The Transition Experiences of Students Formally (i.e. Formerly) in Bilingual Education

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Abstract

Although the number of students who are English Language Learners (ELL) in the United States has steadily increased since 1965, the decision as to how to best educate these students remains controversial (Nieto, 2009). Currently, several states offer Bilingual Education programs as a mechanism to teach students, while other states utilize minimal student supports. At the present time, there is a growing body of literature which provides evidence that bilingual education programs are effective in not only increasing a students’ understanding of core content material, but also in advancing a students’ English language proficiency (August & Shanahan, 2006; Krashen 2006). Although this growing body of research demonstrates the value of bilingual education programs, there are few studies which explore the experiences of students who exit these programs and enter into English speaking classrooms. Therefore, the following survey study examined the type of services ELL students accessed when they transitioned into English speaking classrooms, and explored the extent to which students adjusted to their classroom settings. Students who were formally enrolled in a bilingual education program, and who experienced almost an entire school year in mainstream classrooms, participated in the following survey study. The research findings suggest that students were well prepared and adjusted to their mainstream classes. While a small percentage of students tapped into the available academic and social support services, students generally indicated that these were not helpful. These findings confirm the value and need for bilingual education programs, as they support students in learning English, and contribute positively to a students’ school experience. However, given that there are few studies available regarding the transition experiences of students, there is a need to further explore what this experience is like for students.

Keywords: Bilingual education, transition, mainstream classroom
The Transition Experiences of Students Formally in Bilingual Education

As the number of students who are limited English proficient continues to increase, school districts are charged with the responsibility of increasing their English language proficiency, and to educate them with the skills and tools needed to become productive citizens. Recently, a growing body of literature supports the need and use for bilingual education programs in schools, as a means to fulfill the responsibilities expected of school districts. However, there are gaps in the literature which document what happens to students when they transition into mainstream classrooms.

The focus of the following paper is to first, provide a context of how bilingual education emerged in the United States, and second, to review the research results of a survey study conducted with students who have transitioned out of bilingual education. The study will specifically examine how students have managed this change, and explore the services utilized by students who transitioned out of bilingual education.

The Emergence of Bilingual Education

When President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, he predicted that this law “would not affect the lives of millions” and that it would “not reshape the structure of our daily lives” (Ludden, 2006). Contrary to the President’s predictions, the law became the spark which ignited the arrival of millions of immigrants from countries which the United States historically restricted. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was historic, in that it abolished the quota system which previously regulated the number of immigrants, particularly from non-Western European nations, allowed to enter the US. This legislation was fueled by the civil rights movements, and demonstrated to Americans and others worldwide that the United States was serious about equality. The law facilitated the arrival of immigrants from Latin America and Asia, a trend that was previously characteristic of Western Europeans.
(Ludden, 2010). Today, the passage of this law is reflected in the U.S. demographic population. As recently as 2007, 80% of immigrants who came to the U.S. were from Latin America and Asia, and in 2008, 13% of the people living in the United States were foreign born.

Ironically, the United States was not ready for the cultural differences that came along with increasing numbers of immigrants. Rather, the linguistic differences brought by immigrants were less than tolerated. Immigrants who spoke little to no English were treated as inferior, especially those who spoke languages originating from countries such as Mexico and Africa (Wiley, 1999 as cited in Nieto, 2009). For children of immigrant parents, there was pressure to assimilate, and as Nieto (2009) states, created in children, an “ambivalence towards one’s own native language, the value of one’s cultural background, and ultimately the value of oneself” (p. 61). Although the number of immigrants who enter into the United States has annually increased since the Immigration Act of 1965, the sentiment towards children of parents who are immigrants and who speak a language other than English (LOTE) has not changed (Haub, 2008; Kominiski, Shin, & Marots, 2008; Mitchell, 2005; Nieto, 2009). As a result, the complications which arise from their ethnic identity formation, impacts their school experience and academic achievement (Pauley & Seto, 2010). Consequently, students who are adversely affected are unprepared and unable to compete for career and other opportunities afforded to those with greater academic achievement. For these students, they end up as part of a system that perpetuates and favors the “maintenance of an underclass” (Mitchell, 2005, p.1).

**English Language Learners in the United States**

Students who speak another language than English are commonly referred to as English Language Learners (ELL) (New York State Department of Education, [NYSED], 2010). In 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 20% of school age children spoke another language
at home; this number mirrors the national percentage of people who speak a language other than English at home. Nationally, 24% of the ELL student population who speak English report doing so less than very well (Kominiski, et al., 2008; Migration Policy Institute [MPI], 2010b). Of the languages spoken, approximately 72% of ELL students speak Spanish (MPI 2010b). When it comes to school age children, English language fluency is not necessarily correlated with immigration; in 2000, 64% of children who were ELL were born in the United States (Batalova, 2006).

U.S. born children who are ELL’s may lack English speaking abilities because they may live in linguistically isolated households and communities (MPI, 2010b). Some families choose to predominantly speak to their children in their language, which reflects their country of origin, in order to preserve their cultural traditions. Farruggio (2010) interviewed 69 Latino families whose children attended school in an urban California district. The families indicated that, while they recognized that speaking English was vital for their children to advance in the United States, they viewed the school as the place where their children developed and practiced English. They preferred to speak only Spanish at home to preserve their cultural heritage and maintain ties to their country of origin.

There is a positive correlation between poverty and low English language proficiency. Batalova (2006) reported that ELL children “are twice as likely to live in poor families, compared to children who speak only English or English very well” (para.5). In particular, Spanish speaking families are more likely to live in poverty in comparison to people who speak English or another language (MPI, 2010b). Also, Spanish speakers are also less likely to have a college degree compared to those who only speak English, or other languages, in the United States (MPI, 2010a).
English Language Learners in New York State

New York State is one of 10 U.S. states who report having 20% or more of students who speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home (MPI, 2010a). Approximately half of these students are ELL, or lack the English proficiency needed for academic instruction in English only classes (NYSED, 2009a). Spanish is the language most spoken by ELL students in New York; these students are more likely to live in poverty compared to those who speak only English or another language (MPI, 2010d).

Approximately 8.5% of New York State residents, twice the national rate, who speak a LOTE live in linguistically isolated communities (MPI, 2010c). Immigrants are also likely to be of a lower socioeconomic status. Furthermore, approximately 42% of immigrants in NY have children (defined as under the age of 18), and these families tend to fall 200% below the federal poverty level (MPI, 2010c).

School data report card for New York State.

In order to be in compliance with federal laws regarding student education, all students, regardless of English proficiency, are required to take subject matter assessments (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2007). Limited English Proficient Students consistently perform lower on State Assessments in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science. They are among two other groups, migrant populations and student with disabilities, that are not meeting or partially meeting learning standards (NYSED, 2009c).

Educational Supports for ELL Students: Bilingual Education or English Immersion

When students, who speak a language other than English, enter the U.S. educational system, they are placed in either English Immersion or bilingual educational programs (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). The federal government allows states to determine the approach they will
provide to ELL students (ED, 2007). Some states who have adopted “English only” laws may primarily utilize English immersion classes for ELL students; other states, who do not have such existing legislation, may use an array of programs that fall under the category of bilingual education. The fundamental reasons why some states favor one approach over another are rarely based on program evidence, but rather is reflective of the attitude voters and politicians have of immigrants who do not speak English (Kreshan, 2006; Mitchell, 2005; Nieto, 2009).

Regardless of what type of approach states utilize, English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction is a component of both program types (ESL vs Bilingual Education, n.d.). ESL instruction is a class where instructors utilize strategies to teach the English language to students (ESL vs Bilingual Education, n.d.). ELL students in ESL classes do not need to speak the same native language because instructors only speak English when teaching the English language (Education Committee of the States, 2010). The type and amount of support an ESL student receives is dependent upon the students’ level of English proficiency, and proficiency in their native language. Students are given periodic assessments to determine if the amount of ELL instruction is still appropriate as a student advances academically. Therefore, the length of time in which a student receives ESL support can last one or more years. Individual states determine the amount, and type, of support services ELL students will receive. States also have their own criteria for determining academic English proficiency. As a result, students who are ELL are prepared differently to compete for gainful employment and to advance economically. Hence, a students’ preparedness to obtain such opportunities is therefore dependent upon how states decide they will support their English second language learners.
**English Immersion: English Immersion and Submersion Methods**

English Immersion strategies are strategies used by certain states to teach both the English language and content area material to students who are ELL. English Immersion strategies are utilized in states which have passed laws which restrict the use of bilingual education. Currently, Massachusetts, Arizona, and California primarily utilize such methods for instructing students who are ELL. The laws declaring the use of English immersion programming are overridden in these states in instances when bilingual education is determined to be the method necessary for students to access a meaningful education. This protection is a result of the Supreme Court case ruling of Lau v. Nichols, which determined that if a student is unable to access a meaningful education because of a language barrier, schools are obligated to accommodate students appropriately, regardless of state laws.

English Immersion programs are typically referred to as Structured English Immersion (SEI) programs. SEI programs derive from the premise that the native language a student speaks is unimportant to learning English (Krashen, 2006). Strategies, therefore, do not account for a student’s existing language ability, or level of proficiency in their native language. Under SEI strategies, students may be: (1) placed in mainstream classrooms for most of their school day, while being supported by a bilingual aide, and receive a certain level of ESL instruction; or (2) placed in classrooms which are composed entirely of students who are ELL (Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

Regardless of whether students are in mainstream classrooms or are in a separate ELL class, SEI approaches only utilize the English language for instruction. Instructors in SEI approaches adapt the level of English they use according to the students’ proficiency levels. As students develop and build their English language vocabulary, instructors increase the level of
English used. English levels are increased until students achieve a level of English proficiency that would allow them to enter into mainstream classrooms. Instructors who teach in SEI programs may use total physical response strategies, which involves visually demonstrating to students the words in which they are teaching. Another strategy utilized in this approach is called “realia” (Slavin & Cheung, 2005, p.5). Realia is the practice by which instructors use items to represent words (Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

Proponents who support SEI programming claim that this method is the most effective and cost efficient methodology used to support ELL in developing English proficiency. Current research provides mixed results as to whether this approach is as effective as supporters for this approach claim. Whether or not this is the case, a major disadvantage to SEI approaches is that they do not account for the fact that language is much more than a form of communication. Language is intricately tied to culture. Therefore, the fact that SEI approaches neglect to recognize the native languages used by students, sends a message to students that their culture is unimportant. In turn, this sets a hierarchy that the English language is superior to their native language. In contrast, the ability for a student to use their native language as part of their instruction provides students with much more than academic support. Lee (2006) found that students who were ELL, and who were in bilingual education (which utilizes a students’ native language), felt that this program was beneficial to their social and emotional development. Interestingly, they also noted that their participation in bilingual education did not hinder their motivation or ability to learn English.

**English submersion.**

An English submersion strategy was used by certain states with English only instruction laws prior to the Supreme Court case of Lau v Nicholas (1973). An English submersion strategy
places students who are ELL in regular classrooms with no accommodations (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). Submersion strategies are no longer utilized because the Supreme Court found that these approaches prevented students from accessing an equal education. Lau v Nicholas (1973), involved students who predominately spoke Chinese, and who were ‘submerged’ by being placed in English only classes with no accommodations. As a result, many of the Chinese ELL students received failing grades. This fueled a group of students to sue their respective school district. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the students, declaring that the students were denied from receiving a meaningful education, and were set up for failure (Nieto, 2009). As a result, schools who utilized submersion as a strategy had to change the way they were educating ELL’s; for most the SEI programs replaced this former approach.

**Bilingual education.**

Bilingual education refers to language support services ELL students receive that include the use of a students’ first language in classroom instruction (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). There are many types of bilingual education models, and schools may use primarily one or multiple models. The goal of bilingual education is the same as the goal for SEI approaches: to develop the academic English ability of students, who are ELL, in the shortest amount of time possible, and to transition into mainstream classrooms (Clark, 2009; NYSED, 2010). However, the approach is opposite that of SEI strategies.

Bilingual education recognizes that a students’ ability to develop their native language serves as a foundation to successfully learning academic English. Furthermore, content area instruction in the students’ native language is critical if students are to later understand content material in English. Bilingual education models generally constitute 3 approaches: (1) ESL instruction; (2) content area classes taught in either the students’ native languages, or utilizing
both the students’ native languages and English; and (3) instruction in developing a proficiency in a students’ native language (NYED, 2010). Bilingual educational models are composed primarily of transitional bilingual education models and two way models, which are also known as or dual language models (Slavin & Cheung 2005).

**Transitional bilingual education.**

A Transitional model used in bilingual education is one in which students receive content area instruction only in their native language. Transition models stem from the premise that students who utilize only their native language to develop content area instruction, are better able transition into English speaking classrooms and succeed. Therefore students who participate in this model take content area classes in their native language for several years before they transition into English only instruction (Krashen, 2006). Transitional educational models claim that students are then able to grasp content instruction in English easier than other approaches.

**Dual or two way language models.**

Schools that utilize dual language models usually consist of equal numbers of ELL students who speak the same language, and English speaking students in the same classroom (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). Classroom instruction is usually taught in both English and in the ELL students’ native language (Center for Applied Linguistics [CAL], 2010). The goal of this type of program is to increase the bilingual abilities of both student groups and to foster cross cultural understanding between the two groups. As students move up in grade levels, the amount of time students spend in this type of program tend to lessen (CAL, 2010).

**Bilingual education in New York State.**

In NYS, 567 districts and 88 charter schools have programs for students who are ELL; these programs are funded by state aid and Federal funding received under Title III of No Child
Left Behind Act of 2002 (NYED, 2010). New York State accommodates ELL students by utilizing ESL, and both transitional and dual language models. NYS provides specific guidelines on how to identify students who are ELL, and which services are most appropriate for these students. Part 117 of the Commissioners Regulations instructs schools on how to identify ELL students, and Part 154 provides guidance on the type of program supports schools should implement (NYED, 2010).

In NYS, students who are ELL are identified if they speak little to no English, and score below the state proficiency level on the Language Assessment Battery-Revised (NYSED, 2009b). Students who receive support services are then annually assessed to determine their English language proficiency, using the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). Students who receive scores which indicate a need to continue language supports, will continue to be annually assessed using the NYSESLAT to determine the appropriateness of language support services. Part 154 obligates schools who have 20 or more students, whose native language is the same, to provide students with Bilingual education services. Furthermore, students should participate in the program until they are assessed as proficient (NYSED, 2010). In regards to ESL, students must continue to participate in ESL programming if they score below a proficient level of the NYSESLAT. After students are provided with 6 years of language supports, schools will not receive state funding to provide ESL, but will continue to receive funding under Title III of NCLB. In order for the State to be in compliance of Title III of NCLB, the NYSESLAT is continued to be used to assess the progression of students enrolled in ELL support services (NYSED, 2010).
Bilingual Education: A Legal and Political Issue

Bilingual Education is an issue which has been strongly debated at the federal level. As early as 1923, an instructor who taught in the German Language was tried for teaching students who predominately spoke German (Meyer v Nebraska, 1923). Shortly after, the Supreme Court examined Farrington v Tokushige in 1927, and Hock Ke Lok Po v Stainback in 1944; two cases which settled the issue as to whether foreign language instruction was illegal. In both instances, the court found that prohibiting foreign language instruction was a violation of families’ rights (Utah Association for Bilingual Education, n.d.).

Despite the fact that the Supreme Court had settled cases revolving around bilingual education, none of the cases thus far had influenced the creation of federal legislation on this issue. It was not until the Supreme Court case of Brown v Board of Education (1954), and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (specifically Title VI), that bilingual education received greater attention. Bilingual Education activists built their case specifically around Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which stated that federally financed programs, and activities, which discriminate would have their funds revoked (Nieto 2009; U.S. Department of Justice, 2003). These activists held the position that ELL students were discriminated against because they did not have equal access to education compared to their English speaking counterparts (Nieto, 2009).

Bilingual Education Becomes Law

Four years after the Civil Rights Act, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was adopted under Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1992). Finally, bilingual education was recognized at the federal level. The U.S. government recognized that ELL students could not access meaningful
education without bilingual programming, and that this hindered future opportunities (Nieto, 2009). The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 encouraged school districts to implement programs to serve ELL and low income students. Advocates of bilingual education, however, realized that, although school districts were encouraged to implement such services, this did not automatically mean that those schools provided an enriching experience for students who are ELL. The 1974 Supreme Court Case Lau v Nichols provided such evidence that asking schools to implement such services was not enough to constitute meaningful education for students who are ELL. The Supreme Court ruled that the school district violated Title VI, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. They recognized that students were denied access to equal education, and required that schools take “appropriate action to remedy the situation.” Another result from this hallmark case was that the protections declared by the Supreme Court were added to the Equal Opportunity Education Act (EEOA) of 1974.

In 1981, the Supreme Court recognized that Title VII of ESEA lacked clear guidelines as to what “appropriate action meant for school districts.” This became apparent in the examination of the Supreme Court case, Castaneda v Pickard (1981). This case occurred when Mexican parents accused their children’s school of using practices which they thought were inappropriate. The court ruled in favor of the parents, and this ruling also resulted in the creation of a framework districts use to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights act (1964), EEOA (1974), and the Title VII of the ESEA (1981). The federal government declared that bilingual education programs must be founded on educational theory, must be given the adequate resources needed to implement program, and be proven effective to teach English (Haas & Gort, 2009).
In 1994, the Bilingual Education Act was reauthorized under title VII of the Improving America’s Schools Act. This law recognized that bilingual education was essential for ELL students, and that being bilingual was an asset to remain competitive in a global economy. Title VII (1994) declared that, “multilingual skills constitute an important national resource which deserves protection and development.” This expanded bilingual education programs nationwide, and students were encouraged to develop their native language skills alongside their development of the English language.

Most recently, in 2002, the Bilingual Education Act, was reauthorized under Title III of No Child Left Behind Act, with the purpose of assisting “school districts in teaching English to limited English proficient students and in helping these students meet the same challenging state standards required of all students” (ED, 2007). Fulfillment of NCLB Title III requires that certified ESL teachers utilize an evidenced-based curriculum that increases English proficiency in ELL students (ED, 2006). These students are also counted amongst the population of students who must take high stake tests and who are expected to make annual yearly progress (AYP). Schools who fail to make AYP after three years are penalized. The legislation requires that students are given Reading and Language Arts assessments for students who have been in school after one year. Districts are also required to provide professional development to school staff for the purposes of improving instruction and assessment of students (ED, 2006). Districts are given the option to choose which evidenced based language instruction models and programs they will use, as well as the type of professional development it will provide for staff (ED, 2006).

**NCLB: A roadblock to meaningful education.**

Although NCLB as a model appears to support ELL students, the application of this legislation yields opposite results (Hilner, 2006). The language acquisition expectations placed
on 1st year ELL students is inconsistent with current research regarding second language development of students. Several studies have concluded that it may take students up to three to five years to achieve English oral proficiency, and up to seven years for academic English proficiency (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Paez, 2009). Academic English proficiency implies that students are at a level where they demonstrate English reading proficiency, can follow classroom discussions, and can “think critically about the ideas they have read and heard, and express their understandings and critiques of ideas through speaking and writing in English” (Temple University, 2010, para.1). Taking exams after only year of services becomes problematic for students who are ELL and who are not able to pass assessments at a comparable level of English proficient students. Schools who report less than satisfactory test scores are placed on improvement plans, and face the possibility of closure if they do not improve student scores within three years (NYED, 2008).

Although professional development for working with ELL students is mandated by NCLB, it remains unregulated, and underfunded. In 2002, the National Center for Education Statistics found that 42% of teachers indicated they provided instruction for ELL students, though only 13% received more than 8 hours of training in regards to working with this population (as cited in de Jong & Harper 2005). Tellez & Walberg reported that in 2004, less than 20% of teachers who served ELL were certified as ESL teachers or as bilingual teachers. As recently as 2009, the Supreme Court was faced with a case which brought to question whether funds distributed by NCLB was sufficient to provide schools and teachers with adequate resources and development to serve the needs of students who are ELL (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, n.d.).
Although the intentions and goals rooted behind NCLB are noble, this provision is harmful to students who are ELL and the schools that serve them (Hilner, 2006). The regulations set forth prevent student access to a meaningful education, violates Title VI of the Civil rights Act, the EEOA Act of 1974, and dilutes the historic decisions made from Lau v Nichols and Castenada v Pritchard. Furthermore, because States are only mandated under NCLB to use evidenced based programming; this has opened the doors for states to implement a wide assortment of programs, all of which have their own form of measurement. The variety of services and assessment instruments makes it difficult to cross compare the efficiencies of all of the programs utilized for students who are ELL (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). This laissez faire stance has allowed the implementation of interventions that have not been rigorously examined to qualify as evidenced based. Therefore, the decision states make regarding what interventions they will use may be clouded by a states’ stance regarding people who are limited English proficient, rather than implementing services which meet the needs of students.

**Effectiveness of Bilingual Education**

Although the varieties of services, which fall under the umbrella of bilingual education, are difficult to measure, there is a growing body of literature that supports bilingual programming. A meta-analysis conducted by August & Shanahan (2006) found that students who received bilingual instruction at the elementary and secondary levels, performed better on English proficiency assessments. This has also been found in the case with students whose native language was Spanish, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Chinese who learned English as a second language (Krashen, 2006). August & Shanahan (2006) discovered that a student’s native language oral proficiency and literacy was indicative of a student’s ability to develop English proficiency and literacy. In regards to subject matter content, an analysis of ELL programs
revealed that students who received instruction in their native language prior to transitioning into English performed better on core subjects after transitioning into English classes (Krashen, 2006). Also, instructors who were given adequate professional development not only improved the quality of a teacher’s instruction, but also facilitated student learning (August & Shanahan, 2006).

In 2005, Slaving and Cheung conducted a best evidence synthesis, a process which utilizes more descriptors than that of a meta-analysis, on research which focused on the effectiveness of bilingual education. Their minimum criteria for including studies in their analysis were that 1) the studies utilized similar definitions as to what constituted a student as a ELL, 2) they lasted a year or longer, 3) included quantitative measures, 4) were ELL in countries who predominately spoke English, and 5) studies who used comparable groups. The result of their analysis concluded that there were a total of 17 studies which met their standards. Furthermore, their findings revealed that 9 studies showed effectiveness of bilingual instruction, while 4 indicated no differences between bilingual services and English only instruction (Slaving and Cheung, 2005).

**Challenging the Effectiveness of Bilingual Education**

In the past decades, bilingual education has faced considerable opposition. Opponents of bilingual education argue that bilingual education delays ELL student proficiency in English, and argue that the more time a student spends in English only language instruction, the faster the student will become proficient in English (Krashen, 2006; Slavin & Cheung 2005). These arguments largely stemmed from a meta-analysis conducted in the 1980’s (Krashen, 2006). Current literature has since challenged the results of this study for its lack of validity and methodology. However, shortly after the flawed meta-analysis, the National Commission on
Excellence in Education unveiled, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983) under the Reagan Administration. A central theme declared in *A Nation at Risk* was that the U.S. educational system did not provide students with a quality education as compared to other countries. A warning was given that the U.S. must improve the academic achievements of its students (Nieto, 2009). Hence, *A Nation at Risk* stirred anti-immigrant and anti-bilingual sentiment throughout the nation (Nieto, 2009).

Although the reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act in 1994 recognized that bilingual education was important to compete in a globalized market, the overall sentiment against these programs sustained. English only policies in schools, such as Proposition 227, proposed legislation which banned language instruction other than English in California public schools (1998; Nieto 2005). The amount of states thereafter proposing similar laws followed. Arizona, Colorado, and Massachusetts have since adopted SEI teaching programs, and banned bilingual education programs, except when students demonstrate this need (Haas & Gort, 2009; Mitchell 2005).

The result of this practice created devastating effects on ELL students. Grisson (year, as cited in Haas & Gort, 2009) found that after Proposition 227, English Immersion programs failed the intended goal of producing English proficient students. Instead the findings reported that students who entered in the second grade and who had been in English immersion classes through 5th grade, had still not learned enough English to be classified as English proficient. In 2009, approximately 56% of Latinos completed high school, and another 29% dropped out of school (Haas & Gort, 2009; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2010). Prior to English-only, 55% of ELL students graduated while approximately 25% dropped out of school, indicating that English immersion programs have not lead to the academic
advancement of this population (Haas & Gort, 2009). In Arizona, Mahoney et al. (2005, as cited in Haas & Gort, 2009) found that students who were in immersion programs had not improved at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Overall, three years after English-only legislation was implemented in all of these schools, students had not developed their English proficiency level (Haas & Gort, 2009). Therefore, English immersion programs lack the weight needed to label such as promising in comparison to bilingual education programming.

**Bilingual Education is Un-American**

It is unknown whether state voters for the adoption of English immersion strategies and English only legislation were aware of the effectiveness of bilingual education, and the fact that these interventions enhance the English ability and proficiency of ELL students. The topic of bilingual education and its effectiveness has often been clouded by perception rather than whether these programs benefit students. Instead, debates about bilingual education in America have been clouded by racism, fears, and issues of power and control (Nieto, 2009; Mitchell, 2005). Unfortunately, these deep rooted beliefs have shaped policies which hide under the guise of helping and improving the academic abilities of students though they outright discriminate against those who speak a language other than English.

Ron Unz, a wealthy and influential political activist, who lead the campaign in California for Proposition 227 ran under the motto, *English for the Children*, a misleading slogan that unfortunately won the majority of the state vote (Nieto, 2009). With several states adopting similar laws after Proposition 227, this demonstrated that anti immigration sentiment is a national issue and can negatively impact decisions which infringe upon one’s rights. If ethical and sound decisions are to be made regarding the service needs of for ELL students, underlying
beliefs about immigrants and people who are ELL need to be included as part of discussion (Nieto, 2009).

Although inequalities our education systems exist, this does not mean that those who work with ELL students should allow controversy over bilingual education impact the work which is done with students. In fact, the literature documents specific strategies and best practices school personnel can utilize when working with ELL students (Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Although the majority of the literature focuses on what teachers in classrooms can do, school counselors can play a role in accommodating the needs of these learners, whether bilingual education or English immersion programs exist in their particular schools.

**Strategies and Practices for School Personnel and School Counselors**

Although all staff members in schools are obligated under law to provide ELL students with meaningful academic experiences, school counselors in particular, are required to also do this if they are to uphold the ethics of their profession. The American School Counselor Association, view the role of the school counselor as one that “facilitates student development in the areas of multiculturalism and diversity (as cited in Goh et al., 2007, p.67). School counselors must collaborate with all school staff in driving and maintaining a school climate that is welcoming, appreciative, and supportive of all cultures, race and ethnicities. This includes supporting the personal, academic, and social and emotional needs of ELL students

**Acknowledging the Ism’s and Personal Perspective**

By ignoring that inequalities, racism, discrimination, and the marginalization of underrepresented groups does exist in society is a disservice to students (Chen, 2007). The experiences of students in the community at large does interplay how they behave, communicate, and socialize in school. Likewise, the same interplay is true for school staff; their past
interactions with certain groups may affect the way schools work with students and their families, and influence the expectations the school staff have of students (Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Therefore, it is critical that school staff members are informed about the experience of marginalized groups, and this should form part of a districts professional development. In addition, an examination of their “own” biases towards these groups is equally as important (Chen 2009; Rueda & Garcia, 1996; Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Davis-Aviles (1999, as cited in Araujos, 2010) noted that students who left school before graduating did so because they perceived that school staff did not believe in their ability to achieve academic success. For that reason, professional development which assists staff in exploring their personal biases is as critical as teaching school staff methodologies in working with these students. Exploring such personal biases can have profound effects on the academic and school success of students (Vela-Gude et al., 2009).

Acknowledging and becoming familiar with the cultural backgrounds of students who are ELL, and recognizing how these are similar or different from American values and traditions, can be valuable in working successfully with both students and their in parents (Lee, 2006). If the student is an immigrant, it is important to consider how the educational system in the student’s country is viewed from both a student and family perspective. For some immigrants, it may be that families traditionally view schools as an institution which knows what is best for students, and asking questions or demanding services for their children would be disrespectful (Goh et al., 2007). Therefore, school personnel should avoid labeling absent parents as carless, and instead strive to understand the educational norms of which parents are working from (Lee, 2006). In regards to students, they come from a classroom setting where asking questions and challenging the instructor may be seen as a sign of disrespect. Students may have underlying
reasons for this behavior, which is why effective communications would do much in clarifying these issues.

Parental involvement of students who are ELL has been documented as a factor contributing to school success students who transitioned from middle to high school (Crosnoe, 2009). When parents were informed and included in decisions related to various aspects of their children’s transition (i.e. scheduling), participated in school activities, and had the opportunity to meet with school personnel, these lead students to greater academic success. However, parental involvement with the school requires that communication is understood by both parties. Jasis & Ordonez-Jasis (2006, as cited in Arajuo, 2010) found that miscommunication that occurred between parents and teachers had an ill effect on parental involvement. Parent participation in school activities dwindled because parents repeatedly misinterpreted teacher comments about their children as being students who were “lazy and irresponsible” (Araujo, 2010, p.120).

Furthermore, Araujo (2010) notes that familiarity with a student’s culture is imperative for school personnel because these may conflict with that of U.S. schools. Quinn (2001) found that the conflicting values between Mexican students and the American school systems left Mexican students feeling “marginalized and ignored (p.49).” Some ELL students may come from a collectivist culture that values collaborative work and frowns upon competitiveness (Araujo,2010). This can be a challenge for students who are now expected to complete work individually and are evaluated in comparison to their peers on their academic ability (Araujo, 2010). Therefore, considering U.S. academic practices and considering that of students’ experiences are critical for instructors truly accommodating students who are ELL. School counselors can play an active role in this regard, by educating school staff about the cultural
world view of their students, and by assisting families to understanding the expectations of the school.

**Comprehending English Language Development**

Although teachers need to be informed of second language acquisition and become knowledgeable on methodologies in instructing ELL students, all school personnel should have a base understanding. The reason for this is that students may be misplaced in inappropriate classes as a result. Some students may appear fluent in English, but their oral fluency may not accurately correlate with their English literacy. As a result, students may struggle with content course work because they were not appropriately placed in a class that matches their ability (Araujo, 2010; Chen 2007; de Jong-Harper, 2005). Misplacement can in turn cloud student motivation, and have grave consequences on what happens as a result. School counselors can serve as advocates to their students by assuring students who are ELL are appropriately assessed prior to being placed in classes.

Furthermore, there have been several studies which document the role of an interactive class environment which values the contributions ELL students make in the classrooms (Chen, 2009). Classroom activities that promote interactions between peers and instructors facilitate learning from one another, and build relationships between students and with their instructor. Chen (2009) suggested that an interactive class further equalizes the power dynamics that may exist between students and teachers, and students with each other. Chen (2009) suggested that best practices when working with students who are ELL include: an environment where students feel they make meaningful contributions, are able to comfortably interact with their teachers and peers, and feel valued for speaking another language other than English.
Serving the Needs of ELL: Gaps In The Literature

Currently, the bulk of the literature focused on bilingual education is centered on teaching strategies and practices which help students develop their English fluency and academic achievement. As a result, there exists research gaps which explore other areas involved in bilingual education. This includes identifying additional types of professional development that school staff can benefit from, determining what specific roles and responsibilities school staff have in working with students who are ELL, exploring the extent to which bilingual programming is adequately funded, and identifying best practice strategies on how to involve communities and parents of children who are in a bilingual education. Perhaps the largest gap however, lies in examining what happens when students have reached the goal of English language proficiency and mainstream into English only classrooms.

Currently, NCLB and State laws affirm that students who transition out of bilingual education should receive academic supports. In NYS, schools are obligated to continue supports such as ESL classes, and Academic Intervention Services (NYSED, 2010). Students who exit bilingual programs and enter into mainstream classroom should receive such supports for up to one year. If schools receive federal funding under NCLB, then schools are required to provide support services for at least 2 years (NYSED, 2010). However, at the present time, there are no guidelines as to how students can be socially and emotionally supported during this transition. This lack of guidance is problematic for school counselors, who must create their own blueprint for working with students who transition out of bilingual education, and who must now enter into a new academic environment with new teachers and peers.

Although there is little research which documents the experiences of students who transition out of bilingual education and enter mainstream classrooms, there is significant
research which documents the experience of students who are ELL, and who are placed in mainstream classrooms (without having been in bilingual education). Current research suggests that ELL students experience high levels of anxiety and low self efficacy (Pappamihiel, 2006). Also, the research demonstrates that students react to these feelings by either withdrawing from their peers and teachers, or by disrupting classroom instruction (Pappamihiel, 2006, Monzo & Rueda, 2009). Monzo and Rueda (2009) found that students who are ELL experience such feelings and react accordingly because they are aware that they do not “fit in” with their English speaking peers. Furthermore, they are “aware of the power of status of English vis-a-vis Spanish (p.32)”.

Pauley & Seto (2010) suggested that Latino immigrant groups wrestle with their ethnic identity development, and propose that this contributes negatively to students’ academic achievement and school experiences. Interestingly, in this same study they found that school counselors may often be the first school staff to indentify such obstacles faced by Latino immigrant students. This finding is not surprising given that part of a school counselor’s role is to support students in their personal and social development (Stone & Dahir, 2006).

School counselors are in a unique position in schools given that their scope of responsibility entails collaborating with school administrators, teachers, community organizations, parents, and students. This role allows counselors the ability to understand issues and concerns from multiple perspectives, which provides school counselors with several advantages when it comes to working with students who are ELL. First, understanding multiple perspectives gives school counselors the ability to suggest realistic solutions for all stakeholders involved, because they have an awareness of how each views a particular situation. Second, because school counselors are exposed to a diversity of school personnel and community organizations, they are better able to identify and connect students with a multitude of resources.
Lastly, as a result of these collaborations, school counselors are able to best advocate for their students, with issues that arise in or out of the classroom.

As advocates, school counselors can be helpful when English Language Learners transition into mainstream classrooms. They can work with students on struggles as they wrestle with their ethnic identity development. As students become familiar with the American culture, they may encounter conflicting values, and must negotiate between such values. School counselors can also support students who may not have had the experience of forming relationships with peers who are English dominant. Furthermore, school counselors can work with students to ensure that the academic supports, they are required to receive when they transitioned, have been helpful.

Students who are ELL need such supports, as they enter school with several disadvantages. Such obstacles include: a students’ immigration experience, poverty, unfamiliarity with their surroundings, and their inability to communicate in the dominant language. Consequently, school counselors must be prepared to advocate for such students at many different levels, and in many different ways. Students who transition out of bilingual education must be included in such advocacy efforts, given that their transition presents them with yet another layer of change.

Therefore, the focus of the following study is to explore the perspectives of students who were formally in bilingual education, and who have transitioned into English speaking classrooms. Through the use of a survey developed by the researcher, the study will specifically examine what actions students took when they learned they were going to transition out of the Bilingual Developmental Services program, what types of academic and social support services students accessed during the year in which they transitioned, and how students managed their
transition in a new classroom and with new peers. For more information on the actual student questions, the survey can be found in the appendix of this document.

**Research Hypotheses.**

Prior to administering the survey, the researcher hypothesized that student responses would be dependent upon the length of time students were at high school, as a pose to the length of time students lived in the United States. The rationale for this predication was based on current research which attributes student limited English proficiency with students living in linguistically isolated households (Farruggio 2010; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; MPI, 2010b). In regards to academic success, the researcher surmised that the majority of students would report struggling in their core subject areas. This hypothesis was based on results from the 2007-2008 NYS Accountability and Overview Report, and research regarding the length of time students need English instruction to develop English oral proficiency and academic English proficiency (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Paez, 2009; Temple University, 2007). Furthermore, the researcher also utilized the 2007-2008 Accountability and Overview Report to draw the conclusion that only one third of students would access tutoring services after their transition.

The researcher hypothesized that three quarters of students who transitioned into English speaking classrooms would have consulted with their bilingual teachers, school counselor, and other school and agency staff members, regarding the transition that was to occur the following school year. This estimate is based on the premise that students who transitioned would have formed relationships with individuals in the bilingual program (particularly with their teachers and school counselor), and would have inquired about this academic transition (Arajuo, 2010, Lee 2006). On the other hand, the researcher predicted that once students transitioned, students would indicate less communication between their new teachers, counselors, and other school
staff. This was based on the fact that at the time when students participated in the survey, they would have spent less than a year in their mainstream classes. Furthermore, parents of ELL students would not have had the opportunity to also build relationships with their child’s new teachers, counselor, or other school staff; an element which the research suggests is critical for student success (Arajuo, 2010; Crosnoe, 2009; Lee, 2006).

The researcher hypothesized that student responses would be mixed regarding the services that would have been helpful prior to their transition. The researcher speculated that student responses would be dependent on the length of time students spent in school. The longer students attended the school, the greater likelihood that students would experience a smooth transition.

**Method**

**Demographic Data**

The study took place in a midsize city in upstate New York. In the school district in which the school was located, ELL students speak 72 different languages, and 10% of students are identified as limited English proficient (Rochester City School District [RCSD], Student Profile, n.d.). Currently, bilingual education programs are available for students who only speak the Spanish language. The type of Bilingual education program models used by the district are transitional and dual language programs. Five elementary and one high school (grades 7-12) offer transitional programs, while two elementary schools that utilize a dual language program model (RCSD, Bilingual Education, n.d.). All ELL students are supported through ESOL programming, and several schools in the district utilize s sheltered instructional support via the Learning Through English Academic Program (LEAP), to build English language proficiency (RCSD, LEAP, n.d).
The high school in which the study took place is currently the only secondary school in the district which provides bilingual education (using a transitional model) to students who are ELL in grades 7-12 (RCSD, n.d.). The school is located on the southeast part of the city, and the district in which the school is a part of is known for being the leading district in New York State with the highest poverty rate. (City of Rochester, Southeast Neighborhoods, n.d.; RCSD, Student Profile, n.d.).

The school in which the study took place has a total of 1137 students, with 85% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch (NYSED, 2009c) Approximately, 31% of the students in the school are identified as limited English proficient (NYSED, 2009c) . The school is comprised of 34% of African American or Black students, 59% of Hispanic or Latino, and 1% of Asian or Pacific Islander, and 5% of White students (NYSED, 2009c).

Participants

Students in grades 7-12 who were formally in the bilingual education program and who transitioned out of the program at the end of the 2008-2009 school year were invited to participate in the study. At the advice of the building principal, it was suggested that students who had about a school year to adjust to their transition be recruited for the study. The principal stated that when students initially transition from the Bilingual Developmental Services program (the program where bilingual education forms one of many services), that students generally display resistance (marked by absences, disruptive behavior, having parents call and complain in behalf of the student), and that shortly after a period students adjust to this transition. Therefore, students who already experienced almost a year in English speaking classes formed the target population of this study. By this time, students would have been able to process their transition
and reflect on this experience. In the 2008-2009 school year, 35 students exited the Bilingual Developmental Services program.

By June 2010, when the survey was administered, 24 students of the 35 students were enrolled at the school. Of the 11 students that were not taking classes at the high school, the researcher became aware that 2 students attended alternative programs located outside of the school. The researcher did not know of the whereabouts of the other students. When the researcher attempted to invite the 24 students enrolled and taking classes at the school, the researcher was only able to communicate with 10 of the 24 students. The researcher was unable to communicate with 14 of the students, because students were absent during the days and times in which the researcher recruited. Of the 10 invited students, 8 students completed and returned the survey.

Materials and Procedure

In order to determine which services transitioned students participated in, and how they managed their transition, a survey was developed by the researcher to capture such responses. After several revisions from the school administrator and the school counselor in the Bilingual Developmental Services program, the survey was printed along with a cover letter describing the purpose of the Bilingual Developmental Program, and that of the survey. These statement were added to the cover letter in the case that students who took the survey drew the conclusion that if they answered a certain way, that they would be able to return to the bilingual program. Prior to administering the survey, students were verbally informed that the study was voluntary, and that their responses were confidential.

The survey questions were designed in a manner that allowed students to reflect on the support systems used prior to their transition, and to highlight the academic and social supports
they currently utilized. In addition, the survey asked students if they would have benefited from a support group, or from meeting with their new teachers and counselors, prior to their transition. Lastly, the researcher sought to capture whether students struggled with their actual academic course content, or if they struggled with the use of the English language in classes. Survey responses were based on a 4 point Likert scale, where students had the option of responding to questions which ranged from ‘strongly disagree to strongly agree’ or ‘never to often.’

Students who transitioned into mainstream classrooms in the 2009-2010 school year were identified by the Bilingual School Counselor. These students were invited to participate in a survey by the researcher during their lunch period. If students decided to participate, they were provided with instructions on where to bring the completed survey. When the researcher located all the identified students in the lunch period, the researcher exited the cafeteria. Upon completion of the survey, students dropped the survey in a sealed drop box located on desk which lead to the exit doors at the end of the cafeteria. This area was a place that was supervised by school staff. At the end of the lunch period, the researcher returned to the cafeteria and collected the surveys from the box. The survey was administered to students towards the end of May, beginning of June, and conducted over a 3 week period.

Results

Of the 24 students that were enrolled and eligible to participate, the researcher only had access to 10 of the students (the 14 other students were absent during the recruitment periods). Of the 10 students that were invited and given a survey to participate in the survey, eight students returned the survey. Over half, or 62% of students who participated in the survey were in 10th grade, while 25% were in the 9th grade, and 13% were in the 12th grade. Three of the eight students reported being in the United States over 10 years, while one student reported being in
the United States no more than five years. Furthermore, three of the eight students reported being at the school less than three years, while one student reported being at the school over six years. The following tables represent data from the survey responses, and also coincide with the order of the questions on the survey.

Table 1

*Student Perception on Actions Made Prior to Transition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never-Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes-Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.1 I asked my bilingual teachers about what would be expected of me in my new classes.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. I discussed my concerns and questions with my bilingual teachers.</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3. I asked my bilingual school counselor about what would be expected of me in my new classes.*</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4. I discussed my concerns and questions with my bilingual school counselor.</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5. I discussed my concerns and questions with other school staff (for example, administrators or secretaries).</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6. I discussed my concerns and questions with agency staff (like Ibero and Hillside).</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1 Person did not answer

The first part of the survey explored what students perceived they did once they learned of their transition. Students were asked who they discussed their concerns and questions with regarding this change. In most instances, over half of students reported that they did not discuss this matter with their bilingual teachers, school counselor, or school and agency staff. However, when students did report that they spoke to individuals, students reported either speaking with their bilingual teachers or school counselor.

Table 2

*Student Actions After Transition Regarding Academic Work (Never-Often Scale)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now that I have transitioned:</th>
<th>Never-Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes-Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Q7. I participate in after school tutoring to help me with my English speaking classes.  
75%  25%

Q8. I participate in tutoring classes during my lunch to help me with my English speaking classes.  
100%

Table 3  
**Student Actions After Transition Regarding Academic Work (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree Scale)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now that I have transitioned:</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree-Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree-Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q9. After School Tutoring has helped me understand and complete my class work and homework assignments.</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10. Tutoring During Lunch has helped me understand and complete my class work and homework assignments.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11. Meeting with my teacher during lunch or before or after school helped me understand and complete my class work and homework assignments.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables two and three represent student responses regarding their use of academic supports after their transition. Students for the most part indicated that they do not participate in tutoring to help them with their English speaking classes, or for the purpose of completing class work or homework assignments.

Table 4  
**Who Students Met With To Learn About Available Academic Supports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources I have used:</th>
<th>Never-Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes-Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q12. I meet with my teachers about available resources I could use in order to understand my school work and homework assignments better.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13. I meet with my school counselor about available resources I could use in order to understand my school work and homework assignments better.</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14. I meet with other school staff (for example, administrators or secretaries), about available resources I could use in order to understand my school work and homework assignments better.</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q15. I meet with other agency staff that work in the school (like Ibero and Hillside), about available resources I could use in order to understand my school work and homework assignments better. 62.5% 37.5%

The next set of questions focused on determining which individuals students contacted when they needed information regarding academic supports and resources. Student responses indicated that students did not generally ask their school counselor, other school staff, or agency staff about available academic resources. However, half of students indicated that they spoke with their teachers about available resources.

Table 5
Student Comfort with New Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My comfort with my new peers:</th>
<th>Never-Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes-Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q16. I meet with my teachers to help me feel comfortable with my new peers.</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17. I meet with my school counselor to help me feel comfortable with my new peers.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18. I meet with other school staff (for example, administrators or secretaries), to help me feel comfortable with my new peers.</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19. I meet with other agency staff (like Ibero, Hillside), to help me feel comfortable with my new peers.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table five identifies which individuals in the school students use to help them feel comfortable with their new peers. Over three quarters of students indicated that they did not meet with their teachers, school counselors, other school or agency staff. A quarter of students identified using their school counselor and agency staff as supports to help them adjust to their new peers.

Table 6
Class Participation and Class Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now that you have spent some time in your English speaking classes, please rate the following:</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree-Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree-Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Q.20 I participate in class discussions 37.5% 62.5%
Q.21 I have learned to feel comfortable around my peers 12.5% 87.5%
Q.22 My contributions in class are valued 12.5% 87.5%
Q.23 I struggle with the use of English in my classes 75% 25%
Q.24 I struggle with the following content:
   Q.25 Math 62.5% 37.5%
   Q.26 Science 62.5% 37.5%
   Q.27 English 87.5% 12.5%
   Q.28 Social Studies 87.5% 12.5%

The data found in Table six explore students’ comfort level while in class. These questions focused on their interactions with their peers and the material discussed in class. Over three quarters of students indicated that they are comfortable with their class peers and believe that their contributions are valued. At the same time, a little over a third of students indicated that they did not participate in class discussions. A little over half of students disagreed with struggling with their math and science class content, and over three quarters of students indicated that they did not struggle with English or social studies content areas.

Table 7
Services Students Would Have Found Helpful Before Transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services that would have made my transition easier include:</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree-Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree-Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.29 Participating in group counseling sessions where I could share my concerns about transitioning with my peers would have been helpful *</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.30 Meeting my new teachers before I transitioned would have been helpful</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.31 Meeting my new school counselor before I transitioned would have been helpful</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1 student left question blank
Table seven responses reflect student perspectives regarding services they thought they would have benefited from prior to their transition. A little less than half of students indicated that group counseling sessions would have been beneficial. Over half of students disagreed that meeting their new teachers or school counselor would have been helpful.

**Discussion**

The goal of the survey study was to determine which services students utilized once they transitioned out of bilingual education, and how students have managed this move. In order to answer these questions, the researcher explored which individuals students approached prior to their transition, and those which students approached after their transition. Moreover, the researcher examined the academic support services students accessed after their move, and asked students which services were helpful.

The students who responded to the survey reported both attending school and living in the United States an average of three years. When the researcher compared individual student responses and length of time students were at the school, there were no apparent patterns to the student answers. Therefore, it is unclear as to whether length of time at the school (or even in the United States), had an impact on student responses. Furthermore, even if student responses were consistent, the manner in which the survey questions were designed would not reveal the correlations between student responses and length of time in the school.

The researcher hypothesized that three quarters of students would consult with their bilingual school counselor, teacher, and others bilingual individuals once they learned of their move into mainstream classrooms. Although the results indicated that students spoke to their teachers and counselor, this was only the case for about a third to half of the students. The researchers’ prediction was therefore much lower than expected. A possible explanation for the
results is that almost an entire school year passed before students took the survey. By this point, students may have probably adjusted to their transition. Another explanation for the student responses is that perhaps these particular students felt well prepared to transition into English speaking classrooms as a result of their increased English oral proficiency. This is consistent with research conducted by Lee (2006) who found that students who had formally participated in a bilingual education program found that this setting supported them academically, socially, and emotionally, and felt they were prepared by the time they transitioned.

Student responses were consistent with the researcher’s predictions regarding the extent to which students met with their new teachers and school counselors. In all of the survey questions which inquired whether students met with their new teachers and school counselor, students generally reported that they did not meet with them for academic, social, or emotional support. The researcher had originally predicted that students would respond in this manner because by the time the survey was administered, students would have only been in their new environment for a little less than a school year. Although students may have adjusted to their new environment, they would not have had sufficient time to build relationships with their new teachers, counselors, or peers. Alternatively, another perspective in considering these responses is that students would have (as with the previous finding), felt prepared to transition into mainstream classrooms, and found that there was not a need to access support services. Krashen (2006) and Pappamihiel (2006), found that students who participated in a transitional bilingual education model (which was used by this school), tended to experience smooth transitions into mainstream classrooms.

Students further reported that they generally felt comfortable in their classes, with their teachers, peers, and class content. These responses further support the conclusions made by the
researcher in that students felt prepared to transition into mainstream classrooms. However, these results are not consistent with the 2008 NYS school report card, which report that students who are ELL tend to score lower than English dominant students (NYSED, 2008). Although the researcher did not have student data to compare student responses, the 2007-2008 Accountability and Overview Report for the school that was surveyed revealed that ELL students test scores mirrored national assessment data.

Although the causes for these responses are uncertain, an ethnographic study by Monzo and Rueda (2006) revealed that limited English proficient students perceived themselves to be more English proficient than they really were. According to the researchers, students did this because of their awareness and assumptions that knowing English was perceived as belonging to a higher status than Spanish, and equated limited English proficiency with intelligence. Although this study provides a perspective regarding the student survey results, the researcher did not gather data on how students felt about being Spanish dominant, and whether they equated the English language as a symbol of elevated states. Therefore, while suggestions made by Monzo and Rueda (2006) provide insight as to why a group of Latino students perceived they knew more English than they actually did, further research is needed in this area to determine the applicability of their study with the survey study conducted by the researcher.

Over half of students indicated that the suggested pre-transition activities would not have generally been helpful. This researcher hypothesized that student responses would be mixed in that students who were reported being in the school less time, would find the activities helpful in comparison to students who had been at the school a longer period of time. Seven of the eight students reported attending school 3 or more years. These student responses correlate with current research which indicate that student oral English proficiency takes an average of three to
five years (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Paez, 2009). Therefore, it was not surprising to the researcher that students did not indicate that the listed transition activities would have been helpful.

Perhaps one of the more significant findings of this study was the fact that over 88% of students reported that they felt their contributions in class were valued. This finding is important given that students who believe they are valued in class and who participate, are less likely to leave school (Arajuo, 2010; Chen 2009). Chen (2009) suggests that students who are in interactive classroom settings are more likely to form relationships with their teachers and peers, and that these relationships equalize any power dynamics that are present between peers and teachers. The reason why the researcher believes students reported feeling valued was due to the fact that the bilingual education program allowed students to build their confidence in both their academic abilities and in their English language proficiency. This is evidence that bilingual education programs do in fact support students in a manner in which sets them up for a positive school experience.

Lastly, it is important to mention that further research is needed to fully comprehend the reasons why students responded in the manner that they did. Therefore, a careful consideration of the study limitations is critical, because these shed light on the degree in which the study can be warranted.

Limitations of the Study

A major limitation in this study was the small sample size. From the 24 students that were eligible to participate, the researcher was only able to communicate with 10 of these students. In retrospect, it would have been helpful if the researcher had an alternative plan to address student absences. Another related limitation was the fact that the survey was
administered in late May, beginning of June. This was problematic because by the time the survey was dispersed, students had a sense whether or not they were going to progress to the next grade or remain in their current grade. As a result, student knowledge of failures could have been a factor in student school attendance.

Since English was the student’s second language, the researcher should have translated the survey into Spanish. Although the language used in the survey was geared at a 6th grade reading level, it is possible that students would have responded differently had the survey been available in their native language. Therefore, it may have been helpful to have given students the option to complete the survey in Spanish.

As the review of the literature highlighted, bilingual education is very much a political issue much more than an issue of adequately fulfilling student needs. The survey did not address how students felt about being limited English proficient, and what being proficient in the English language meant to them. In the instance that they survey had explored some of these themes, a survey approach to understanding these deep rooted issues would in itself had been inappropriate.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

There is a void in the literature which investigates the perspectives of students who exit bilingual education programs and enter into mainstream classrooms. Instead, much of the literature surrounds the effectiveness of this education model, and best practices for teachers who work with these students. Although information of this nature is critical, addressing the social and emotional needs of students is equally as important, and serves as a major contributor to a students’ school success.
At the present moment, current research which focuses on ELL students generally take place in the western United States, and with students who are Central and South American. Further research is warranted in examining whether geographic location, including the demographics of a students’ community, are factors to consider when determining the needs of students. Also, there is a need to further explore the application of practices within other Latino groups.

In regards to the school counseling profession, there is a gap in the literature regarding best practices for school counselors who work in schools that offer bilingual education services. As ELL populations continue to increase, the likelihood that a school counselor will work with students who had been, or are currently in a bilingual program is a reality. If school counselors are to become effective advocates for their students, then competence in this subject matter is of critical importance.

In many States, legislation around bilingual education have been based on and tainted by racist attitudes, fears, and issues of power and control. Unfortunately, these deep rooted beliefs have shaped policies which hide under the guise of helping and improving students. Even in a time where the number of limited English proficient individuals in the United States continues to increase, institutional discrimination in our education system is common. The only difference is that these unjust policies and practices have less to do with skin color, and more about language proficiency. My hope, is that honest research continue to guide the practices of those who work with ELL students, and that through these practices, bilingual education becomes less about opinions and more about students.
References


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Policy Report 2000-1


Hilner, B. (2006). *Bad Policy and Bad Law: The shortcomings of the No Child Left Behind Act in bilingual educational policy and its frustration of the Equal Protection Clause.* Unpublished Manuscript, Villanova University School of Law, Bryn Mawr, PA


Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S. 390 (1923)


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Appendix

The Bilingual Developmental Program and ESOL services are time limited services. They are for students who predominately speak a language other than English for a limited period of time. The goal of the program is to integrate students into English speaking classes as soon as possible.

DEAR STUDENTS,

PLEASE FILL OUT THIS SURVEY TO HELP US BETTER UNDERSTAND THE SERVICES YOU USED WHEN YOU TRANSITIONED INTO ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASSES.

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE SURVEY, AS YOUR ANSWERS ARE ANONYMOUS.

THANK YOU!
Please place an "X" in the response which best describes what you did.

**ONCE I became aware that I was going to transition:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I asked my bilingual teachers about what would be expected of me in my new classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I discussed my concerns and questions with my bilingual teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I asked my bilingual school counselor about what would be expected of me in my new classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I discussed my concerns and questions with my bilingual school counselor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I discussed my concerns and questions with other school staff (for example, administrators or secretaries).</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I discussed my concerns and questions with agency staff (like Ibero and Hillside).</td>
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</table>

**Now that I have transitioned:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I participate in after school tutoring to help me with my English speaking classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I participate in tutoring classes during my lunch to help me with my English speaking classes.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>After School Tutoring has helped me understand and complete my class work and homework assignments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Tutoring During Lunch has helped me understand and complete my class work and homework assignments.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Meeting with my teacher during lunch or before or after school helped me understand and complete my class work and homework assignments.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**RESOURCES I have used:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. I meet with my teachers about available resources I could use in order to understand my school work and homework assignments better.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I meet with my school counselor about available resources I could use in order to understand my school work and homework assignments better.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I meet with other school staff (for example, administrators or secretaries), about available resources I could use in order to understand my school work and homework assignments better.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I meet with other agency staff that work in the school (like Ibero and Hillside), about available resources I could use in order to understand my school work and homework assignments better.</td>
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**MY COMFORT WITH MY NEW PEERS:**

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<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. I meet with my teachers to help me feel comfortable with my new peers.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I meet with my school counselor to help me feel comfortable with my new peers.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18. I meet with other school staff (for example, administrators or secretaries), to help me feel comfortable with my new peers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. I meet with other agency staff (like Ibero, Hillside), to help me feel comfortable with my new peers.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Now that you have spent some time in your English speaking classes, please rate the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. I participate in class discussions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21. I have learned to feel comfortable with my peers:</td>
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<td>22. My contributions in class discussions are valued:</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. I struggle most with the use of English in my classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. I struggle with the following content in my classes:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Services that would have made my transition easier include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29. Participating in group counseling sessions where I could share my concerns about transitioning with my peers would have been helpful.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Meeting new teachers before I transitioned would have been helpful.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Meeting my new school counselor before I transitioned would have been helpful.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32. How long have you been in the United States? __________________________

33. How long have you been at Monroe High School? __________________________

34. What grade are you in? __________________________