained that it is the combination of these factors that make teaching in a DLI program dynamic for them.

The DLI teachers felt they possess ownership of their program. The teachers explained that having ownership of the program entails creating their own curriculum. Teachers clarified that sometimes administrators want schools in the district to be

consistent and use the same type of curriculum materials. Often, schools adopt basal reading programs that provide teachers with scripted curricula. The teachers claimed that their administration gave them autonomy to make curriculum decisions. For example, they decided not to adopt a basal reading program; instead, they selected reading materials that matched content themes and that allowed them to instruct using a balanced literacy approach. Teachers collaboratively developed content themes, such as "Community," "Heroes," and "Habitats," at each grade level based on content and language standards. The teachers believed that thematic instruction provides a context for academic and language instruction and for developing literacy. Teachers commented that as students moved through the program they built upon previous concepts and language structures that deepened students' knowledge in specific content areas and built language proficiency. The teachers expressed appreciation for working in an environment that gives them the opportunity to apply their academic knowledge and reflect on what works best for their students.

The teachers perceived that in their program, the "students are always in the forefront" and this contributes to an exciting teaching environment. Teachers spent time together discussing how individual students were progressing within and across grade levels. When the teachers were asked what features of their program contributed to student achievement, they talked about having high expectations for all students and believing that all students were capable of learning regardless of the amount of knowledge they brought to the classroom. The teachers claimed they aimed to have all students engaged 100 percent of the time.

The teachers emphasized how positive they were about the students and how they valued their backgrounds and potential.

The DLI teachers have collaborated in a variety of ways. For example, teachers have shared materials, instructional ideas, and current research. In a recent focus group discussion, teachers were asked how they learned to teach reading without the guidance of a scripted curriculum. The teachers explained they learned from each other. One teacher described how she developed her ability to teach reading with the assistance of her colleagues. They discussed ideas, she observed their teaching and they gave her books to read. The principal remarked that he believed that because they received no funding for their DLI program and they had few resources that the teachers had to rely on each other. He commented that the group of DLI teachers was "tight," and that they were "always hungry for more." The teachers viewed collaboration as a critical part of working in this DLI program and they found it beneficial.

The teachers expressed a critical need for a DLI program coordinator during the focus group discussions and on the questionnaire. Although teachers believed that it was valuable for them to conduct their own assessments, they noted the amount of time it took to administer them, especially when all students are assessed in both languages. The teachers stated they needed someone who was in charge of both program assessment and student assessment. Teachers also stated a need for a coordinator to assist with choosing and ordering materials and the need for a coordinator to play the role of a parent liaison to coordinate after school programs, conduct home visits and make sure parents are committed to participating in the program. Furthermore, teachers expressed concern about not having a program coordinator because

a multitude of responsibilities fell on them. Vista teachers claimed they dedicated time outside of teaching to work on tasks needed for effective DLI program implementation. One teacher wrote on the questionnaire that she fears “our teachers are working too hard and will get burned out if this pace continues.”

What instructional practices are used in the program?

Classroom observations revealed that teachers instructed through thematic units using visual teaching techniques adopted from the GLAD (Project G.L.A.D., 2009) model and the SIOP (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2007) teaching framework. Both GLAD and SIOP are characterized by use of visuals, high levels of interaction between students and students and teacher, teacher modeling, explicit teaching of learning strategies, and teachers using comprehensible speech. Observation notes included extensive descriptions of the classroom walls that were covered with pictures, student work, and a variety of charts that spelled out chants (a GLAD strategy), language structures, and graphs of concepts and experiments that students used as a resource while doing independent or group work. Everything posted on the walls was linked to a unit theme.

Building background knowledge was a critical component of the teachers’ instruction. Teachers reported that they did not instruct without a solid base of pictures. One teacher claimed “we spend hours on Google images and print off a million pictures.” They used pictures in a variety of ways. For example, when they designed a chant with new vocabulary, such as one focused on roots, stems, leaves, flowers, and seeds, they posted pictures of these items while they sang the chant together with the students. Teachers also used a variety of graphic organizers that were drawn

on butcher paper and hung on their walls. When they introduced the organizers, they placed pictures next to the words to support comprehension. Teachers also designed games in which students worked cooperatively to sort pictures with matching words. The teachers explained that once students had seen pictures and practiced sorting and classifying them, they made stronger connections to newly presented information.

Vista teachers prioritized building the NSSs' background knowledge. Teachers explained that the NSSs in their program were less likely than NESs to possess the background knowledge needed to learn new information. Teachers used aspects of the NSSs' culture as one way to build background knowledge. One teacher began a thematic unit on community by taking pictures of places around their town that she thought the NSSs would likely go to first. For example, she took a picture of the panadería, instead of the traditional bakery. She claimed it was important for the NESs to learn aspects of the Latino culture. This teacher also explained that "Spanish is dominant in our program from the beginning and kids respect that piece."

The teachers explained that many NSSs came into their program without many school experiences and were not familiar with classroom routines, such as raising their hands and giving opinions. Teachers reported that early in the program, the NESs participated more during classroom activities, whereas the NSSs were reluctant, primarily because they did not know classroom expectations. To remedy this, teachers explicitly taught the classroom culture. For example, when the class read a book, teachers modeled how to make connections with ideas in the book and routinely gave students opportunities to make their own connections. They encouraged the NSSs to participate by calling

on students who did not raise their hands and asked them to talk to a partner before sharing responses with the whole class.

Classroom observations revealed teachers regularly using cooperative learning techniques. Teachers were purposeful about grouping students, placing students in both heterogeneous and homogeneous groups throughout the day depending on the aim of instructional tasks. Teachers normally paired NESs with NSSs in order to encourage language development. One teacher claimed that she was always thinking about how she was grouping students, making sure that table groups were never monolingual. The teachers explained that they consciously thought about each student's first language and how much language the student produced. Teachers also paired NSSs together to promote language development. One teacher explained that, "we need language development at this level too. We think about who needs Spanish language development, not just the native English speakers, but the other kids too."

Observations showed that a large part of instruction in grades K-2 is focused on Spanish literacy. All teachers spent two hours per day instructing students in reading groups composed of four to six students with a mix of NESs and NSSs; teachers formed groups based on students' Spanish reading levels. In the reading groups, teachers typically began with a "book walk," showing students the cover of the book, reading the title, and identifying the author and illustrator. Then, page by page, teachers showed students the pictures and talked about what was featured, prompting discussion with the students by asking them questions and encouraging connections to the students' experiences. Teachers often read the book aloud with students reading in chorus, or teachers read part of the page and students read another part in chorus without the

teacher. Afterwards, students either took turns reading to partners, or partners read aloud together.

Observation notes revealed that reading was linked with explicit instruction in phonics using words from books the children read in groups. Phonics work focused on two-letter syllables in Spanish. Typically, teachers created small cards with Spanish syllables printed on them (for example, la, le, li, lo, and lu). The teachers laid out cards in front of the small group of students, pronouncing syllables with students repeating them in chorus. Then pairs of students within the small group received a plastic bag filled with the same syllable cards. They pronounced them as they laid them on the table. They separated syllables into columns according to the first consonant sound. The teacher said words that contained two syllables, for example, “lu pa,” “pu pa,” and “pu ma,” and students found cards that matched the sounds and put them together. Next students read a story that contained syllables they just practiced. At the end of reading group sessions, students practiced writing sentences in paper books that had a similar theme to the book read in the group. They labeled illustrations and wrote words practiced in the phonics lesson.

Further observations also showed students engaged in “free reading” in Spanish each day for 20 minutes. Every student had a box of books that included non-fiction and fiction. Students took their boxes and moved to different parts of the classroom. Some students read alone, others read aloud to each other in small groups or to partners, some students lay on rugs, and others sat in various places around the classroom. The teachers also read during this time period. One observation in a second grade classroom revealed an NES sitting in a chair reading a book aloud in Spanish to two NSSs sitting in front of her. The NES held the book so her

partners could see it. They talked about the pictures and then the NES read the book to them in a manner that was similar to how a teacher would do it.

Discussion

In interpreting student assessment data, the authors referred to Thomas and Collier's (1997) longitudinal research that was focused on the effectiveness of different bilingual programs. These researchers concluded that "the impact of appropriate education for English language learners requires a long-term look at trend data, and a continuous monitoring of the progress that students make over a number of years" (p. 72). Studies have shown that students who participate in DLI programs normally do not catch-up academically with their peers who do not participate in DLI programs until after four to seven years of instruction (Lindholm-Leary, 2008, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). However, research has demonstrated that students who participate in DLI programs, (when they are long-term and deemed effective), begin outperforming their peers between fifth and eighth grades (Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002).

Data presented here are results from assessments given to DLI students at the end of third grade. It is important to keep in mind that in this 80:20 DLI model, none of the students received formal instruction in English reading until fourth grade. Although the percentage of NSSs who were at grade level in English reading at the end of third grade are not high (36 percent), percentages were congruent with DLI research in that the NSSs were showing progress (a 28 percent increase in students attaining grade level in one year), and they were showing more progress than their peers

who were not schooled in DLI programs. It is encouraging that students in Vista who received the most instruction in Spanish were showing the highest achievement. This was consistent with Thomas and Collier's (2002) and Lindholm-Leary's (2008) research that showed the more schooling students have in their first language, the higher they achieve in learning English and other subject areas.

The percentage of NSSs progressing in Spanish reading was high with close to 100 percent of them reading at grade level by the end of third grade (96 percent). It is critical to note that the NESs' progress in both English and Spanish reading was substantial with 90 percent of them reading at grade level in English without formal instruction. Also, the NESs were achieving in Spanish reading at a fast rate with 80 percent at or nearly at grade level at the end of third grade. Given the research on the long-term effects of DLI schooling, the authors expect that by the end of fourth grade, the percentage of NSSs reading at grade level in English will increase substantially, and the NESs reading at grade level in Spanish will be close to 100 percent.

Teachers' perceptions of the effects and benefits of this DLI program were compared to recommendations in the GP. The curriculum strand of the GP emphasizes the importance of teacher collaboration in developing curriculum (Howard et al., 2007). In DLI programs, it is critical that linguistic skills and content concepts are coordinated across grade levels. The GP state that teachers must be given time to collaboratively plan to ensure this articulation. In addition, the GP define effective features of DLI curricula as thematic, enriching, and meaningful (2007). Data from this evaluation showed the DLI curriculum as thematically-based with a focus on teaching language through interesting

content. The teachers stated they have high expectations for all students in their program. The GP state that the shared belief that all children can learn “is a central operating principle that empowers students, especially English language learners” (p. 24). Establishment of high expectations for success among all students in the Vista DLI program has created a positive school environment that facilitates learning.

The GP indicate that exemplary DLI programs employ a program coordinator to assist both in program planning and implementation (Howard et al., 2007). The assessment and accountability strand outlines tasks that provide “an infrastructure focused on assessment” (p. 9). These include maintaining a data management system, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and communicating with stakeholders. The curriculum strand delegates many responsibilities to a program coordinator, including staying current with published materials, working with new teachers, and coordinating curriculum across grade levels. The family and community strand advocates for a family liaison who ensures positive and active relationships with the community. The Vista DLI program has required comprehensive tasks that are beyond time the teachers have available during their normal teaching schedule. Teachers have enjoyed working in the DLI program and this has motivated them to collaborate on many aspects of it outside their teaching duties.

The Vista teachers’ instructional practices were also compared with those recommended in the GP. The “Instruction” stand of the GP recommends promotion of positive interactions between teachers and students, cooperative learning, sheltered instruction techniques, and balancing the needs of both language groups (Howard et al., 2007). The GP highlight facilitation as the

teacher's main role to ensure positive interactions and student-centered instruction. The GP cites several studies that have shown how cooperative learning improves academic achievement among ELLs when tasks require interdependence and groups are designed based on language needs (2007). Language input is particularly important when working with second language learners in order that they continue to develop language proficiency and to understand the content being taught. Accordingly, the GP recommend use of sheltering techniques, visuals, modeling, and interesting content. Classroom observations of the Vista teachers' instructional practices reflected several features of effective instruction recommended in the GP for DLI programs.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a DLI program to discover how well the program is implemented, improve the program, and inform administrators, parents, staff, and community about its effectiveness. Assessment data showed both NESs and NSSs making progress in their oral, written, and reading proficiency in two languages. Teachers perceived the DLI working environment as exciting, because they have autonomy to create their curriculum, they put the students in the forefront, and they experience high levels of collaboration. Teachers also perceived a need for a program coordinator, because of the multitude of tasks required to maintain quality. Classroom observations showed that teachers employed instructional practices that are student-centered, thematic, and focused on a balanced literacy approach.

As a result of the evaluation, teachers have realized several aspects of the program that need attention. For example, they want to incorporate more oral assessments and are considering using the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA). Teachers want to collect data on students' cross-cultural competence, primarily because this is one goal of the program and without these data, they do not know if the goal is being met or not. As a result of this evaluation, we have created a data management system to track student progress. We must expand the data system and keep it regularly updated. The Vista DLI program needs a budget and personnel to help document assessment data and if professional development were provided for teachers to help them interpret data appropriately and accurately, instruction and program development would be better informed.

The following recommendations have been gleaned from the evaluation data and are aligned with the GP. The recommendations can be generalized to other school districts that face budget and staffing challenges similar to Vista.

- Teachers of ELLs need a strong academic background and thorough training in ESL and bilingual education. They should possess knowledge of second language acquisition theories and principles, as well as in-depth familiarity with instructional practices that have been proven effective with ELLs such as those rooted in the GLAD (Project G.L.A.D., 2009) framework and SIOP (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2007) model. In addition, teachers of ELLs need to possess a comprehensive understanding of the important role culture plays in learning, issues of assessment for ELLs, ESL history and

research, how to build partnerships with families and the community, and how to advocate for ELLs (TESOL, 2002).

- Teachers with strong ESL and bilingual credentials need to be given autonomy to develop and manage the curriculum for ELLs. This includes making decisions regarding the most useful, appropriate, and informative assessments, use of materials that reflect the interests and backgrounds of the learners, and teaching approaches that promote student interaction and engagement with both content and language.

- Administrators, teachers, and staff must not only value the experiences, languages, and cultures ELLs bring to schools and classrooms, but also provide these students with opportunities to use their backgrounds to express and validate their identities. Classroom activities such as writing about life events, interviewing family members, presenting their family history, and reading about their own and different cultures are examples of ways ELLs can showcase their backgrounds. High expectations for all students and believing that all students can learn breed a sense of ownership among students and heighten student motivation to learn. This in turn cultivates a school and classroom community in which students from different language and cultural backgrounds interact and learn from and with each other. Educational equity for all language groups must be the aim of the school to ensure a successful and positive learning environment for all students.

- Teachers' work schedules must include time built-in for on-going collaboration and professional development. This is especially critical if teachers are given autonomy to

develop and maintain their curricula. Many schools currently allot time for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and a portion of this time could be used by DLI teachers or teachers of ELLs to work on aspects of their programs, such as interpreting assessment data or documenting curriculum. Administrative support for teacher collaboration and teacher-centered professional development that is focused on the unique needs of the school and its programs is a necessity.

- Dual language immersion programs necessitate a full- or part-time coordinator to assume the myriad of tasks demanded of effective implementation. The coordinator's responsibilities require tasks such as maintaining an assessment database, facilitating collaboration and professional development, and serving as a parent and community liaison. Long-term school-university partnerships are also necessary to support programs for ELLs by providing needed resources and consulting, and would provide teacher educators with up-to-date information about the realities of current school and classroom issues, especially those related to the growing number of ELLs in our communities.

- Schools must actively involve parents in the education of ELLs. For example, teachers can follow-up with homework checks, give parents suggestions for how they can help with homework, and ask parents to assist their children with reading at home. Valuing the languages and cultures the ELLs bring to the school builds a "cultural bridge" that gives parents an open and welcoming pathway for participating in the school and classrooms, and in turn

informs the parents about what the school system is like and how it operates. Communication and holding high expectations for parents are keys to building community support for schools and programs.

The benefits of bilingualism are well-documented in both research and in the workplace. Long-term second language learning that begins early provides our youth with abilities and cultural perspectives that benefit many aspects of their lives and the healthy growth of our society. Effectively implemented dual language immersion programs are ideal for ensuring academic achievement for ELLs. For school districts unable to offer a DLI program, the recommendations provided here will assist in ensuring an equitable education for ELLs so that they have the opportunity to contribute knowledge and their talents to resolving challenges that people world-wide increasingly confront.

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