

DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: PARENT MOTIVATION AND SUPPORT

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### Abstract

This research examined the factors that motivate parents to enroll their children in a dual language setting and the support systems they seek in an effort to assist their children in this learning environment. The study was conducted through a survey of parents whose children are enrolled in one of three dual language programs in Ventura County. The surveys revealed the desire of parents to provide their children with an opportunity to become bilingual and to have a better future. The survey results also specified the systems of support parents seek out from the school sites. Among the most highly requested support systems were language classes and parent meetings explaining the components of dual language programs and the stages of language acquisition.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....i

Introduction.....1

    Researchable Question.....3

    Definition of Terms.....3

Review of Literature.....5

    Programmatic Structure.....5

    Teacher Support.....9

    Parent Motivation.....14

Method.....18

    Setting.....18

    Participants.....20

    Instruments.....20

    Procedures.....21

    Description of Data Analysis Method.....22

Results.....23

    Montalvo Elementary School.....23

    Río Real Elementary School.....26

    University Preparation School at CSU Channel Islands.....29

Preliminary Conclusions and Discussion.....34

    Suggestions for Future Support Systems.....35

    Suggestions for Future Research.....39

References.....40

## Introduction

The number of dual language programs offered in school districts across the nation continues to rise. The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) reports that the number of dual language programs has more than doubled over the last ten years. In 1997, there were 149 dual language programs offered throughout the country. On August 25, 2008 there were 335 programs in 27 states plus Washington, D.C. reported on the CAL website ([www.cal.org/resources/databases.html](http://www.cal.org/resources/databases.html)). California takes claim to nearly one-third of the country's dual language programs with a reported 104 schools in 64 districts throughout the state ([www.cal.org/twi/directory/state.htm](http://www.cal.org/twi/directory/state.htm)). Prior to 1998, many schools in California offered a variety of bilingual programs to English Learners (ELs), but those programs were doomed through the passage of Proposition 227. Article 2, English Language Education, of this law states,

Subject to the exceptions provided in Article 3 (commencing with Section 310), all children in California public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English. In particular, this shall require that all children be placed in English language classrooms. Children who are English learners shall be educated through sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one year. Local schools shall be permitted to place in the same classroom English learners of different ages but whose degree of English proficiency is similar. Local schools shall be encouraged to mix together in the same classroom English learners from different native-language groups but with the same degree of English fluency. Once English learners have acquired a good working knowledge of English, they shall be transferred to English language

mainstream classrooms. As much as possible, current supplemental funding for English learners shall be maintained, subject to possible modification under Article 8 (commencing with Section 335) below.

It is only through parent waivers that students are permitted to receive any instruction in a language other than English in California. Article 3, Parental Exceptions, states,

The requirements of Section 305 may be waived with the prior written informed consent, to be provided annually, of the child's parents or legal guardian under the circumstances specified below and in Section 311. Such informed consent shall require that said parents or legal guardian personally visit the school to apply for the waiver and that they there be provided a full description of the educational materials to be used in the different educational program choices and all the educational opportunities available to the child. Under such parental waiver conditions, children may be transferred to classes where they are taught English and other subjects through bilingual education techniques or other generally recognized educational methodologies permitted by law. Individual schools in which 20 pupils or more of a given grade level receive a waiver shall be required to offer such a class; otherwise, they must allow the pupils to transfer to a public school in which such a class is offered.

As a result of this article, there are a number of schools in California who offer various forms of bilingual education to students on waivers. Ventura County school districts follow this trend, as well. Four school districts have implemented dual language programs in at least one school. Conversations about expanding the number of schools who offer this program are on-going.

*Researchable Question*

With the increase in the number of dual language programs has come an increase in the amount of research focused on this form of education. A large majority of the studies conducted have focused on the effectiveness of dual language programs and the support teachers need in order to be effective. This study will focus specifically on the needs of parents who have enrolled their children in a dual language program within Ventura County. It will answer the questions:

**What are the factors that motivate parents to enroll their children in a dual language program? What support systems do parents involved in a dual language program seek from the school site?**

*Definition of Terms*

In the field of education, there is an indefinite number of ways in which programs where multiple languages are taught can be described and labeled. The National Dual Language Consortium (NDLC) defines dual language as, “a form of bilingual education in which students are taught literacy and content in two languages. Dual language programs foster bilingualism, biliteracy, enhanced awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, and high levels of academic achievement through instruction in two languages.” ([www.dual-language.org/what\\_is.htm](http://www.dual-language.org/what_is.htm)).

Under the umbrella of dual language description, there are four program types, as described by the NDLC.

1. Developmental, or maintenance, bilingual programs. These enroll primarily students who are native speakers of the partner language.
2. Two-way (bilingual) immersion programs. These enroll a balance of native English speakers and native speakers of the partner language.

3. Foreign language immersion, language immersion or one-way immersion. These enroll primarily native English speakers.
4. Heritage language programs. These mainly enroll students who are dominant in English but whose parents, grandparents, or other ancestors spoke the partner language.  
([www.dual-language.org/what\\_is1.htm](http://www.dual-language.org/what_is1.htm)).

This study will focus on two-way bilingual immersion (TWBI) programs within the dual language umbrella. Any reference to dual language programs will be under the definition of TWBI.

**Target Language**—refers to the minority language chosen as the second language of instruction within in dual language program.

## Review of Literature

Programs in which students are immersed in two languages are currently described as the fastest growing programs and the most effective type of foreign language instruction in the United States (Eric Development Team, 2003; Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). As such, dual language programs have received more attention in the past ten years than they have since their inception in 1963 (Fortune & Livant, 2007). With the number of programs growing across the nation every year, these programs have caught the attention of researchers, curious about their programmatic structure, student achievement, teacher support, and parent motivation. This review of the literature will focus on the four areas mentioned above, highlighting common themes found in the research pertaining to each component.

### *Programmatic Structure*

Making the choice regarding the structure of the dual language program at a school is an important decision. It is one upon which administrators, teachers, and parents spend a great deal of time before coming to a conclusion. Important factors contributing to the decision making process are the languages in which instruction is offered, the division of instruction between these languages and the student population in which the dual language program is composed. Most often, schools offer two languages of instruction: the majority language (English, in the United States) and the target, or minority, language.

Some programs begin with the target language as the one in which all students first learn to read and write. The percentage of the day in which English is taught increases with each year the students are enrolled in the program. These programs are typically referred to as the 90:10 model because the target language is spoken 90% of the day in Kindergarten and English is spoken 10% of the day. Each year the amount of time in each language changes by 10%. In first

grade this means that the target language is reduced to 80% and English is increased to 20%. By the time the students are in fourth grade, the division of languages is equal and students spend half of their day in the target language and half of their day in English (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005).

Another dual language program structure is commonly referred to as the 50:50 model. In this structure, the students' instructional day is divided so that exposure to both the target language and the majority language is equal. Within the 50:50 program, there is variance in the students' Language Arts instruction. Some programs choose to follow the simultaneous Language Arts model in which students learn to read and write in both languages from the onset of their education. In the Gómez 50:50 model, students receive Language Arts instruction in their native language until they are ready to transition into their second language, typically in the second or third grade. The language of instruction in Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science is divided so that students are equally exposed to both the target language and English (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Freeman et al., 2005). Often it is impossible to ensure a truly equal division of language time by the end of the instructional day. By the end of the year, however, equity in regards to the exposure to both languages can be achieved.

*Target language.*

Many options are available in the area of target language. The most common choice in the United States, and especially in California, is Spanish. However, a handful of programs throughout the United States offer French; German; Mandarin, Cantonese and other dialects of Chinese; Japanese, and Navajo as the target language ([www.cal.org/twi/directory/tables.html](http://www.cal.org/twi/directory/tables.html); Freeman et al., 2005)

*Strict separation of language.*

It is important in any TWBI program that there is a strict separation of languages. This means that teachers maintain one language during the time of instruction. The languages are typically separated by the time of day, the teacher, subject matter, or space. In a self-contained classroom, the separation of language looks different than that in a team teaching situation. Self-contained TWBI classrooms, most often found in the lower grades of a 90:10 model, have only one teacher. English and the target language, then, are typically separated by the time of day or by the subject matter. For example, in a Kindergarten classroom all subjects are taught in the target language except for English Language Development. In a fourth grade self-contained classroom however, the separation of languages could be structured so that the morning is dedicated to teaching in the target language and the subjects taught in the afternoon are instructed in the majority language. In other examples, the language of instruction alternates by the day. This model ensures that vocabulary in all subject matters is taught in both the target and the majority language.

In the 50:50 model, a team teaching situation is most common. The target language and English, then, are separated by space and person. Students have two teachers each day; one who teaches in English and one who teaches in the target language. As the students change classrooms, so does the language of instruction (Soltero, 2004). Students learn to associate the language with the teacher. When they enter into a new classroom the students change the language channel (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe). Separation of the two languages is essential because if content or directions are translated in the students' dominant language they will not allow themselves to learn their less dominant language.

Often teachers will permit students to speak to them in the opposite language, or to even codeswitch. However, the teacher's response is always given in the language of instruction. This approach builds the students' vocabulary in their non-dominant language. It also lowers the affective filter of learning in their non-dominant language. Some controversy regarding the allowance of codeswitching in dual language programs has developed, however, research has proven it to be a "common linguistic behavior of bilinguals or developing bilinguals" (Soltero, 2004). As noted on page 32 of Dual Language: Teaching and Learning in Two Languages, Durán (1994) states, "This behavior is a normal cross-linguistic outgrowth of becoming or having become bilingual, which implies that the speaker has some degree of competencies in the two languages."

*Student population.*

When considering the composition of the student population for a two-way bilingual immersion program it makes sense to have a balance between language minority and language majority students. The most effective dual language programs have a balance of language minority and language majority students. (Christian, 1994; Lindholm, 1990 in Soltero 2004, p. 28 and Freeman et al., 2005; Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003). This balance allows the students to have peers serve as language models when the instruction is delivered in their non-dominant language. This equal distribution of student language is not always achievable. In these instances, up to two-thirds of the class make-up can be English dominant students (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). However, as noted in Soltero (2004),

"Because one of the essential premises of dual language education is the social, academic, and cultural interaction between students from the two languages, an imbalanced representation of the two linguistic groups seriously weakens the program's

effectiveness. A substantial imbalance in linguistic representation creates serious problems for dual language programs. The high levels of second language proficiencies attained by both language groups, particularly by English-dominant learners in the minority language, are largely attributed to the interaction between students from the two languages. (p. 28)

Another factor to be considered in regards to student population is the ethnic diversity among the native English speakers. English-dominant students typically represent Anglos, Latinos, African Americans, among other ethnic groups. In addition to the ethnic diversity, students often come from different socio-economic backgrounds. This can greatly impact the students' academic and linguistic needs (Freeman et al., 2005; Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003).

“Students in dual language enrichment programs, even when all the children are Latino, do not all start with the same first language. Some are native English speakers and some are not. Usually, students come from both low-income and middle- or upper-middle-class families. The students learn together in two languages and become competent in both. When students come from two or more cultural groups, they also build important friendships and come to appreciate one another's strengths, languages, and cultures. (Freeman et al., 2005).

### *Teacher Support*

#### *Administrative support.*

With the varying demands placed on teachers in a dual language program, it is important that teachers feel supported by the administration. The role of the principal in a dual language setting differs from that of an administrator in a mainstream school (Reyes, 2002).

Principals, in particular, must be highly skilled and sensitive to [the issues facing bilingual teachers]. Principals need to provide continuous direction and yet work collegially with the bilingual director and district supervisors. . . . principals also need to know how to supervise within the context of continuous change and adaptation and a curriculum foreign to everyone. This leader must be highly skilled in human relations and in confronting racial tension, historical inequalities, and ingrained negative attitudes (Calderón & Carreon, 2000).

In another effective Dual language model, the principal “...acts as a clinical/collaborative supervisor vis-à-vis her young instructional staff. She acts as mentor and ‘critical friend’ to individual teachers, giving them feedback after conducting ‘walk-throughs’ with visiting researchers” (Reyes, 2002). It is also important for members of the administration to be involved in the professional development sessions alongside the teachers so that “[the principals] can be sensitive to [the teachers’] needs and adjust the support systems” (Calderón, 1995). While the principal’s role varies, it is clear from the research that being able to deal with tough topics is a valuable skill. Acting as a mentor, spending time in the teachers’ classrooms and offering feedback are also important responsibilities to be carried out by the administration. These added duties may be too cumbersome for a principal to take on themselves.

Because of this, David Bernhardson (2007) states that it is important to “include resources to hire a curriculum coordinator - someone whose primary role is to attend to the many unique curriculum development needs of an immersion program.” This supportive role is mentioned throughout the research on Dual language programs. While the roles and responsibilities, as well as the titles of the position, vary from program to program, they are similar to those mentioned as duties of a principal. Nevertheless, this position is noted as a

critical feature in successful Dual language programs (Calderón, 1995, 1996; Calderón & Carreon, 2000; Clark, Flores, Riojas-Cortez, & Smith, 2002; Ernest & Gonzalez, 1996, 1997, 1999; Reyes, 2002; Peña, 2002). The most common responsibilities of this position are to provide support for the Dual language teachers through classroom visits (Reyes, 2002), providing and attending professional development sessions (Boudreaux, 2007; Ernest & Gonzalez, 1996, 1997, 1999), clarification of the program structure and components (Peña, 2002), and facilitate collaboration meetings (Clark et al., 2002; Ernest & Gonzalez, 1999, Reyes, 2002). Ernest and Gonzalez (1999) note that management and implementation of their project was facilitated through strong administrative support and leadership.

Regardless of the form in which the administrative support may come, Calderón and Carreon (2000) note, “It is not enough to have the curriculum, well-prepared teachers, and a well-thought out design. Without support from the school leadership, the program can still fail.”

*Ongoing professional development and teacher training.*

“As two-way bilingual or dual language programs begin to flourish throughout the nation, special care must be taken to give the teachers in such programs support, freedom and resources to do their job well” (Calderón, 1995). Aside from physical resources, teachers need pedagogical resources to be effective in a dual language setting. Reyes (2002) confirms this notion by stating, “Professional development would seem to be a high priority given that bilingual/dual language teachers suffer from a set of existential dilemmas and professional challenges.” Howard, Sugarman, and Christian (2003) note that, “teachers appreciate ongoing professional development to help them with these challenges.”

As reviewed in the literature, this is, in some cases, as simple as learning the basics of a dual language program (Clark et al., 2002; Peña, 2002). At other sites, support in the form of

curriculum training needs to occur so that all staff members are prepared to use the new instructional pieces (Coy & Litherland, 2000; Ernest & Gonzalez, 1996, 1997, 1999; Reyes, 2002). It is important in these training opportunities that staff be given the theoretical background of the materials being presented, as well as ample time to practice putting them to use (Ernest & Gonzalez, 1999). Often after the initial training opportunities, ongoing professional development is offered; some for the whole staff and other based on interest and need (Calderón & Carreon, 2000). Still other Dual language programs are focused on acquiring methods for collaborating with the staff and external agencies (Calderón, 1995, 1996; Calderón & Carreon, 2000; Clark et al., 2002; Reyes, 2002). Regardless of the form it takes, “useful professional development models have been designed to further support [the] teaching [of dual language teachers] in these challenging educational environments” (Howard et al., 2003).

#### *Teacher collaboration.*

As stated by Boudreaux (2007), it is important for administrators to “enforce collaboration among everyone.” The implementation of collaboration is seen in much of the research about dual language programs. While taking on different names and a variety of forms, collaboration is viewed as a “best practice in a bilingual setting” (Reyes, 2002). In most models, the teachers meet regularly to plan curriculum and reflect on their teaching practices (Calderón, 1995, 1996; Calderón & Carreon, 2000; Ernest & Gonzalez, 1996, 1997, 1999; Reyes, 2002).

Margarita Calderón has conducted extensive research in the area of teacher collaboration and professional learning communities in a dual language setting. She has named this model Teachers Learning Communities (TLCs), which are defined as, “opportunities for mainstream-bilingual teacher teams to meet regularly to study their instructional practices, adjust and solve multiple problems, take risks, share student successes, analyze student work, and continue their

personal and professional growth” (Calderón & Carreon, 2000). The teachers were trained in ethnography techniques and use these notes to guide their conversations during the TLCs (Calderón, 1995, 1996; Calderón & Carreon, 2000).

By creating a culture of inquiry through ethnography, professional learning was focused and accelerated. With the tools of ‘teacher ethnography’ the teams of monolingual and bilingual teachers drew closer together. . . . the teachers’ continuous learning is bringing about instructional program refinement and greater student gains as evidenced by preliminary test data for the experimental and control sites (Calderón, 1996).

*Partnerships with external agencies.*

Three successful models of collaboration with external agencies were cited in the literature. Relationships with educational institutions, including colleges and universities, have proven to be beneficial mutually beneficial (Clark et al., 2002; Ernest & Gonzalez, 1999; Reyes, 2002).

A consultant and the dual language coordinator at one site took on the roles of coach and ‘critical friend’ in an effort to help teachers pursue research questions (Reyes, 2002). N. Rivera Méndez (personal communication, June 2, 2000) stated, “This kind of staff development helped me improve my planning and my effectiveness as a teacher.” Additionally, this action research cultivated collaboration and teamwork, as noted by C. Demoleas (personal communication, June 19, 2000). Likewise, similar training occurred on a different campus where “the dual language program staff and consultants provided 18 professional staff development sessions for teachers and administrators” (Ernest & Gonzalez, 1999).

At the third site, a strong relationship with a university was established. The role of the university was to “provide professional development, graduate training, and consultation for the

school” (Clark et al., 2002). This partnership developed between the two institutions “initiated a collaborative process. The relationship [was] reciprocal, with each entity addressing and meeting the needs of the other” (Clark et al., 2002).

### *Parent Motivation*

In a review of the literature focused on factors that motivate parents to enroll their children in a dual language program, bilingualism and multiculturalism were common features noted by the researchers. Within the desire for bilingual children, the cognitive, financial, and academic benefits of bilingualism were also mentioned. Researchers also found that parents with linguistically diverse family members sought out ways to facilitate their children’s ability to communicate and connect with relatives who speak a different language.

### *Bilingualism.*

Schools with dual language programs promote bilingualism, multiculturalism, and academic achievement. Bilingualism is a skill upon which great value is placed in dual language programs (Dagenais, 2003; Freeman et al., 2005; King & Fogle, 2006). By definition, dual language programs have a goal for students to become biliterate, as well. The California Department of Education defines the goal of TWBI as a program in which students will “develop their bilingualism and biliteracy in English and another language.”

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/ip/overview.asp>). This requires educating students who will not only be able to speak a second language, but who will also have the skills which will enable them to read and write in the additional language.

For years, researchers have pointed out the benefits of being bilingual. Both professionally and socially, having knowledge of another language expands the number of people with whom one is able to communicate (King & Fogle, 2006). Businesses look for

potential employees who are fluent in multiple languages (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2005). In her research, Leticia Saucedo (1997) states, “There are those who believe that in today’s multiethnic society and global economy, it is essential for all students to learn a variety of languages so as to promote cultural diversity, increase financial opportunities, and effectively provide for the communication of various cultures and populations.” This research is confirmed by Dagenais (2003) who states that, “parents equate multilingualism and knowledge of French, English and their family language with marketable resources in national and international economies.”

As the world continues to move toward a global economy, the need for employees who speak multiple languages increases. The number of employment opportunities for those who are bilingual or multilingual is greater than for those who are not. Often, salaries and wages are higher for employers who speak multiple languages, as well. The possibility of having a better future is greater as a bilingual person than it is as a monolingual one as a result of the additional opportunities available to those who speak more than one language. Bilingualism and multilingualism are very marketable skills. It is quite clear what benefits come about as the result of a higher paying job. Financial security is an achievement all parents want for their children. Because it is a skill many employers prefer, and sometimes require, being bilingual provides a certain amount of job security. In a day and age where unemployment is high, having this skill set is one that will set the potential employee apart from the competition. Job security and employability are two factors that contribute to providing a better future. Parents want their children to have employment and financial security. Being bilingual increases the probability of both.

An abundance of research has been devoted to discovering and sharing the cognitive advantages of learning another language. Thomas and Collier are two of the nation's leading researchers in dual language programs. Through their research, and that conducted by other researchers it has been proven that ELs who have participated in a dual language program for at least four years academically outperform their monolingual peers. Their research has also found that native English speakers performed above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on norm-referenced tests in English, in addition to maintaining their English skills and acquiring a second language (Dagenais, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

A significant amount of research has also shed light on the benefits of learning other languages at an early age. Children learning an additional language “achieve cognitive and linguistic benefits on academic tasks that call for creativity and problem solving; know about the structural properties of the languages; knowledge is beneficial in reading development because it facilitates decoding academic language” (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2005, p. 5).

*Preservation of heritage language.*

Many people come from linguistically diverse backgrounds, however not all family members have maintained their ability to communicate in more than one language. Especially in California, there is a large population of English-first Latinos. Many of these families have sought out two-way immersion programs in an effort to facilitate relationships with all family members because being bilingual will allow the children to learn and/or maintain the family's heritage language (Dagenais, 2006; Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006; King & Fogle, 2006). This has become a reason for the increase in TWI enrollment (King & Fogle, 2006). Diane Dagenais found that “parents invest in maintaining the family language to secure their children's affiliation and identification with their language communities” (p. 278).

*Multiculturalism.*

People who are bilingual are “able to understand and communicate with members of other cultural groups and to expand their world. They are able to respect the values, social customs, and ways of viewing the world of speakers of other languages and their communities” (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2005, pp5-6). As noted in Freeman et al. (2004), students who have participated in a dual language program have more positive attitudes regarding multiculturalism and bilingualism. This notion is supported by Soltero (2002). She reports that when students have developed a secure cultural identity, they are better equipped to succeed academically. By incorporating the students’ language and culture into the school curriculum, the learners’ native language and cultural identity are reinforced. In doing so, “the minority culture and language are viewed as advantages that enrich the lives and opportunities of the minority group and broaden the awareness and understanding of the majority group (Soltero, 2002).

## Method

### *Setting*

Four elementary schools in Ventura County currently offer dual language programs as an alternative instructional program. Three of these schools, Montalvo Elementary School, University Preparation School, and Río Real Elementary School, agreed to participate in this study. Each school has designed the dual language program after the two-way bilingual immersion models, meaning that each class is made up of both English-learners and Spanish-learners and that all students are learning both languages.

In 2000, Montalvo Elementary School was the first to implement this model in Ventura County and is currently in its tenth year of implementation. Montalvo has two instructional pathways; the dual language program and the structured English immersion program. The dual language program provides the students with a 90:10 delivery of language instruction. In kindergarten and first grade all students spend 90% of their instructional day in Spanish and 10% in English. The percentages are reduced to 80% in Spanish and 20% in English in second grade. In third grade, Spanish instruction makes up 70% of the day, while English instruction is increased to 30%. Following this progression, the students eventually divide their instructional day equally to reach 50:50 by the time they enter fifth grade. Montalvo Elementary School provides two way immersion education to 209 students in grades Kindergarten through fifth.

Río Real Elementary School is one of the newest dual language programs in Ventura County and also follows the 90:10 model. The two-way immersion program at this school transferred from another campus in the district, so the current participating population is comprised of 40 kindergarteners and 19 first graders, some of whom transferred to Río Real from

the previous school site. This year there are two kindergarten classes following the dual immersion program in an effort to expand the number of participants.

University Preparation School at California State University Channel Islands (UPS) is a direct-funded charter school. UPS offers classes for students in kindergarten through fifth grade and, like its dual language companions, offers two different strands within the school. A difference between UPS and the other schools offering two-way immersion programs in Ventura County is that the other program offered on the school site includes instruction in conversational Spanish. This strand, called Language Enrichment, provides 30-45 minutes of conversational Spanish each day. The dual language program at UPS follows a 50:50 model of two-way immersion instruction. The students in this program have two teachers with whom they spend their day. Half of the day is spent with their Spanish teacher and the other half with their teacher of English. Both teachers implement Language Arts lessons with all children each day. The method of dispersing Math, Social Studies, and Science lessons, however, varies by grade level and/or unit. By the end of the school year, though, the students have received half of their instruction in each language in all curricular areas.

The classroom makeup in the dual language program consists of fifty percent native Spanish speakers and fifty percent native English speakers. This composition allows for the presence of strong, peer language models regardless of the language of instruction. Because the teachers never abandon their language of instruction in front of the students, the language models can also serve as the bridge between instruction and comprehension until the target language skills are better developed.

Another unique opportunity offered to the students of UPS is a multi-age classroom setting. In these classes there are children from at least two different grade levels learning

together. Typically the student compositions in the multiage classrooms are: kindergarten and first grade (Early Years), second and third grades (Primary Years), and fourth and fifth grades (Intermediate Years). Regardless of the classroom makeup, students remain with their teacher for at least two years as they loop from one grade to another. The curriculum for the two grade levels is divided over the two year span. The standards have been grouped together according to the school-wide, over-arching themes of Voyages and Cycles of Life. All teachers, even those teaching a straight grade, consult the standards within this curriculum map to guide their instruction.

### *Participants*

Four schools were invited to include their parent population in this study. The participating schools were chosen based on being located in Ventura County and the presence of a dual language program at the school site. Three administrators accepted the invitation to participate in this study. Individual invitations to participate in the study were attached to the eight-question survey and were sent home with the students in each of the dual language classes from the three participating school sites. All participants were parents or legal guardians of students currently enrolled in a dual language program at the school sites.

### *Instruments*

The instrument for this study was a survey distributed to the participants. The survey consisted of eight questions. The questions centered on the factors that motivated each parent to enroll their child(ren) in the dual language program at the school site and the forms of support they sought from the school site. The questions were as follows:

1. How many children do you have enrolled at this school? In what grades are they currently enrolled?

2. Are each of your children enrolled in the Dual language program? If not, please explain why.
3. How long has your eldest child been enrolled in the Dual language program?
4. What languages are spoken in your home?
5. What motivated you to enroll your child(ren) in this Dual language program?
6. Have those motivating factors changed over time? If so, how and why have they changed?
7. What type of support systems does the school have in place for parents? Are any of the support systems focused specifically on the needs of families in the Dual language program?
8. What other types of support could be offered to meet your needs?

Each participant was invited to participate through a written consent form in which they were assured that each individual's results from the survey would be kept confidential. Each participant was given a copy of the survey questions attached to the consent form. A week long timeframe was granted in an effort to provide an opportunity to prepare thoughtful answers to the survey questions.

### *Procedure*

Copies of the consent forms and survey questions were color-coded by school so that data could be disaggregated by school site, as well as throughout the county. Both documents were distributed in Spanish and English. The Spanish translations were stapled on top of the English copies for two reasons. First and foremost, placing the Spanish in the front elevates the status of

the target language of the dual language programs. Secondly, it ensures greater participation from the Spanish speaking population of each school site. By not requiring these participants to search through the documents to find a translation, it increased the chance that more people would complete the questions. An envelope was paper clipped to each survey so that completed documents could be returned in a confidential manner. Each teacher was provided with a large envelope to serve as the collection mechanism. The surveys and consent forms were delivered to the school sites the week prior to distribution so that they could be clearly explained to the principal and then the staff members. The completed surveys were retrieved from the school site the week following their distribution.

#### *Description of Data Analysis Methods*

The data will be presented as a summary of the responses given by each participating school. In an analysis of the data returned from all three schools, a compilation of the results, as well as common themes will be reported.

## Results

### *Montalvo Elementary School*

#### *Return rate and language of surveys.*

Sixty-five surveys, representing at least 96 students in the dual language program, were returned. Based on the enrollment in the dual language program at Montalvo, a 46% return rate was obtained for this project. Forty-one surveys were completed in English and twenty-four were completed in Spanish. This equates to 63% of the responses being returned in English and 37% in Spanish. Of the completed surveys returned, twenty-four parents noted that only English is spoken in the home, representing 37% of the participant population. Fourteen surveys, which translate to 22%, mentioned that only Spanish is spoken in the home. Twenty-five surveys, or 39%, stated that both Spanish and English are used in the home. Three surveys were returned with the mention of German or French being spoken at home. These surveys represent 5% of the population completing the surveys.

#### *Motivating factors for enrollment.*

In sharing the factors which led to the enrollment of their child(ren) in the dual language program at Montalvo, forty participants mentioned the importance or desire for their child to be bilingual. Fifteen participants felt that bilingualism would improve their child's future or that being bilingual would provide a better future for their child. Ten participants mentioned that being bilingual would provide better jobs and educational opportunities in their child's future. Eight surveys stated that the importance of learning another language at an early age was a motivating factor for enrolling their child in the dual language program at this school site. Additionally, four surveys noted that their child's enrollment in the dual language program was partly motivated by the increased brain and cognitive development the program provides. Five

participants felt that the dual language program provided a challenge and or enrichment in their child's education.

Survey results also indicated being motivated by the multicultural aspect of the dual language program. Nineteen of the completed surveys stated a desire for their child to maintain their heritage language. Nine mentioned they chose the dual language program because they wanted their child's appreciation of different cultures to be increased. Two additional surveys mentioned the dual language program was chosen in an effort to expose their child to a diverse population. One participant mentioned being motivated by the desire that his or her child become a global citizen.

Seven surveys mentioned factors related to the school. Two participants felt that Montalvo was a school superior to others in the area. One participant was motivated to enroll his or her child in the program due to its quality. One survey mentioned the location of the school as being a motivating factor. Another noted the school's test scores as a factor of motivation. One survey stated that enrollment in the dual language program would provide his or her daughter with a good self-concept.

Other motivating factors were associations to educators in a dual language program. Two participants mentioned either being a teacher or being related to a teacher in a dual language program. One participant stated that her child was enrolled due to her husband's insistence.

*Support systems offered by the school site.*

Forty-eight surveys were returned mentioning the various support systems offered by the school site. Twenty-one participants stated that the school supported the parents through Two Way Immersion Meetings. Thirty-two mentioned the language classes offered to parents are beneficial in providing support. Eleven participants also noted the benefits of the parenting

classes offered. Two participants specifically stated the technology classes offered at the school site as a support system at Montalvo. Five participants mentioned that the school offers support through the translation of materials sent home and for parent meetings. Newsletters and phone messages were also mentioned by five participants as being a positive support system in place at Montalvo. One parent stated that the translation of the homework was beneficial. Five parents also mentioned the support provided through the availability of bilingual books.

The personnel associated with the school site were also listed by several participants as a support system. One survey noted the school personnel in general, while five participants mentioned the teachers, one made note of the bilingual parent liaison, and seven mentioned the principal. One participant also mentioned the other parents of the TWI program as a support system.

Programs within the school were also mentioned as providing support to the parents in the dual language program. Four participants stated the after school programs offered are a system of support. One participant mentioned the migrant program and another noted the free breakfast and lunch program as other support systems. Four additional participants stated that the focus groups available at the school, such as the School Advisory Council and the English Language Acquisition Committee, were supportive. An additional survey noted the fundraisers at school offer support to the dual language program, as well.

*Support systems specific to the dual language program.*

Fifteen surveys mentioned support systems that were specifically designed to meet the needs of the dual language program. All of these surveys mentioned the TWI meetings offered at the school site. One participated noted that the parenting classes and three stated that the

language classes were specifically offered to parents of students in the dual language program at Montalvo.

*Suggestions for further support systems.*

Twenty-eight surveys contained suggestions for support systems focused on the needs of the dual language program. Six participants mentioned the need for classes for parents; five of which suggested language classes and one requested parenting classes. Four participants suggested having after school programs and two requested assistance with homework. Eight parents noted that summer school would be an additional way to support the dual language families. Two surveys made the recommendation to hold social gatherings for the dual language families. Three suggestions for more bilingual field trips were also made. Two participants asked for instruction in the arts and physical education and one requested cultural education. Whereas one parent requested that the school site share research and data on dual language programs. Additional surveys suggested Spanish books and more parent-teacher conferences.

*Río Real Elementary School*

*Return rate and language of surveys.*

Twenty-five surveys, representing at least 25 students in the dual language program were returned. Based on the enrollment in this program at Río Real Elementary School, a 42% return rate was achieved at this site. Seven surveys were completed in English and eighteen were completed in Spanish. This equates to 28% of the responses being returned in English and 72% in Spanish. Of the completed surveys returned, two parents noted that only English is spoken in the home, representing 8% of the participant population. Seventeen surveys, which translate to 68%, mentioned that only Spanish is spoken in the home. Six surveys, or 24%, stated that both Spanish and English are used in the home.

*Motivating factors for enrollment.*

In sharing the factors which led to the enrollment of their child(ren) in the dual language program at Río Real, nineteen participants mentioned the importance or desire for their child to be bilingual. Seven participants felt that bilingualism would improve their child's future or that being bilingual would provide a better future for their child. Three participants mentioned that being bilingual would provide better jobs and educational opportunities in their child's future.

Survey results also indicated being motivated by the multicultural aspect of the dual language program. Five of the completed surveys stated a desire for their child to maintain their heritage language. Two mentioned they chose the dual language program because they wanted their child's appreciation of different cultures to be increased. Two additional surveys mentioned the dual language program was chosen in an effort to expose their child to a diverse population.

Three surveys mentioned factors related to the school. One participant was motivated to enroll his or her child in the program due to its quality and another because of the quality of the teachers involved in the dual language program. An additional survey mentioned that placement in the dual language program was the only space available to his or her kindergartener. This participant is now grateful for his or her child's opportunity to acquire correct grammar in both English and Spanish.

*Support systems offered by the school site.*

Fourteen surveys were returned mentioning the various support systems offered by the school site. Three participants stated that the school supported the parents through Two Way Immersion Meetings. Four additional participants mentioned meetings, not specific to TWI, as being supportive. One survey mentioned that the language classes offered to parents are beneficial in providing support. One participant mentioned that the school offers support through

the translation of materials sent home and for parent meetings. Newsletters were also mentioned by one participant as being a positive support system in place at Río Real. One parent also mentioned the support provided through the availability of bilingual books.

The personnel associated with the school site were also listed by several participants as a support system. One survey noted the school personnel in general, while two participants specifically mentioned the teachers as being supportive. Another participant mentioned the support provided through the parent-teacher conferences. An additional survey participant stated that the whole school is focused on the dual language program. One participant also mentioned that the parents are encouraged to participate in the school.

*Support systems specific to the dual language program.*

Five surveys mentioned support systems that were specifically designed to meet the needs of the dual language program. Three of these surveys mentioned TWI meetings. One participated noted the after school programs as being focused on the needs of the dual language program.

*Suggestions for further support systems.*

Seven surveys were returned with suggestions for support systems focused on the needs of the dual language program. One participant mentioned the need for language classes for parents. Another suggested having after school programs. An additional survey asked for the homework to be translated as a means of support for the dual language parents. One survey mentioned that merely continuing with the TWI program would be a means through which to support it. There were additional suggestions for more parent-child interaction, a computation program, and social gatherings for the families in the dual language program. Also, a participant

suggested creating a connection with the other dual language programs in the county as an additional support system.

*University Preparation School at CSU Channel Islands*

*Return rate and language of surveys.*

Seventy surveys, representing at least 95 students in the dual language program, were returned. Based on the enrollment in the dual language program at UPS, a 43% return rate was obtained for this project. Forty-eight surveys were completed in English and twenty-two were returned in Spanish. Of the surveys returned, twenty-three noted that only English is spoken in the home and eleven noted that only Spanish is spoken in the home. Thirty-three surveys noted that both languages are spoken at home. Two other languages, Gujarati and Japanese, are also languages spoken in the homes of students at UPS.

*Motivating factors for enrollment.*

In sharing the factors which led to the enrollment of their child(ren) in the dual language program at University Preparation School, forty-seven participants mentioned the importance or desire for their child to be bilingual. Twelve participants felt that bilingualism would improve their child's future or that being bilingual would provide a better future for their child. Five participants mentioned that being bilingual would provide better jobs and educational opportunities in their child's future. Eight surveys stated that the importance of learning another language at an early age was a motivating factor for enrolling their child in the dual language program at this school site. Additionally, four surveys noted that their child's enrollment in the dual language program was partly motivated by the increased brain and cognitive development the program provides. Three participants felt that the dual language program provided a challenge and or enrichment in their child's education.

Survey results also indicated being motivated by the multicultural aspect of the dual language program. Eight of the completed surveys stated a desire for their child to maintain their heritage language. One participant stated that the dual language program would emulate his or her child's home environment. Three mentioned they chose the dual language program because they wanted their child's appreciation of different cultures to be increased. Five additional surveys mentioned the dual language program was chosen in an effort to expose their child to a diverse population and one survey mentioned a reduction in the child's bias as a motivating factor. One participant mentioned being motivated by the desire that his or her child become confident in speaking Spanish.

Nine surveys mentioned factors related to the school. One participant felt that UPS was a school superior to others in the area. Two participants were motivated to enroll his or her child in the program due to its quality. One survey noted the school's association with California State University, Channel Islands a factor of motivation. An additional participant mentioned he or she was motivated by the quality of the teachers in the dual language program. Three surveys noted that the idea of having a Spanish curriculum for their child was a reason for enrollment.

*Support systems offered by the school site.*

Thirty-eight surveys were returned making note of the support systems offered by the school site. Four participants mentioned the language classes previously offered to parents as being a beneficial means through which to offer support. Four participants mentioned that the school offers support through the translation of materials sent home and for parent meetings. Newsletters and phone messages were also mentioned by three participants as being a positive support system in place at UPS. One parent stated that the translation of the homework was

beneficial. Two parents also mentioned the support provided through the availability of bilingual books.

The personnel associated with the school site were also listed by several participants as a support system. Fourteen participants mentioned the teachers as providing support at UPS. One participant also mentioned the other parents of the TWI program as a support system.

Programs within the school were also mentioned as providing support to the parents in the dual language program. Six participants noted that parent teacher conferences are a positive means of support. Four noted that the ability to participate in the classrooms as a means of support. Two participants stated the after school programs offered are a system of support. Three additional surveys mentioned specific after school clubs, such as the Math Club, Ballet Folklórico and the Art Club as support systems. Four additional participants stated that the focus groups available at the school, such as the School Advisory Council and the English Language Acquisition Committee, were supportive. Ten parents stated the Family Resource Center offers support. Two participants also made note of the bilingual books that are made available and one mentioned the availability of computers.

*Support systems specific to the dual language program.*

Three surveys were returned commenting on the support systems in place at UPS that are specific to the dual language program. One survey mentioned both the language classes that were previously offered at the school site and the after school activities as being support systems specifically designed to meet the needs of dual language families. Two surveys noted that the teachers in the dual language program offer support specific to the needs of the program.

*Suggestions for further support systems.*

Forty-five surveys contained suggestions for support systems focused on the needs of the dual language program. Nineteen participants mentioned the need for classes for parents; fifteen of which suggested language classes, three requested parenting classes and one suggested computer classes. Six surveys suggested having after school programs and one participant requested summer school. Two additional surveys asked for the homework to be translated as a means of support for the dual language parents whereas seventeen parents requested assistance in how to help their children with homework. One survey mentioned that merely continuing with the TWI program would be a means through which to support it. There were additional suggestions for more parent-child interaction, a computation program, and social gatherings for the families in the dual language program. Also, a participant suggested creating a connection with the other dual language programs in the county as an additional support system. Three surveys made the recommendation to hold social gatherings for the dual language families and two suggested activities that promote parent-child interactions. Three suggestions for more bilingual field trips were also made. Two participants asked for cultural education. Whereas one parent requested that the school site share research and data on dual language programs. One additional survey suggested Spanish books and three requested audio material in Spanish. There was one request for webcams in the classrooms so that parents could be a part of the instructional day even while at work.

Fifteen surveys made recommendations for ways in which information could be shared with the parents involved in the dual language program at UPS. Eight parents requested regular TWI meetings. Five suggested meetings in which research and data are shared whereas one

participant requested the information be shared via mail. One other made a specific request for the benefits of bilingualism to be shared.

Nine surveys made suggestions regarding personnel at UPS. Five participants requested that more bilingual staff be hired on the school site. One survey suggested ensuring additional help for teachers in the dual language program. One participant recommended that UPS have a coordinator of the dual language program. Two parents suggested that the connections with CSUCI be strengthened.

### Preliminary Conclusions and Discussion

The reasons for enrolling students in a dual language program most noted in research were mentioned by the surveyed parents in Ventura County. Because bilingualism is a skill that is highly valued in dual language programs it comes as no surprise that 68% of the surveys mentioned this as a motivating factor for enrollment in a dual language program (Freeman et al., 2005). It may seem a bit obvious that parents who enroll their children in a dual language program want them to be bilingual, however, that seems to be true in English speaking families more so than in Spanish speaking homes. Many native English-speaking families mentioned the cognitive and academic benefits of learning a second language and specifically acquiring it at a younger age. These parents are aware their children are already fluent in the dominant language of the country in which they reside. Having a second language puts their child ahead of the game. Spanish speaking parents are looking for ways to help their child make gains in the United States. For these families, the parents feel their children need to develop a strong command of the English language (Dagenais, 2003). They have been told that maintaining Spanish and transferring these skills to English is a means to that end. In these cases, bilingualism may not be the highest priority, but rather developing a strong command of English is most important. In addition to quoting the research that supports the notion of developing English through a student's native language, administrators need to make sure all parents are aware of the numerous benefits of becoming bilingual and biliterate.

For many parents in Ventura County, becoming bilingual and being enrolled in a dual language program meant reconnecting and/or learning the child's heritage language. Many Latino parents were not raised bilingually as children because their parents wanted them to learn English. As the research regarding the benefits of bilingualism is becoming more well-known,

Latino parents are choosing to enroll their children in dual language programs. They want their children to have an opportunity they did not have—becoming bilingual. For these families becoming bilingual means more than knowing two languages; it means connecting and communicating with monolingual family members and preserving a piece of the student's cultural background.

The added benefit of cultural appreciation and diversity was also noted by Ventura County parents. In a global society, it is becoming more and more important to be aware of and sensitive to the myriad of cultures in our world. Interactions with people of a background different than your own is inevitable both in one's personal and professional life. Many companies, both large and small, have offices and manufacturing plants around the world. Being enrolled in a dual language program offers opportunities for a multicultural education while building relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds.

#### *Suggestions for Support Systems at the School Site*

The portion of this project that has not yet been explored by researchers is the various forms of support offered to and/or needed by parents who have chosen to enroll their children in a dual language program. The participants of this survey overwhelmingly noted that parent meetings, especially those focused on the needs specific to dual language programs were a great means of support. In schools where these meetings were not currently offered, it was suggested that they be implemented as a means of support. In her research, Stephanie Sheriff (2007) notes that she conducts workshops on a variety of topics in an effort to reach out to and support parents in the dual language program. Parents are eager to be informed of current research on dual language programs; specifically about the benefits of bilingualism, the models for dual language programs and the benefits and drawbacks of each model, and the language development

expectations for students. Many parents are unaware that the process for learning to read is different in English than it is in Spanish. While most parents understand that the acquisition of literacy skills of a student enrolled in a dual language program may be delayed in the early grades, they are unclear as to what that looks like in reality. When *should* their child begin to transfer their literacy skills from one language to the other? What types of errors will a student typically make while acquiring literacy skills in a second language? How long does it usually take before a child is able to read fluently in both languages? Does a child's decoding skills develop at the same rate as his or her comprehension skills? Two resources mentioned by King & Fogle (2006) that may prove to be beneficial and informative to parents involved in dual language programs are: *The Bilingual Family Newsletter* ([www.bilingualfamilynewsletter.com](http://www.bilingualfamilynewsletter.com)) and the *Why, How, and When Should My Child Learn a Second Language?* brochure ([www.cal.org/resources/brochures/whyhowwhen\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.cal.org/resources/brochures/whyhowwhen_brochure.pdf)).

Meetings focused on ways to support students as they develop oral, receptive and literacy skills in their second language are sought out by parents whose children are enrolled in a dual language program. Accompanying the desire to support the students is learning strategies for success in their second language. Instructing parents about the stages of literacy development in each language would prove to be an immense support, as well, especially if the similarities and differences in the development process are noted. Informing the dual language parents about successful strategies implemented in the classroom extends the classroom walls and allows them to better informed partners in their child's education.

Many schools offer English language classes to parents of English Learners through Community Based English Tutoring funds, which are designed "to provide free or subsidized adult English language instruction to parents or other community members who pledge to

provide English language tutoring to California school children with limited English proficiency” (<http://www.atsolutions.info/cbet/index.asp>). Classes focused on teaching the target language of the dual language program are desired by those parents who have limited skills in this language. Classes of both types are provided by Sherriff (2007) as a means to support dual language parents’ desire to acquire a second language. Parents seek out this form of support in an effort to better assist their children with homework assignments and development of oral, receptive, and literacy skills in their second language. Additionally, many parents feel it is essential for their children to see them making an effort to learn the language, as well. Second language acquisition is no longer a “mandate” from the authority figures of the family, but becomes a goal for the family unit. With parents serving as students, they become the models of learning. Opportunities to problem solve any frustration that comes about during the language skill developing process can be problem solved through real life experiences, rather than what may appear to be arbitrary guesses.

Another focus for classes noted by Ventura County parents as a desired form of support were those focused on parenting skills. Parents mentioned an interest in learning how to better assist their children with homework, especially when he or she is resisting. Parents also inquire about out the most effective manners in which to discipline and offer praise to children.

In the surveys returned by Ventura County parents, suggestions for methods in which the schools could offer support with homework were offered. It was recommended that homework for children in the dual language program be translated. However, based on the research that notes a strict separation of languages is necessary in order for children to acquire the second language, it is not recommended for schools to follow this suggestion (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Freeman et al. 2005; Soltero, 2004). If homework is translated, students will rely

too heavily on their dominant language. There is a great risk that they will translate everything into their native language and not work to develop the target language. An alternative to this suggestion is to organize a bilingual homework club and/or exchange. This would require parents to volunteer to assist students at their child's grade level with homework in their native language. Parents would be matched up with students whose native language is different than their own so that students could receive assistance from a language expert. While parents may not feel competent to help their own children in their less dominant language, they are able to serve as a language model for someone else's child. In exchange, their child also receives homework support from a model in their second language.

Having items available in an audio format is a wonderful suggestion, but according to research, it must be interactive (King & Fogle, 2006). Providing audio CD's in each language with high frequency words, alphabet sounds, vocabulary words and reading passages to the parents would be beneficial for monolingual families. If the audio portion was recorded by a native speaker, the students and parents would have a strong language model from whom they could learn. Families would have to opportunity to practice the appropriate literacy skill with a form of immediate feedback. In the instance of alphabet sounds, the student would be able to say the sound and check for accuracy with the CD or he or she could listen to the CD for instruction on how to say the sound and then could produce it him or herself.

Parents seek out ways to interact with their children in the target language and to make connections with families in the dual language program. A way in which this desire could come to fruition is through the formation of school activities focused on sports, art and cultural traditions. After school activities allow students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds to interact with one another in a social atmosphere. Evenings designed around interactive

activities for the whole family offer additional opportunities for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural interactions. Parents are able to make connections with other parents and forge lasting relationships with those who have similar school experiences with which they can relate.

*Suggestions for Future Research*

Research is clear regarding the best models for dual language programs and the benefits reaped by their participants. Many researchers have also investigated the factors that motivate parents to enroll their children in dual language programs. It is not, however, obvious about how to retain and support the parents who choose to place their children in these programs. Since “educating a child is a shared responsibility between the school, community and parents” (Saucedo, 1997) it is my hope that the voices of Ventura County parents are heard in an effort to resolve the deficiency of research regarding effective ways to support dual language parents.

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