

Creating Two-Way Dual Language Schools through Effective Leadership

Those who enter the world of educational leadership today will find that much has changed since the days of the one-room schoolhouse. In this new world, nurturing and caring are no longer empty promises, but career commitments; multiple languages and cultures collide and grow with each other instead of against each other. Today's educational leaders will do more than just balance budgets, maintain discipline, and prevent lunchroom gripes. They will be a part of educational reform at its most controversial and political. Recognizing diversity, not ignoring it, must be part of the principal's job description in any school, anywhere in the country. Schools serve cultures, families, and students with different attitudes, different beliefs, and different approaches to education. I believe that only one type of school can create acceptance of these differences and encourage education for all: the Two-Way Dual Language School.

Background

I was born to English-speaking Hispanic parents who were the offspring of Spanish-speaking parents. My brother is four school years older than I am. Upon entering kindergarten, he spoke only Spanish and was punished and often ridiculed for his "disorder." He is now a successful businessman who struggled to relearn his primary language in order to function in his job. He has children who speak no Spanish and are oblivious to the Mexican identity for which he suffered ridicule. They feel left out at traditional family gatherings and see no value in their cultural background.

I, on the other hand, was first taught to speak in English because of my brother's experiences, but I was a "weekend Spanish speaker" when I spent time with my grandparents. My caretakers

were also Spanish speakers. Although I can speak Spanish and English fluently, my written Spanish is equivalent to that of a delinquent fourth-grade student. I crave information about my culture and take every opportunity to participate in Mexican cultural traditions. I had to devote an entire college career to learning about a language that I should never have lost.

I share this experience to illustrate the difference between *being educated in* a second language and merely *speaking* more than one language. We need to realize how quickly our children can forget what their cultural background is and what kind of people their grandparents were. My brother was happiest before he went to school. I was happiest when I was with my grandparents. He never pursued his education further than high school. I keep going back to school to learn more about people and issues that were not part of my social studies curriculum but were what I loved most in my life. Did the school fail us by labeling my brother with a disorder instead of a gift? Did it fail to see my anguish at wanting more out of school than "see Jane run"? Yes. It failed us both, and it has failed many others, but today's Two-Way Dual Language Schools won't.

Two-Way Dual Language Schools

According to a 1990-1998 survey of conducted by the U.S. Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA), the number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students keeps growing. In a nutshell, the survey indicated that the population of LEP students in

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1997 numbered 3,452,073, up 70 percent from 1989, in a U.S. K-12 enrollment of 46,375,422. By the end of the 1999-2000 school year, the survey projected, the total enrollment of K-12 LEP students would reach well over 5 million. Although the majority of LEP students currently reside in California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois, the LEP population has grown more than 200 percent in at least eleven other states.¹ Schools that have never had a bilingual program will now be serving a population of students who may not speak, read, or write a word of English.

Two-Way Dual Language Schools promote second language learning for all students and develop LEP students' primary language in order to promote biliteracy. English-speaking students learn the language of non-English-speaking students; in the same classroom, LEP students develop their primary language academically and linguistically, making their transition to English more meaningful and successful. The bilingual education expert Dr. Jim Cummins refers to this transition as "common underlying proficiency" (CUP). His premise is that concepts and comprehension are not stored linguistically. Therefore, when LEP students learn academic skills and concepts in a primary language, the linguistic process of learning to speak English makes more sense to them and has more meaning.²

LEP students who are forced to learn English immediately with no primary language support cannot learn the concepts that are being taught, because they have no foundation in the home language from which to make a transition. This explains the traditionally low self-esteem and high dropout rates of minority LEP students in English-only programs. Experts in Two-Way Dual Language Schools, including Cummins; Dr. Elena Izquierdo of El Paso, Texas; and Dr. Howard L. Smith of San

Antonio, Texas, confirm that dual-language programs increase cross-cultural understanding, offer students the well-established linguistic and cognitive benefits of bilingualism, and create multicultural environments that promote respect and appreciation for all cultures and languages.³

There are several kinds of dual-language program. The 50/50 model provides 50 percent of instruction in English and the other 50 percent in the LEP student's home language. The 90/10 model starts with 90 percent of the instructional day in the LEP student's home language and 10 percent in English. Both programs begin at the kindergarten level, with the 90/10 model adjusting gradually to 50/50 by the fifth grade. The dual-language concept can be found in some schools in programs for gifted and talented students, early childhood programs, and parent-implemented programs for families seeking bilingual education. There are several examples of successful elementary level programs, and new efforts are being made to continue the success throughout the middle school and high school years.

Leadership for Success

The OBEMLA survey demonstrates that the increasing number of LEP minority children is more than just a phase. It is a wake-up call to the nation, demanding that our schools be better prepared for our children. This will require a wide range of materials available in students' home languages; teachers and staff that are academically bilingual and biliterate; community awareness and support of multiculturalism; and acceptance of the notion that English is the country's main language but communication in other than English is a necessity for our students, our families, our businesses, and our social relationships.

On April 18, 2000, President Clinton released a memorandum concerning the International Education Policy. It began:

To continue to compete in the global economy and to maintain our role as a world leader, the United States needs to ensure that its citizens develop a broad understanding of the world, proficiency in other languages, and knowledge of other cultures. America's leadership also depends on building ties with those who will guide the political, cultural, and economic development of their countries in the future.⁴

The challenges of twenty-first century call for a new leadership style in education to fulfill the promises of that statement. It is not a step-by-step style, with a formulated process and guaranteed results. It will serve both the nation's growing population of minority LEP students and non-LEP students. This new leadership style requires a constructivist mentality; a caring heart and soul; acceptance and knowledge of multiculturalism; acceptance of the fact that interacting with people is a leader's primary job; willingness to accept change; and the ability to create a vision and share it with others.

The success of Two-Way Dual Language Schools depends upon the leadership of these schools. Leaders will have to be constructivist, sharing leadership responsibility with the teachers, staff, students, and community members. Constructivist leaders move away from person-centered roles to community-shared roles. They allow time for reflection and active participation. They see values, experiences, and prior knowledge as tools for new learning. Constructivist leaders are often looked upon as radical and eccentric. However, if values and visions are shared with the educational community, acceptance will gradually and naturally follow.⁵

Educational leaders can ensure that everyone shares in the vision and goals of Two-Way Dual Language Schools by creating caring leadership. In shaping the school culture, administrators shape students' and teachers' thinking and actions in a school. Using metaphors and storytelling, attending meetings, and participating in rituals and ceremonies are a few ways to promote an acceptance of culture and sensitivity to others' values and beliefs without jeopardizing individual learning experiences.⁵ Educational administrators also determine the cultural diversity of the school staff. This is especially important in Two-Way Dual Language Schools, where more than one culture already exists. Teachers and staff of color, of both sexes, and of various ethnicities should be not only considered but also accepted as a vital part of the school culture. Even in school communities that are predominantly Hispanic or Asian, teachers who are Hispanic, Asian, and African-American, Lithuanian, French-Canadian, etc., should be made part of the campus staff.

In *What's Worth Fighting for in the Principalship*, Michael Fullan notes a recent trend: principals inherit an increase in responsi-

bilities and a decrease in input on new programs. He points to four major reasons principals struggle in their positions: (1) the tendency to externalize problems; (2) the assumption that the entire system needs to be changed; (3) the feeling of being trapped in the middle; and (4) the inability to use the power that they as principals have. Principals of Two-Way Dual Language Schools must meet these challenges head-on. For people interested in this work, ignorance is not an option. Dual-language programs need strong leadership. They need people who are well versed in multicultural education and sensitive to minority issues and needs. Two-Way Dual Language Schools are worth fighting for. Home languages and cultures are worth fighting for. Children's success is definitely worth fighting for!

Meeting the Challenge

English-Only advocates have had some successes, such as California's Proposition 227 and Arizona's Proposition 203. To counteract such pressures, bilingual education supporters need to become advocates as well, promoting the great advances of programs like the Two-Way Dual Language Schools.

Escuela Montessori de Montopolis in Austin, Texas, is a dual language program designed to provide the environment, incentive, resources, and opportunity for monolingual English-speaking children to learn Spanish, for monolingual Spanish speakers to learn English, and for children already partly bilingual to balance and enhance their dual literacy. This school uses the 50/50 model in a unique way. The director for the school, Chiquie Estrada, started the program by designating the school's two classrooms as Spanish-only and English-only. The children spend half their day in the Spanish room, speaking and learning in Spanish, and the other half in the English room, speaking and learning in English. The program attributes its success to the youth of its students and to the fact that each language is valued and taught individually.

Empowering School Communities ¡Si!, a voluntary dual language program in Oklahoma's Shidler and Wheeler Elementary Schools, promotes English and Spanish for all students. These two schools have added a parental component to their dual language program. Not only are the students learning a second language; the parents are also provided with English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and are active in regular meetings

and training focused on parenting children in second-language-acquisition programs. The schools' principals, Sharon Creager and Pamela Mustain, along with the administrator of curriculum and dual language programs, Sherry Coy, work together to accomplish the program's goals: high levels of proficiency in a first and second language, as well as high levels of self-esteem and positive cross-cultural attitudes.

Maynard Elementary School in Emporia, Kansas, has an 87 percent Hispanic population in a school district that has only a 29 percent total Hispanic population. The school's principal, Carolyn Koch, had a vision that all students could succeed no matter what language they knew or did not know. Her school was new to the entire notion of dual language instruction. As a progressive leader, Carolyn gathered parental support by using parents as tutors and resources for the Spanish language; increased professional development activities with an ESL endorsement program for the entire staff; and increased Spanish-speaking personnel in order to accommodate the Spanish-speaking children. Maynard Elementary met the challenge and promoted multiculturalism in Kansas.

Fight for Our Children

Two-Way Dual Language schools are the answer to the growing LEP population. To deny the benefits of being bilingual is to deny the existence of a global economy of production, to deny individuals their ethnicity, and to deny the United States the chance to enrich its culture.

A successful dual language program must have successful leadership. Educational leaders have to promote true bilingualism that includes biliteracy. Bilingual education advocates have to continue to insist that knowing how to *speak* two languages is not good enough. We must continue to support our children and their education by being advocates for their future, their voices, and their rights as learners. This is not a plea for non-English-speaking and minority families only. This is a plea for our children—all our children, black, white, Asian, Hispanic, or anything else. The world needs people who are literate in more than one language.

While English-Only limits our minds, our spirits, and our hearts, Two-Way Dual Language

Schools bring true meaning to the words "equitable education." Our children have a right to retain their culture and learn the English language. As parents, educational leaders, and members of the human race, we owe it to our children to continue the fight for biliteracy and Two-Way Dual Language schools.

Notes

1. OBEMLA state data survey, *K-12 and LEP Enrollment Trends*, 1997.
2. Jim Cummins, 1981.
3. Jim Cummins, 2000.
4. William J. Clinton, 2000.
5. Linda Lambert et al., 1995
6. Lynn G. Beck, 1994.

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