

The ACIE Newsletter

News from the American Council on Immersion Education

May 2005

Vol. 8, No. 3

Pathways to Bilingualism: Evolving Perspectives on Immersion Education

Theme Issue:
Pathways to Bilingualism

The fall conference, organized by the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, was the first immersion-specific conference to be held in the United States since 1995. It drew attendees from all over North America and included international participants as well. Many of you took the time to give the conference organizers your thoughts about the format and content of the three-day event. For the most part, your comments were overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic:

- I thought this conference offered a refreshing depth of discussion about so many important issues relating to theory, policy, and practice: there was a really good mix of highly relevant research, and research-based practice, and the relevant policy/politics in various contexts. I was so impressed!
- I really enjoyed the topic-specific networking opportunities offered at the luncheon. What a great way to gain and share information in our areas of concentration/expertise!
- As a TESOL pre-service teacher educator, [I] gained so much insight from the research in immersion education that I wished that all of my ELL educators, pre-service teachers were there to hear such words as "more English is not better" and "a human brain is not a monolingual brain" (Genesee).
- It was superb to be able to not only hear [nationally-acclaimed researchers] in person, but to interact with them and have a chance to ask them questions specifically related to our own programs; phenomenal!
- I appreciated the inclusion of food (evening reception and two lunches) as many of us are paying our own way. This made the conference an excellent value in addition to the many other benefits it provided. I had a wonderful time, learned a great deal, and had my belief in the value of immersion education reaffirmed. I can't wait to attend another conference!
- I was drawn into and overheard so many important discussions that grew out of session topics and plenary speakers! This was a conference about putting theory into practice, reflective practice, best practices, advocacy, and action research!

Some of you had useful suggestions for the next conference:

- I'd love to see more 2-way communication between research and teacher so that those of us at the ground level can impact the research. Classic dilemma!



Immersion Specialist Iran Amin of Montgomery County Public Schools interacts with a participant during her conference presentation.

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Volume 8, Number 3

American Council on Immersion Education

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The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

If the response to last October's Pathways to Bilingualism conference is any indication, immersion educators are eager for regular opportunities to network, to hear how other schools are meeting the challenges of teaching in two languages, to learn about new research in the field, to share classroom best practices and program strategies and more. One issue of this newsletter cannot begin to replicate the broad spectrum of presentations that conference attendees could choose from, but we are proud to provide a representative sampling of some of the research issues presented and discussed at the three-day conference.

The researchers and researcher-practitioners whose work is included in this newsletter represent full and partial immersion schools in locations throughout North America. Some have conducted their research in two-way immersion programs, others in one-way programs; some report on projects in Spanish language settings, others in French, and still others in Hawaiian. One paper even addresses issues related to multilingualism when immersion students speak a third language at home; that is to say, neither the immersion language taught at school nor the language spoken by the majority of citizens of the country.

The conference was organized around four

broad themes that our research articles illustrate: **Program Design and Development** (Attrition in Four U.S. Elementary Immersion Schools); **Assessment and Program Evaluation** (this issue's Bridge article: Meeting the challenges of No Child Left Behind in immersion education in the U.S.); **Immersion Pedagogy and Language Development** (Recognizing Multilingual Immersion Students); and **Policy and Advocacy** (A Comparison of Program Contexts: African-American Student Achievement in U.S. French Immersion Programs).

In addition to the spotlight on research, you can read some of the remarks and recommendations from the conference evaluations and see some of the people who attended the conference.

Lastly, many of you expressed a strong interest in another conference within a couple of years (certainly the nine year interval between the 2004 conference and its predecessor was seen as too long). As this issue goes to press, the Immersion Projects at CARLA is requesting funding to make this international conference a biennial event. You will find information about the success of this proposal in upcoming issues of the ACIE Newsletter.

—Kimerly Miller, Editor

FINAL CALL FOR PAPERS ON IMMERSION EDUCATION

Plans are underway for a volume showcasing the work of conference speakers and some of the papers that were presented in sessions. We welcome submissions of work that was not presented at the conference. The volume will be organized into four themes: **Program Design and Development, Assessment and Program Evaluation, Immersion Pedagogy and Language Development, and Policy and Advocacy.**

To have your paper considered, send an electronic manuscript by June 30, 2005, (postmarked) to Diane Tedick (djtedick@umn.edu) or Tara Fortune (fortu001@umn.edu). The paper should be no longer than 30 pages, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, and in standard APA format. Include a cover sheet with the title, name, address, office and home telephone numbers, fax number, e-mail address, and full name of institution where each author is employed.



Pathways to Bilingualism Conference, *continued from page 1*

- This conference was very much focused on research. As an educator, it was very interesting to me to learn about all the current research being done. As research often does, it creates more questions than it answers. I would have liked to have seen more workshops about the practical application of the research findings for classroom use.
- I like the lecture format but perhaps time for questions should be longer. We also learn from questions.
- A more international focus [...] should be additive. It should not replace what you have.

Many of you indicated a desire to have the conference occur at least biennially if not every year:

- Perhaps every 3-4 years with each conference focusing on a particular strand (i.e. Program Design and Development, Assessment and Program Evaluation, etc.)
- I think a conference such as this should be held every other year ... There is obviously great need and interest, as evidenced by the fact that this conference was sold out.

And finally, some of you were star-struck!

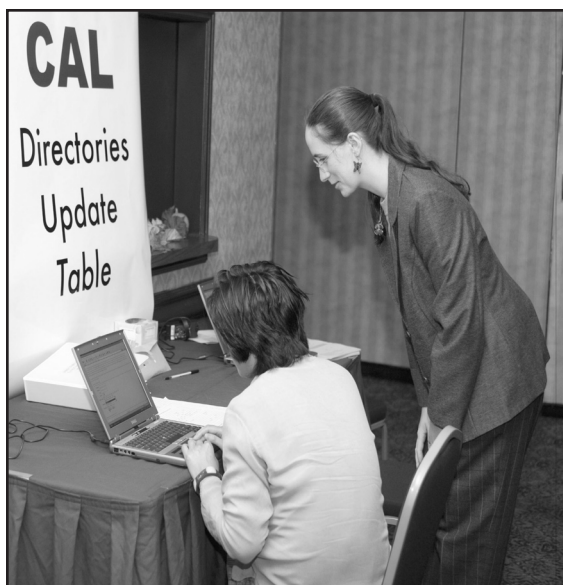
- It was wonderful to have so many well-known researchers as speakers, and to finally put faces to those names I had read about for so long (Mr. Genesee looked much younger than I had imagined!!)
- ...it was [a] Hollywood Walk of Fame in language education. ○



The “much younger than...imagined” Dr. Fred Genesee gives the conference keynote on “Bilingualism in the Global Village.”

THE CONFERENCE IN NUMBERS

- More than 350 participants
- Attendees from 29 states and the District of Columbia
- Attendees from 9 countries including Canada, China and Hong Kong, Finland, Japan, Nigeria, Syria, and Switzerland
- 5 plenary and keynote speakers
- 10 pre-conference sessions
- 290 participants attended the pre-conference sessions
- Over 55 concurrent sessions
- 10 departments, institutes, and colleges from across the University of Minnesota collaborated in the planning and implementation of the conference



Conference participants update the immersion database managed by the Center for Applied Linguistics.



Networking was one of the most worthwhile endeavors at the conference, as reported in conference evaluations.



RESEARCH REPORTS

In an effort to push the edge of what we currently know about learning, researchers continue to design and publish new studies on issues important to immersion education. Keeping up to date with current research is a time-consuming task.

This regular feature will help inform the immersion education public about recent research by providing our readers with brief summaries of selected studies.



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Recognizing Multilingual Immersion Students

by Diane Dagenais, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia

With 17.9% of the US population speaking a language other than English at home (US Census Bureau, 2005) and 17.6% of the Canadian population declaring a mother tongue other than French or English (Statistics Canada, 2004), urban schools on both sides of the border are increasingly characterized by linguistic diversity. In recent years, Canadian educators have drawn attention to children of diverse origins in immersion classrooms (Dagenais, 2003). While studies have provided abundant evidence of the positive benefits of French Immersion for English-speaking students (Lapkin, Swain & Shapson, 1990), there is relatively little data on the progress of learners of diverse origins in immersion (Taylor, 1992). In response to these issues I undertook ethnographic research to gather information on multilingual immersion students' language practices at home and school. Children's conversations at home were audiotaped, their classroom interactions were videotaped, parents kept written records of literacy practices at home and we conducted open-ended interviews with the children, their parents and teachers.

At home, the families of my study group regularly alternated between languages. For example, in a family of South Asian origin, the grandparents spoke only Punjabi with all members of the family, the parents alternated between Hindi (the mother's heritage language) and English in their conversations together, and she spoke a combination of Hindi and English with the children whereas the father spoke a combination of Punjabi and English with them. The children spoke to each other mainly in English but eventually used some French during homework activities as the youngest child progressed through school.

The multilingual children also engaged in a rich array of literacy practices at home. For instance, Vanessa wrote letters in Spanish to relatives, did her homework in French and

English, read recipes in Spanish when helping her mother cook and read Spanish language magazines that were at home. In addition, she read novels for pleasure in English and in French for homework, watched television in English and occasionally in French, watched videos in Spanish and English. She listened to the local radio station in English and sometimes listened to cassettes or CDs in Spanish. Thus, Vanessa and her multilingual peers drew on each language for particular purposes and literacy tasks according to their needs and communication partners.

MULTILINGUAL FAMILIES CHOOSE IMMERSION

Interview excerpts and narrative interpretations of observational data were shared with policy makers and educators to counter the myth that bilingual education is too taxing for children of immigrant families. Unlike their unilingual counterparts, these children had already learned at a young age to juggle the communicative demands of a complex multilingual context. Moreover, their parents did not view the introduction of new languages as a threat to family languages; rather, they actively sought out opportunities for their children to learn new languages. They enrolled their children in immersion to learn French and English while adopting a range of strategies to maintain the family language at home, such as registering their children in community-based language classes on evenings or weekends, providing individual tutoring, participating in religious activities in the family language or making regular trips to the parents' country of origin. One couple gave the following rationale for choosing immersion education.



EXCERPT 1

Mike: We told ourselves that she has to learn three or four languages. Not just one. Most kids here just know one language. They are very fluent in English. They are very good in English, right, but that's all they know.

Lak: And we thought that it would be great if she knows other languages besides English and Punjabi. Because in Singapore, she probably would be speaking Chinese, Malay, and Punjabi. So, we thought that if there are four languages that she could pick up there, what is it to have another language here?

(Interview transcript, parents of South Asian heritage)

Clearly, these parents wanted to position their children favorably with respect to monolinguals and bilinguals locally, nationally and internationally. Aware of forces of globalization, they adopted a transnational perspective to invest in a language program that would help attain this objective.

Contrary to the multilingual practices we documented at home, observations at school revealed that a monolingual norm prevailed in classrooms focusing on the language of instruction, either French or English. Nevertheless, over two years of observations, we documented a few exciting occasions when teachers recognized children's multilingualism, as illustrated in the case below.

During a French literacy activity in grade three, the teacher asked students to write a text titled "Why I am proud to speak 2 languages". Chaska, one of the children we were observing asked: "Well, can I write about the other languages I speak?" In response, the teacher proposed as an alternative "Why I am proud to speak three languages."

The children were later asked to read their text to the class. When Chaska did so, her classmates asked her to say something in Spanish.

EXCERPT 2

Marla: Can you say something in Spanish?
Chaska: Spanish? ¡Hola! ¿Cómo estás ?
Marla: Hello (Allô)!
Chaska: Hi! How are you?
Teacher: ¡Hola! ¿Cómo estás?

EXCERPT 3

Chaska: Sabes que - know what? . . . If you say gato in Spanish. . . And in French it's like gateau (cake).
Other child: Gato. Chaton (kitten).
Chaska: If you say Yo quiero comer un gato. . . . They will think you want to eat a cat.
Teacher: Oh yes?
Chaska: Yes. . . .
Students: Ah, hah, hah!

(Classroom audiotape transcript, 4/7/00)

Given the opportunity to display her knowledge of three languages, Chaska shared a humorous observation about similarities and differences in the Spanish word gato and the French gateau. Moreover, her teacher acknowledged her experience by repeating her Spanish greeting. *Multilingualism, continued on page 9*



Grade five and six students in the study group work on a Language Awareness activity. Here, they are applying what they know about a particular language and languages in general to make sense of a conversation about weather. The lesson involved learning weather vocabulary and negation syntax in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Inuktitut (a native language of Northern Canada) and Malagasy (a language of Madagascar).



Comparison Contexts: African-American Students, Immersion and Achievement

by Michelle Haj-Broussard, Assistant Professor of Teacher Education, McNeese State University, Lake Charles, LA

In dual language education much research has focused on the acquisition of academic content or the acquisition of language. However, as Valdes (1997) argued, dual language education does not occur in a sociocultural vacuum. Rather, it reflects the contexts and power structures within which it exists. In the U.S. dual language education confronts the national dilemma of a majority/minority student achievement gap. In the South, this dilemma is known as the Black/White Achievement Gap. This study examines the Black/White Achievement Gap in a very specific sociocultural context—Southwestern Louisiana—where many African-American students also have francophone cultural heritage.

The Black/White Achievement Gap is an issue that cannot be overlooked. Hedges and Nowell (1998) determined that there is still a significant gap in Black/White achievement, especially in the top 10% of achievement test score distribution. More importantly, these authors note that this distribution has not changed significantly since 1965. If the achievement gap cannot be closed at the elementary and secondary levels, the racially unequal social stratification is likely to become even more pronounced. In this age of high-stakes testing, a disproportionate number of African-American students risk being retained or tracked into lower-level classes, thereby becoming ineligible for college admission.

Having taught French immersion (FI) for nine years in Title I schools with 40-99% African-American students, I had always been impressed with my students' academic progress in the program. Despite, this teacher's hunch, the true impetus of this research was the threatened closing of all four Louisiana FI programs in schools with over 90% African-American students.¹ This situation came about even though previous research in the U.S. had

indicated certain benefits for African-American students in the language immersion context. For example, early studies of partial immersion students in a large urban school district had shown language benefits but relatively few academic benefits in primary school (Holobow, Genesee, Lambert, Gastright, & Met, 1987; Holobow, Genesee & Lambert, 1991). More recently, Caldas & Boudreaux (1999) found general academic benefits for African-American FI students in late elementary immersion classrooms. Apart from these studies, however, little research has been conducted on the effects French immersion has on the academic achievement of African-American students.

This study examined differences in minority/majority student achievement in both the French immersion (FI) and the regular education (RE) classroom contexts. In addition, it explored how African-American students, their peers and their teachers (1) perceive themselves, (2) perceive others, and (3) interact within each school setting. This article reports on the quantitative findings alone.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Phase I of the study includes a quantitative analysis of covariance comparing immersion and non-immersion fourth grade students' LEAP (Louisiana Educational Academic Performance) scores. Using the fourth graders' third grade Iowa Test of Basic skills (ITBS) scores as a control, this phase investigated:

1. Whether there were differences in academic achievement between African-American students and White students,
2. Whether there were differences in academic achievement between French immersion students and regular education students and
3. Whether there was any interaction effect between these student groups.

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

A total of 347 grade four students participated in the quantitative phase of the study. Of these students 163 were in the FI program and 184 were in the RE program. Table 1 summarizes information on the socioeconomic status (SES) and the ethnicity of the participants. While the number of students who paid full lunch prices and the number of White students were equivalent in both fourth grade classrooms, the RE setting had nearly thirty more students on free lunch. More White students in both program contexts were in the higher SES category and paid full price for their lunches while the majority of African-American students in both contexts were in the lower SES category (either free or reduced lunch programs).

In terms of ethnicity, there were over twenty more African-American students in the RE classes than in the FI classes. This was after one FI class was excluded from the study because it had no African-American students despite the school having a 40% African-American student population. Students from other ethnic backgrounds were balanced across programs.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Initial findings of the quantitative data analysis revealed (1) that White students scored significantly higher than African-American students [see ethnicity (A)], and (2) that FI students scored significantly higher than RE students [see classroom context (B)]. The combined effect of ethnicity and program context were not shown to significantly impact test performance (Table 2).

A closer examination of the subgroups found that there was no significant difference in test scores between African-American students regardless of program context (see Table 3 on page 10). This supports Holobow et al. (1987; 1991) earlier findings that African-Americans in dual language programs do as well as African-Americans in regular education. However, it must be noted that in the area of mathematics there was also no

Table 1: Ethnicity and SES Profiles of Participating Students

	French Immersion Program			Regular Education Program		
	African American	White	Other	African American	White	Other
Free Lunch	24	13	0	46	17	2
Reduced Lunch	8	10	0	6	8	0
Full Lunch	9	93	6	10	90	5
Total	41	116	6	62	115	7

Table 2: ANCOVA Results

	LEAP Language Scores			LEAP Mathematics Scores		
	Adjusted df	Adjusted MS	F	Adjusted df	Adjusted MS	F
Ethnicity (A)	1	9778.82	6.76*	1	11721	11.37**
Classroom context (B)	1	4070.14	2.81	1	6531.9	6.34*
A x B	1	3636.93	2.51	1	8.912	.01
Iowa Test of Basic Skills	1	272784	188.50**	1	298971	289.97**
Within (Residuals)	329	1447.14		329	1031.06	
Total	333			333		

* <.05, **<.0001

significant difference between the math scores of African-American FI students and the White students in RE (although there was a significant difference between African-American RE students and White RE students). This may indicate a bridging of the achievement gap, but it does not fully support Caldas and Boudreaux (1999) who found that the achieve-

Comparison, continued on page 10



THE BRIDGE

Educational research is vital to validating effective practices, challenging ineffective ones, and encouraging innovations. Yet research is only valuable if teachers read and implement findings in their classrooms.

The Bridge feature is included as an insert to encourage teachers to collect them for future reference. We hope this pull-out insert will help immersion educators stay abreast of the latest research and allow it, when applicable, to affect their own practice.

Mike Anderson, Ph.D., is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Program in English as a Second Language at the University of Minnesota. He has also worked at the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) and researches how students are included in statewide testing as well as the impact of statewide accountability systems on the instruction of different groups of students.

As coordinator of one of four research symposia at the conference, Mike invited all Bridge co-authors to participate in the symposium and discuss the impact of the federally-mandated No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on immersion programs in their various states (California, Hawaii, Louisiana, and Texas). This article grew out of that symposium. The authors were invited because they represent different types of immersion education programs in various areas of the U.S. It was our hope that our different perspectives would inform each other as well as provide a sampling of the wide range of immersion contexts.



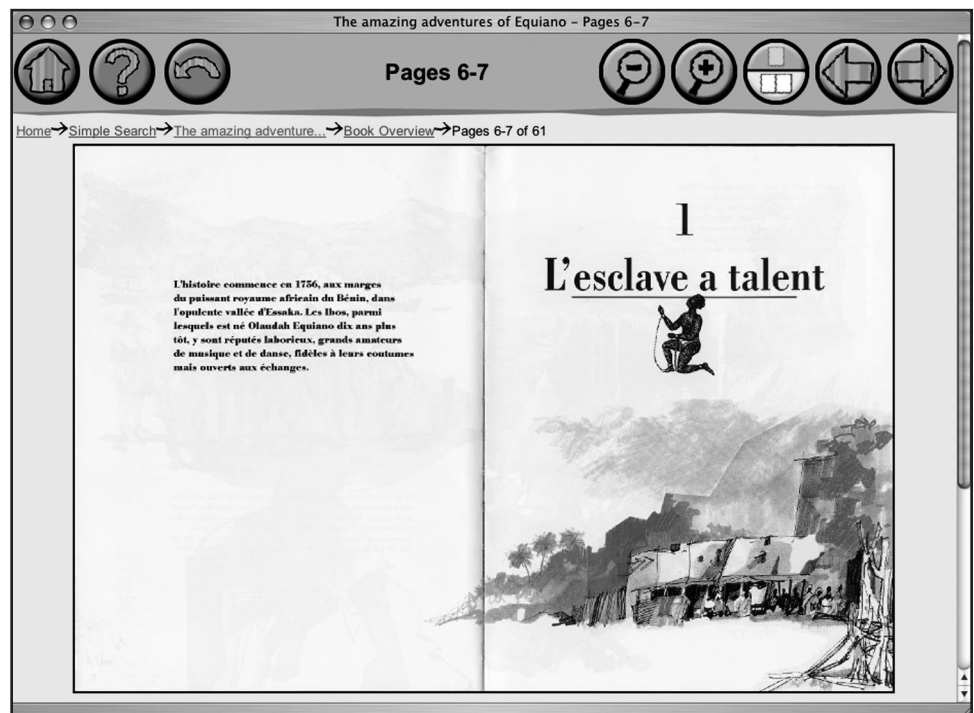
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International Children’s Digital Library

WWW.ICDLBOOKS.ORG

The mission of ICDL is to create a collection of more than 10,000 books in at least 100 languages that is freely available to children, teachers, librarians, parents, and scholars throughout the world via the Internet. The website currently has 611 books in 28 languages. The ICDL wants to collaborate with children as design partners in the development of computer interface technologies that support children in searching, browsing, reading, and sharing books in electronic form.



One of the books available in the digital library. Visitors can search for books by genre, age, or language (from Arabic to Yiddish).



Multilingualism, continued from page 5

USING ONE LANGUAGE TO UNDERSTAND ANOTHER

Such observations led me to explore approaches for recognizing language diversity such as Language Awareness. Language Awareness originated in Britain with the work of Hawkins (1984) and his team. Recently, this approach has been developed extensively in francophone Europe and has drawn the attention of education policy makers in the European Union (Castellotti & Moore, 2002). Language Awareness has students attend systematically to language diversity and compare the patterns of their own languages as well as those of their classmates, communities and the media. Immigrant children's knowledge of other languages is used as a teaching resource to inform all students, so that languages that once seemed distant become more familiar and accessible. European research has shown that Language Awareness operates as a powerful tool for developing knowledge of language patterns and promoting positive attitudes to speakers of other languages (Candelier, 2003).

In an ongoing teacher-researcher project with colleagues in Montreal, Quebec, my research partners and I adapted Language Awareness activities developed for francophone classrooms in Europe and Montreal to the language level and the cultural context of a grade 5/6 French Immersion classroom in Vancouver, British Columbia¹. Activities addressed themes such as families of languages, borrowings between languages, origins of names for locations, and the evolution of alphabets and scripts. Our analysis of classroom videotapes and interviews of children suggests that multilingual students were repositioned in social interactions during Language Awareness activities. As they shared their language resources with their teacher and peers, their knowledge was no longer marginalized but became central to discussions about language diversity. Moreover, when exposed to oral or written texts in diverse languages beyond the language of instruction, students

drew on their collective knowledge, including the expertise of multilingual peers. The children readily pooled their resources to make links between the languages that were known and unknown to them.

Activities such as these respond to calls to recognize bilingual/multilingual children's language resources and broaden their strategic use in classrooms (Hornberger, 2003). They also move the focus of instruction in immersion classrooms beyond linguistic duality by having students systematically attend to various languages. Ultimately, such an approach fosters the creation of an inclusive immersion community whose representation of itself includes speakers of a variety of languages.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Françoise Armand and Diane Dagenais received funding for this research from the Metropolis Project, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Canadian Heritage. ○

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UPCOMING

CONFERENCES FOR DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION

Hartford Schools' 5th Annual Dual Language Summer Institute

June 29-30, 2005, Cromwell, CT

Hartford Public Schools and the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission present the 5th Annual Dual Language Education in the New Millennium Summer Institute.

For conference and registration information, visit: http://www.hartfordschools.org/downloads/flyers/dual_language.pdf or email ESSEB001@hartfordschools.org.

13th National Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Program Summer Conference

July 11–14, 2005, Monterey, California

New Teachers and Administrators Institute, Opening Day, July 11, 1-4:30 P.M.

There is no extra fee, but participants must pre-register (indicate on registration form).

Please visit <http://www.bilingual-education.org/2waycabe/> and click on "Upcoming Events" to download registration forms and view hotel reservation information.

Comparison, continued from page 7

Table 3: Significant Effects of Program Context and Ethnicity on LEAP Math Scores

Program Context	Estimate	Standard Error	df	F Value
FI African American * FI White	-13.669	6.0118	329	2.19*
FI African American * RE African American	10.3030	6.4809	329	1.59
FI African American * RE White	-3.5850	5.8463	329	.061
FI White * RE African American	23.4699	5.4058	329	4.34**
FI White * RE White	9.5819	4.3911	329	2.18*
RE African American * RE White	-13.888	5.1116	329	2.72*

* <.05, **<.0001

ment gap decreased or disappeared among immersion students from diverse racial backgrounds. This bridging of the achievement gap was found despite the fact that one third of the African-American students in French immersion were in a program which the qualitative phase found to be a less than ideal immersion setting.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Because of the use of the third grade Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores as a covariate, the four years of immersion schooling prior to taking the ITBS were not taken into account. Considering that the FI students obtained ITBS scores were higher than the RE student scores, a longitudinal study of immersion which could account for those initial four years would be useful. Because of the pivotal role of parents who choose to place their children in immersion, the effect of this parental involvement on the children's academic achievement also needs to be examined. The lack or absence of African-American students in immersion programs situated in schools with large African-American populations underscores the need to study which students enter or leave immersion and why. Finally, a replication of this study in a geographical area where French is not a heritage language for the African-American students could increase the generalizability of

the findings in this study and allow for conclusions regarding the effect that learning a heritage language versus simply learning a second language has on students.

CONCLUSION

Immersion is not a panacea for ameliorating African-American students' education. However, in terms of the educational equity for African-American students, this study lends support to earlier findings and shows that African-American students' are as academically successful in these programs as African-American students in non-immersion programs. Furthermore, the positive collective self-esteem (one of the findings from the qualitative phase of this study), extensive language skills and high LEAP scores of the FI students in well-implemented programs indicate that immersion is a beneficial environment for African-American and White students.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Two of the schools were closed after this study as part of school districts' desegregation plans. ○

Attrition in Four U.S. Elementary Immersion Schools

by Peggy Rigaud, 1st Grade French Immersion Teacher, Normandale French Immersion School, Edina, MN

One of the many challenges facing U.S. immersion schools is the issue of attrition and its impact at the district, school, and classroom level. Although some amount of student withdrawal is a natural phenomenon in public schooling, American educator Stover (2000) emphatically states that “research has made it clear that bouncing from school to school, classroom to classroom, hurts children’s academic progress” (p. 61). In other words, long-term schooling experience in one setting benefits learners. In immersion programs, attrition rates can have an additional negative impact. Since best practice recommends that newcomers entering after grade one be able to demonstrate a certain level of bilingualism and biliteracy, immersion learners that leave the program are difficult to replace.

To date, research on immersion education in the U.S. has largely ignored this topic. However, a number of research studies examining attrition in Canadian French immersion schools point to seemingly high attrition rates, certain studies reporting between 40-50% at the elementary level alone (Stern, 1991; Kamin, 1981; Morrison, Pauley, & Bonyun, 1979; Halsall, 1989). Do U.S. immersion schools experience a similar decline in student population during the elementary years? How effective are U.S. immersion programs at providing students a sustained, K-6 learning experience?

This research study examines transfer rates in four U.S. elementary immersion schools. Research questions are as follows:

1. What are the attrition rates as determined by the relative percentage of students who leave the program at each grade level for each of four Midwest elementary immersion programs for the academic years between 1991-1992 and 2001-2002?
2. How do these rates compare with the corresponding district-wide attrition rates for elementary schools?
3. How do these rates compare with the attrition rates of one demographically similar, same-district elementary school?
4. Have the attrition rates for each school over the ten-year period remained stable, increased or decreased as each program has established itself?
5. Are there specific grade levels during which student transfers to a non-immersion program are more likely to occur?

DATA COLLECTION

Student withdrawal data were gathered on four elementary immersion schools (see Table 1 for School Profiles) for a ten-year period (1992-1993 – 2001-2002). The participant schools all represent the same metropolitan area located in the Midwest.

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Table 1. Elementary Immersion School Profiles for 2002-2003

Statistics taken from the 2002 state database

School**	District	Year Began	Grade Level	Number of Students	Race/Ethnicity* by Relative Percent				Free/Reduced Meals* by Relative Percent
					As	Bl	Hisp	Wh	
Anderson Spanish Immersion	New Palz Urban	1986	K-6	633	2	10	43	45	33
Northbrook French Immersion	Edwards Suburban	1991	K-5	572	4	1	1	94	2

*As=Asian, Pacific Islander and Other, Bl=Black, non-Hispanic, Hisp=Hispanic, Wh=White.

**Fictitious names have been used for the schools and their districts.



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Note that this is for the pre-conference institute only. To submit a proposal to the NABE Regular Conference, please go to <http://www.nabe.org>.

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This study reviewed three main types of transfer data: 1) mid-year transfer rates, 2) total withdrawal rates, and 3) mobility rates. Data on the rate of mid-year transfers came from the state database and refer to students transferring out of the elementary school between Oct. 1st and June 1st of the academic year. Total withdrawal rates were determined using site-based information (yearbooks, school directories and databases) and refer to students transferring out of the immersion elementary school during the school year or the summer immediately following. Mobility rates were taken from district-maintained databases and refer to the rate of students enrolling in and/or leaving a school during the academic year.

DATA ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Sub-question #1: How do mid-year transfer/mobility rates for immersion schools compare with the corresponding district-wide rates for non-immersion elementary schools?

Annual mid-year transfer rates for individual immersion programs were reported as relative percentages based on the total number of students for each year in which data were available. These rates were then averaged across the ten -year period of time for each immersion school and compared to the average transfer

rate for all same-district, non-immersion elementary schools.

Overall, in both urban and suburban districts, the elementary immersion schools had lower mid-year transfer or mobility rates when compared to the district average for elementary schools that were not immersion (see Table 2 below).

- In New Palz Urban Schools, Anderson Spanish Immersion School’s mobility index was notably lower (4-5%) than the district average for elementary schools (18-22%) for the three years beginning in 2000-2001 (data were unavailable prior to the 2000 – 2001 school year).
- In the Edwards Suburban School District, the elementary average (not including Northbrook French Immersion) of mid-year transfer rates across six years was 3.7%, whereas the average mid-year transfer rate for Northbrook French Immersion during those same years was 2.4%.
- Pearl Spanish Immersion School in the Lanesville Suburban District, the youngest of the four immersion schools, first became a K-6 elementary site in the 2002 –2003 school year. Thus, comparison between this immersion program and the district’s non-immersion schools was only possible for this one year. In the 2002 – 2003 school year, Pearl Spanish Immersion’s mid-year transfer rate was 1% while the other five Lanesville elementary

Table 2: Mid-year Transfer Rates for Immersion vs. Non-Immersion Schools During 1992-1993 – 2001-2002 Academic Years

School District	Averaged Mid-year Transfer Rates for Immersion Schools	Averaged Mid-year Transfer Rates for Non-immersion Schools
New Palz Urban	4.7%	20.3%
Edwards Suburban	2.4%	3.7%
Lanesville Suburban	0.1%**	10.9%
Rosetown Suburban	1.7%	12.6%

* District mobility rates reported here, mid-year transfer data from state not available.

** Data available for 2002-2003 academic year only



schools reported an average mid-year transfer rate of 10.9%, nearly 10 percentage points higher.

- In Rosetown Suburban Schools, data were available for a period of eight consecutive years. Results indicate that Ridgeview Spanish Immersion's mid-year transfer rate on average came to a mere 1.7% as compared to 12.6% for the remainder of this district's elementary schools.

Sub-question #2: How do these rates compare with the attrition rates of one demographically similar, same-district elementary school?

To address this question, a match school was selected from within the district based on a similar demographic profile. Match schools were found for two of the four immersion schools, Northbrook French Immersion and Ridgeview Spanish Immersion. Withdrawal rates for these two immersion schools were then compared to those of demographically similar, non-immersion elementary schools, Hope Elementary and Phillips Elementary. Table 3 displays the mid-year transfer rates for schools in the Edwards Suburban School District. Withdrawal rates were very similar across six years, with the averaged rate indicating a slightly lower rate of withdrawal for the French immersion school. In contrast, withdrawal comparisons for Rosetown Suburban Schools found far fewer student withdrawals in the immersion school as compared to the demographically-comparable non-immersion school (see Table 4).

Sub-question #3: Have the attrition rates for each school over the ten-year period remained stable, increased or decreased as each program has established itself?

The total withdrawal rates for the four immersion schools over the ten-year period were examined to determine whether the attrition rates (or total withdrawal rates) for each school remained stable, increased or decreased as each program established itself.

Table 3: Mid-year Withdrawal Comparisons for Edwards Suburban Schools

Data Year	Northbrook French Imm.	Hope Elementary
1996-97	1.8%	2.7%
1997-98	1.2%	3.4%
1998-99	3.5%	2.6%
1999-00	2.6%	3.5%
2000-01	3.6%	0.2%
2001-02	1.7%	1.3%
Average	2.4%	2.6%

Table 4: Mid-year Withdrawal Comparisons for Rosetown Suburban Schools

Data Year	Ridgeview Spanish Imm.	Phillips Elementary
1993-94	1.9%	18.0%
1994-95	1.8%	19.4%
1995-96	1.8%	20.5%
1996-97	0.3%	20.0%
1997-98	3.3%	25.6%
1998-99	1.2%	20.5%
1999-00	0.6%	22.5%
2000-01	1.2%	22.6%
2001-02	0.6%	18.4%
Average	1.7%	20.8%

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“ Results indicate that transfer rates for the four U.S. elementary immersion schools included in this study were either similar to or lower than same-district mobility rates and mid-year transfer rates of demographically similar, non-immersion elementary schools. These findings suggest a high level of satisfaction with the immersion option and could be utilized to promote the program in the district and in the community at large. ”

RESOLUTION

In February, both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate passed resolutions naming 2005 The Year of Languages. The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies at <http://www.language-policy.org> has a link to both resolutions which clearly state the many benefits of language study from enhanced academic achievement to improved national security. In addition to the resolutions themselves, you can read comments that were made prior to the vote. Check up on your legislators and see who from your state supports expanded foreign language study.

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The two younger schools, Pearl Spanish Immersion and Northbrook French Immersion, which began in 1996 and 1991 respectively, both showed higher total withdrawal rates during years 1 and 2 of the program (see Table 5 below for rate comparisons). However, this rate decreased steadily as the programs matured (program years 5 and 6).

Table 5: Total Withdrawal Rates for Immersion Start-ups vs. Mature Programs

	Start-up Program		Mature Program	
	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 5	Yr 6
Pearl Spanish	13.3%	8.3%	13.3%	13.3%
Northbrook French	---	6.4%	5.4%	13.4%

Sub-question #4: Are there specific grade levels during which student transfers to a non-immersion program are more likely to occur?

Finally, data were analyzed to determine the timing of student transfers in each school and to establish whether there are critical periods (i.e., particular grade levels) during which students are more likely to transfer out of an immersion school. To do this, each immersion school's percentage of total withdrawals at each grade level was determined for all available data years. Grade-level specific percentages were then averaged over the data period in order to examine which grade level(s) produced the highest overall percentage of student transfer per immersion school.

Findings from these analyses were inconclusive. Over a period of six years at Northbrook French Immersion, the highest average rate of withdrawals occurred during third grade, with the next highest in first grade. At Ridgeview

Spanish Immersion, data for a four-year period showed that the highest rate of withdrawals took place during kindergarten, followed by grade four. The data from Pearl and Anderson Spanish Immersion Schools, were not complete enough to do an adequate analysis.

DISCUSSION

Results indicate that transfer rates for the four U.S. elementary immersion schools included in this study were either similar to or lower than same-district mobility rates and mid-year transfer rates of demographically similar, non-immersion elementary schools. These findings suggest a high level of satisfaction with the immersion option and could be utilized to promote the program in the district and in the community at large. Research-based information about attrition rates in U.S. elementary immersion schools is crucial for immersion educators. Such information provides a tangible measure of these immersion schools' ability to provide a sustained learning experience for elementary-age students, especially after they develop beyond the start-up years. Moreover, low attrition rates in the elementary immersion school could provide impetus for district officials and parents to support continuing the immersion option into middle and high school.

Upon review of the annual percentages of mid-year withdrawal for these four immersion schools, study findings seem quite positive for immersion educators and administrators. However, it should be noted that the two schools providing the most complete data (Northbrook French Immersion and Ridgeview Spanish Immersion) were both suburban schools, contexts known to be less likely to experience high attrition. Thus, this study may not accurately reflect what is occurring in urban immersion programs. Furthermore, if one follows a cohort of students from the beginning of the elementary experience through elementary-school graduation at fifth or sixth



grade, it is clear that attrition remains a concern in both urban and suburban immersion schools. For example, the average attrition rate for six cohorts of K-5 students at Northbrook French Immersion was 24.7%. In other words, nearly one-fourth of the children who began in kindergarten dropped out of the program before the end of the fifth grade. Such findings indicate a need for further research into this issue. In particular, it would be valuable to explore who is choosing to leave the program and for what reasons. Complete and accurate record keeping is imperative for undertaking research of this sort.

Despite great efforts to obtain student withdrawal information from a variety of sources (at the site, district and state level), there were many gaps in the information that was provided. It is thus recommended that immersion

administrators encourage office staff to keep accurate and complete records on student withdrawals. When relocation is not the reason for a student's transfer out, immersion programs will benefit if administrators or support staff conduct formal or informal exit interviews with the student's parents. Such information is necessary to more clearly understand the reasons for student withdrawal from immersion and implement school-wide practices to address the issues. ○

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AVAILABLE

The Center for Applied Linguistics is pleased to announce that the Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education are available in draft form for public comment at <http://www.cal.org/twi/guidingprinciples.htm>.

The Guiding Principles were developed by a national panel of dual language researchers and practitioners with support from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition at The George Washington University. Grounded in evidence from research and best practices, the Principles were developed as a tool to help dual language programs (two-way immersion, heritage language, foreign language immersion, or developmental bilingual programs) with planning and ongoing implementation.

We encourage everyone to read the draft document and submit feedback on the web site. Please e-mail Julie Sugarman at julie@cal.org with any questions.

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ACIE NEWSLETTER/MAY 2005

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The American Council on Immersion Education (ACIE) is an organizational network for individuals interested in immersion education—teachers, administrators, teacher educators, researchers, and parents.

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Meeting the Challenges of No Child Left Behind in U.S. Immersion Education

Mike Anderson, Ph.D., Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), schools across the nation have been working hard to comply with the accountability requirements that the law requires. In fact, I doubt there is a teacher in the U.S. who has not attended at least several meetings where the topic had something to do with NCLB and accountability. The discourse has changed in schools and new vocabulary has been adopted into the lexicon of educators. It is common to hear teachers or administrators talking about NCLB, comprehensive assessments, or AYP (adequate yearly progress). In addition to NCLB requirements, many states have additional laws such as English-only requirements that add additional layers to the complicated nature of educational accountability.

So, how does immersion education fit into state accountability systems?

First, immersion programs in the public schools need to take part in statewide assessments for accountability purposes. Under NCLB, states are required to measure student achievement on established content standards that have been determined at the state level. Achievement in the areas of math, language arts (reading and sometimes writing), and science must be measured for all students at various points throughout grades three to twelve. Beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, achievement in math and language arts must be assessed every year in grades three through eight and at least once during grades ten to twelve. Beginning in the school year 2007-2008, achievement in science must be measured at three points throughout grades three to twelve.

In addition to the content assessments, English language proficiency must be measured each year for all students with limited English proficiency (or English language learners). Like the content standards, English language proficiency standards are determined by each state. English language learners who are in two-way immersion programs must be assessed in their English proficiency just like all non-English-speaking students.

While research has been done on the impact of statewide testing on English language learners and students with disabilities in general (Anderson, 2004; Nelson, 2002; Thompson & Thurlow, 2003) as well as on the achievement of immersion students on standardized measures (see the article by Kathryn Lindholm-Leary below), little research has been done on how immersion programs have been impacted by NCLB and state-level educational accountability legislation (for a review of a recently completed dissertation study on this topic, look for next fall's November issue of the ACIE Newsletter).

To begin a discussion of NCLB's impact on immersion education, a panel of immersion educators and researchers from across the United States took part in a symposium at the Pathways to Bilingualism conference held in Minneapolis in October 2004. The panel members shared data and experiences and explored the different ways their states are meeting the challenges of including immersion students in statewide accountability systems.

The panelists were asked to consider these questions:

- 1) How are students in immersion schools included in statewide testing?
- 2) Are immersion students allowed to take state assessments in a language other than English or with linguistic accommodations?
- 3) How are immersion students performing on the tests?
- 4) What issues of accessibility do immersion educators deal with in terms of statewide testing?
- 5) Are immersion educators in the state familiar with the options their students may have in participating in these assessments?
- 6) How are assessments being created in immersion languages?
- 7) How do new teacher quality requirements affect immersion teachers and what they do?
- 8) How do immersion programs, especially those who teach exclusively in the immersion language in the early grades, handle the priorities given to English language arts under NCLB?

Because assessments are currently being implemented and data on the impact of these assessments is still being collected, the answers to all of these questions are not yet apparent. However, this symposium produced an important discussion on these issues. The following pieces are summaries of presentations by four different practitioners or researchers on these issues. The authors represent immersion programs in California, Hawaii, Louisiana, and Texas.

It is our hope that further discussion of these issues will take place with input from educators working in different immersion contexts across the U.S. If you have data on NCLB's impact on your program or would like to share how your program is meeting the challenges of NCLB requirements, please contact me at ande1819@umn.edu.

It is through continued dialogue on these issues that the bridge between policy research and practice in immersion contexts can be built.

The Impact of No Child Left Behind in California

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D., Professor, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA



Possibly the greatest obstacle with the current NCLB requirements in California, and other states, is that it pressures schools to demonstrate the academic success of their ELL students at early grade levels. Yet, a recent synthesis of the empirical research on English language learners (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, in press; Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, in press) concluded that ELLs who received some specialized program (bilingual or English as a second language education) were able to catch up to, and in some studies surpass, the achievement levels of their ELL peers and their English-speaking peers who were educated in English-only mainstream classrooms – but not until late elementary or middle school. These findings indicate further that ELLs who participated in programs that provided extended instruction through the medium of the students' first language (i.e., two-way immersion and late-exit programs) outperformed students who received short-term instruction through their first language (i.e., early-exit and transitional bilingual education (TBE) programs).

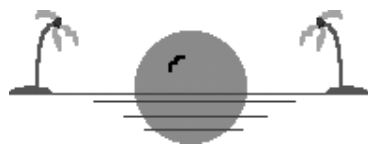
In California, where we also have legislation requiring instruction through the medium of English (Proposition 227), there is the schizophrenic attitude that our ELLs need to learn English as quickly as possible, but, on the other hand, the recognition that bilingualism is an asset. Because of this recognition of the importance of bilingualism, many English-speaking parents have advocated for two-way immersion programs¹. California has the largest number of two-way immersion programs in the country—about 200 such programs (www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/ip/ap/directory.asp).

A variety of studies have examined the bilingual proficiency, academic achievement, and attitudinal outcomes of students in two-way programs. Most of this research comprises students in Spanish/English programs, but there are a few reports that present the outcomes of Chinese and Korean program students as well. My research (e.g., Lindholm-Leary, 2001, 2003, 2005) with students enrolled in two-way immersion (TWI) programs in California is consistent with research in other states in showing that:

- By fifth or sixth grade, almost all ELL and native English-speaking students who had attended a two-way immersion program since kindergarten or first grade were rated as proficient in both languages. In addition, at one high school site, almost all of the students who took the Spanish Advanced Placement test scored high enough for Advanced Placement credit.
- Both ELLs and native English speakers scored at to well above grade level measured in both languages by middle school; and they performed at comparable or superior levels compared to same-language comparison peers. These results extend to studies of Chinese and Korean TWI program students as well.
- In studies of secondary students who had been in a TWI program in elementary school, results with both 90:10 and 50:50 programs showed that students had positive attitudes toward school and the TWI program. Most students believed that learning through two languages helped them learn to think better, made them smarter, and helped them do better in school. Students, especially Hispanics, felt valued in the TWI program, were glad they participated in it, and would recommend it to other students. Most students agreed (and Hispanic students strongly agreed) that the TWI program challenged them to do better in school, gave them more confidence to do well in school, and gave them a better education.

Immersion in the Hawaiian Context

Puanani Wilhelm, Hawaiian Language Immersion Education Specialist, Hawaii State Department of Education, Honolulu, HI



The Papahana Kaiapuni Hawai'i (PKH), Hawaiian Language Immersion Program, is a special instructional program offered in selected public schools where children, for the most part native speakers of English, are taught through the medium of the Hawaiian language. The program provides an important means for students to acquire Hawaiian language proficiency through complete immersion in self-contained school or program-within-a-school settings for elementary and secondary students. Instruction in all content areas in Hawaiian language immersion schools is conducted exclusively in Hawaiian from kindergarten through Grade 4. Beginning in Grade 5, students receive a minimum of one hour of instruction in English. Students in Papahana Kaiapuni Hawaii are expected to meet the same educational standards as are students in the English-medium program.

Under the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) states are required to measure student progress in reading, math and science. They must also test 95% of a school's student body, including those in identified sub-groups regardless of their program of study. Prior to NCLB Hawaiian immersion students in grades K-5 were exempt from participating in statewide testing using a norm-referenced standardized test given in English. Since the NCLB law was passed, however, PKH student progress must be measured in the identified areas. One of the most obvious concerns regarding accountability under NCLB for PKH is finding an appropriate tool for assessing student progress in light of the mismatch between language of instruction and language of assessment. In order to meet the NCLB mandate the State of Hawaii Department of Education (DOE) presented a plan to the Federal Department of Education that resulted in the translation of the English-medium tests used under the Hawaii State Assessment system (a mix of SAT and Hawaii Standards-based items).

Wanting to identify possible areas of difficulty PKH teachers worked with Hawaii DOE program specialists to do a trial translation of some standards-based test items. The trial translation raised some concerns about the translation process itself. It became obvious that there would be problems translating reading passages, especially poetry or pieces that included English idiomatic or figurative language. The PKH teachers also recognized potential issues with the comparative length and relative complexity of the translated piece compared to the original English piece. The test questions related to the reading passages that had to do with grammar, parts of words (like prefixes and suffixes), words whose meanings would need to be derived from context would all be problematic to translate and parallel questions would have to be created.

The PKH teachers also realized, based on their experience with the test translation process, that the translators must be highly skilled Hawaiian language writers who were familiar with the vocabulary being used in the PKH classroom. In fact, the teachers and state staff recommended that original items be created in Hawaiian to assess the same standards at the same level as the English items. The decision was made to do a translation-back-translation model. This model uses one translator to take a test item in English and translate it to Hawaiian. The second translator edits the original translation and creates an English translation of the Hawaiian piece. In the end, the two English versions should be essentially the same, thus assuring fidelity to the meaning of the original English item.

The first translation effort was a grade 3 reading test. Subsequently, the grade three math and grade four reading and math tests were translated along with the directions for administering the test. The Hawaii DOE specialists participated in the translation process by identifying appropriate translators, by seeking feedback regarding the translated material from PKH teachers, and by communicating concerns to Hawaii test development specialists and the translators themselves. However, when the grade 3 pilot translated reading test was administered the same issues identified through the first trial translation resurfaced among PKH teachers who administered the test. There was a general feeling that the test was too difficult for PKH students despite the fact that the translators created a very high quality, accurate Hawaiian version of the test. To be fair, English-medium teachers also think the Hawaii tests are too difficult for their students.

The need to seek an alternate instrument to measure PKH student progress became even more obvious as the subsequent translations of the grade 3 and 4 tests were administered this year. Because the PKH is a program within a larger English-medium school, the entire school, not just the PKH classes, are impacted by poor test scores that are used to measure adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB. While there is no definitive study of comparative progress between English and Hawaiian-medium students, there are obvious problems with using a translated version of the test and maintaining the same high stakes consequences for schools. Fortunately, a re-examination of NCLB requirements by the State of Hawaii Test Advisory Committee and the experience of PKH teachers, students and state staff in using a translated version of the test, may lead to a more appropriate accountability solution in the future.

Starting this summer (2005) work will begin on designing an alternate assessment portfolio system for Papahana Kaiapuni Hawaii program students. The premise is that student evidence (work) will be collected and adjudicated to provide scores (comparable to Hawaii State Assessment [HSA] test scores) to indicate PKH student progress in reading, math and science. The parameters for the student work collection will be provided by the benchmarks assessed in the HSA tests. The portfolio would be designed to guide the collection of student work, perhaps by providing prompts, reading passages, problems or situations to drive student response. These responses, which may take various forms, would then be scored with the same rubrics used to score the HSA tests. The student scores should match with scores derived from various test items and may be used in place of HSA scores.

This alternate form of assessment, which is supported by NCLB, will provide: 1) accurate data regarding PKH student progress relative to the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards in reading, math and science, 2) the opportunity for PKH teachers to be involved in systematic and consistent professional development supportive of the implementation of the alternate portfolio assessment, and 3) valuable information regarding the use of alternate forms of assessment for measuring student progress which may impact the use of such alternate forms with other sub-groups. Ultimately, the goal of all our efforts should be to support student academic achievement regardless of the language used to educate them. Current efforts to fairly assess Papahana Kaiapuni Hawai'i Hawaiian immersion students will result in valuable lessons to inform both Hawaiian language immersion education development in Hawaii, and immersion education efforts nationwide.

Foreign Language Immersion Programs in Louisiana

Nicole Boudreaux, French Immersion Support Teacher, Lafayette Parish French Immersion Program, Lafayette, LA

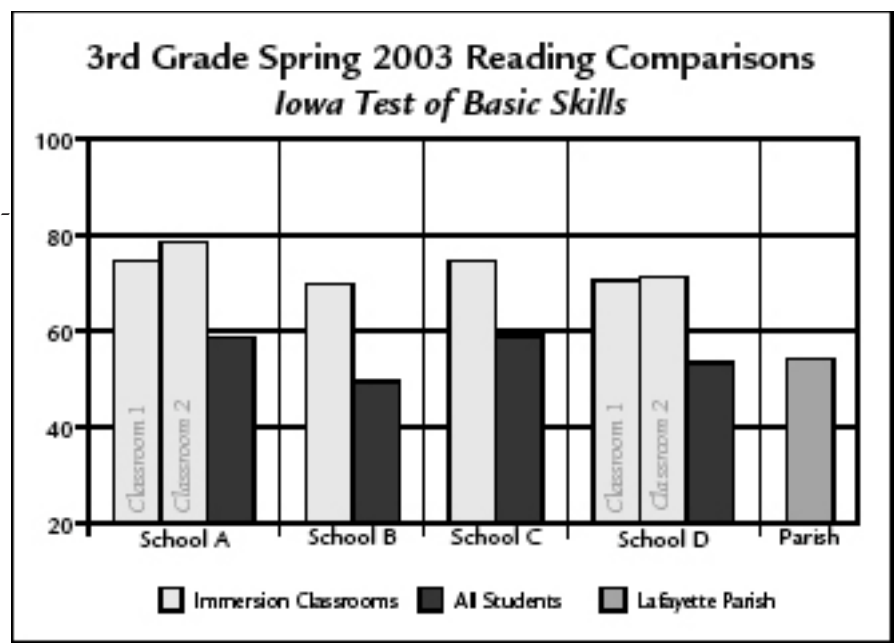


Foreign Language Immersion Programs in Louisiana educate close to 3,000 students in thirty schools. All programs offer partial immersion, which means that students have between 90-120 minutes of English language arts instruction per day starting in Kindergarten. Literacy instruction in English starts in Kindergarten on day one, and programs introduce literacy in French about the middle of the Kindergarten year. Our concerns about NCLB are three-fold: Testing our students' academic progress in the accountability era, proving our staff to be Highly Qualified Teachers, and promoting the credibility of our programs in regard to NCLB standards.

Louisiana is using two standardized measures of testing. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is given at various grade levels (depending on the school district choice) and the Louisiana high-stakes test, LEAP (Louisiana Educational Academic Performance), is administered at grades 4 and 8 in elementary schools. Testing policy for these tests is the same: there are no accommodations given to immersion students. Tests are in English and the students are considered regular education students and must take the tests in English. It is our responsibility to see that they are able to transfer the skills, and especially the vocabulary, they learn in the immersion language into English. Local performance comparisons show that immersion students on average score as high as or higher than non-

immersion peers (see chart for an example at 3rd grade). This finding is the best advertisement for our programs. However, administrators are working with the State Department of Education in order to identify immersion students at the state level when taking these tests so more precise research can be done on this unique population.

It is interesting to note that the state does not require any testing of the students' proficiency level in the immersion language. School districts that



have decided to monitor progress with various foreign language testing measures have done so on a voluntary basis. Sadly, except for foreign language supervisors, no administrator is actually much interested in this aspect of the program.

Regarding the requirement for Highly Qualified Teachers in NCLB, the Louisiana Department of Education has reached a solution that seems adequate. In the state, foreign language immersion teachers come from two sources. Some are local teachers with local certifications, which put them at the same level as any other teacher in the state. For those teachers the only concern is to verify their fluency level in the immersion language, which is done independently by each school system. However, many immersion teachers are foreign born, coming to our system as Foreign Associate Teachers under a J1 visa given to them by CODOFIL (Council for the Development of French In Louisiana)², a government agency. Under NCLB, requirements for hiring have become more demanding. CODOFIL, with verification from the State Department of Education, only recruits teachers with the equivalent of a Bachelor degree, an Elementary Certification in their country of origin (or appropriate subject), and a minimum of 3 years experience. Once they are in Louisiana, they are granted a special certification valid for 3 years and renewable once, which identifies them as Highly Qualified. After 6 years, if they wish to remain in Louisiana, they are required to take the Praxis exam.

Our third concern is credibility in an era where most administrators only worry about ‘Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic’ and all evaluations are based on standardized tests scores. Even though immersion scores are on average higher than those of non-immersion students, many believe that it is due to the fact that our programs are elitist and handpick students, which is not the case. In order to be recognized as a valuable academic program, we have to be sometimes “more royalist than the king,” and follow NCLB requirements to the letter of the law. For example, we have addressed language arts issues by closely matching the immersion language arts curriculum to the English language arts curriculum, and consolidating grade-level instruction to show clear academic progression. Our main concern as immersion educators however remains instructional time spent in each language. Following an early partial immersion model, we have established a minimum of 210 minutes of daily instruction in the immersion language. Some districts still have difficulty maintaining this minimum. As pressure to perform well on NCLB-mandated tests administered in English mounts, French language time may decrease.

NCLB has made it harder for our programs to survive because of unfounded administrative fear of poor test results. It has also made it easier in some ways. NCLB is providing momentum and inspiring focused initiatives to convince opponents using evidence from testing that immersion is a valuable and effective way not only to teach a second language to children, but also simply to teach.

Meeting NCLB Challenges in Texas

Mary Lester Zeigler, Assistant Superintendent, Alamo Heights ISD, San Antonio, TX



Founded in 1909, the Alamo Heights Independent School District (AHISD) is a mid-size suburban school district nestled in the heart of San Antonio, Texas. The five schools—1 high school, 1 middle school, two elementary schools, and one early childhood campus—serve approximately 4500 students in grades PK-12 and represent students from parts of four municipalities—Alamo Heights, Olmos Park, Terrell Hills, and San Antonio.

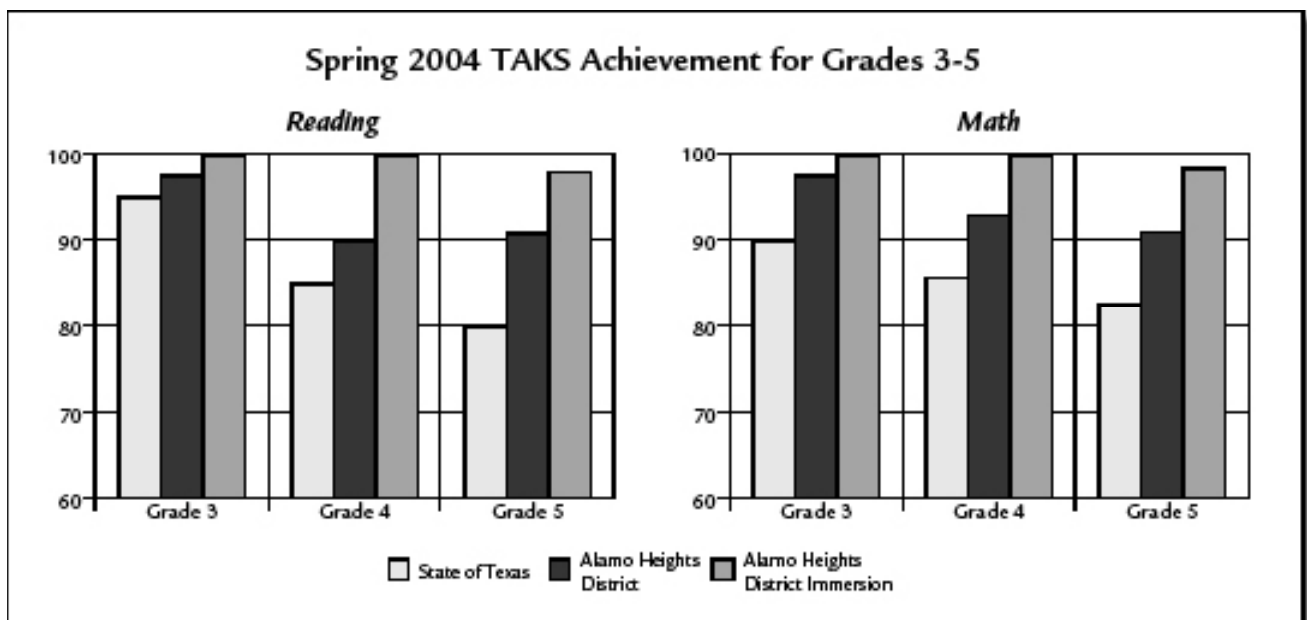
AHISD has many distinctive characteristics. First and foremost, Alamo Heights is known for its tradition of excellence. The schools, students, parents, and communities are united in their support of the school system. This partnership enhances the many accomplishments of the students. Over 90% of the district’s graduating seniors pursue higher education opportunities. SAT and ACT scores earned by AHISD students far exceed the state and national averages. Likewise, student performance

on Advanced Placement (AP) exams is exceptional. In 2004 the College Board identified 87 AP Scholars for their achievement on the AP exams. District demographics reflect a very diverse student population—68% Anglo and 32% minorities. Over 22% of the students are classified as economically disadvantaged. This diversity contributes to the many accomplishments of the district.

AHISD's Spanish Immersion Program was established in the fall of 1998. The oldest students are currently in seventh grade. The immersion offerings will be extended through high school as students progress through the system. The program is designed for English-speaking students who wish to become fluent in Spanish. Students are chosen by a lottery system and enter the program in first grade. The curriculum for language arts/reading, mathematics, science and social studies is delivered entirely in Spanish in first grade and until midyear of second grade. English is introduced in the spring semester of second grade. English language arts is taught for approximately one hour a day in grades 3-5. Students are expected to continue in the program until fifth grade. At the secondary level, students may take one or two classes in the second language.

The major obstacle faced by the AHISD Spanish Immersion Program has been the hiring of teachers. There are many applicants who are "highly qualified" according to NCLB guidelines. Nevertheless, securing master teachers who are fluent in Spanish, committed to the immersion philosophy, and are a match for the community is challenging.

The NCLB requirement for uniform testing measures has not negatively impacted the program. Texas required testing of all students enrolled in public schools long before the NCLB regulations were implemented. (Some type of state testing has been in place for over 25 years.) Immersion students take the state criterion-referenced exams (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Grades 3-5), an abilities test (Cogat, grades 2, 3, 5) and a norm-referenced test (Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), grades 2, 3, 5) in English. Historically they outperform their counterparts in the regular classrooms. The charts below reflect their performance on the state-mandated exams.



In 2004 an AHISD administrator, Dr. Cordell Jones, evaluated the Spanish Immersion program as his dissertation project. Using data from 1999-2003, the study compared the performance of the district's 168 Spanish immersion students to 832 Non-Spanish immersion students and confirmed that the Spanish immersion students outperformed their comparison groups at every grade level. It also confirmed that the Spanish immersion economically-disadvantaged students' achievement was

higher than non-Spanish immersion economically disadvantaged students. Another important finding was that the Spanish immersion students showed no significant dip in their first language.

The AHISD Spanish Immersion offering is one of the most popular offerings in the district and is known throughout the city and state as an exemplary program. Many private school students enroll in the district to be eligible for the lottery. The immersion students develop their second language fluency at a time when brain development is best suited for learning another language. Their academic performance outpaces their counterparts in regular classes. Although hiring qualified teachers who meet all the requirements established by the district is difficult, the end result is an outstanding program for AHISD students.

Footnotes

¹ Two-way, also called dual language, immersion education integrates native English speakers and English language learners for academic instruction that is presented separately through two languages. For both groups of students, one of the languages is their native language and one is a second language.

² For a description of CODOFIL see "Immersion Advocacy and the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana" in the February, 2003 ACIE Newsletter.

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