Bilingual Education: Searching for the Ideal Elementary Bilingual Program

Vanessa J. Brumaghim
The College at Brockport, Vanessa.Brumaghim@RCSDK12.org

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses
Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons, and the Elementary Education and Teaching Commons

To learn more about our programs visit: http://www.brockport.edu/ehd/

Repository Citation
http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses/213

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Education and Human Development at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education and Human Development Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact kmyers@brockport.edu.
Bilingual Education:
Searching for the Ideal Elementary Bilingual Program

by

Vanessa Brumaghim

APPROVED BY:

[Signature]
Advisor 12/7/09

[Signature]
Director, Graduate Programs 12/14/09
# Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1  
  Key Terms ......................................................................................................................... 5  

Chapter II: Review of Literature ........................................................................................... 7  
  History of Bilingual Education in the United States ......................................................... 7  
  Types of Bilingual Programs ............................................................................................. 10  
  Opposition to Bilingual Education ..................................................................................... 14  
  Benefits of Bilingual Education ......................................................................................... 23  
  Components of a Successful Bilingual Program ................................................................. 32  

Chapter III: Reflection ........................................................................................................... 42  

References ............................................................................................................................. 50
Chapter I: Introduction

Driven by the various debates surrounding our country's legal and illegal immigrants, one of the most passionately debated topics in education is the worth of bilingual education. Bilingual education refers to all programs that teach content using two languages. The main question is whether our public schools should teach content using English only, or both English and a second language. Although there are outspoken groups from both sides of this debate, the number of bilingual programs has increased dramatically over the past several years. This increase in the number of bilingual programs is due primarily to the need to educate the growing number of students that speak a non-English language at home.

English language learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing segment of the student population in grades K-12 in the United States (Field, 2008). In fact, ELLs now make up more than 10% of the entire student population (Jepsen, 2009). If bilingual education programs are not utilized, there is a danger of alienating and failing to support the growing number of ELLs in our public educational system. With this dramatic increase in the diversity of the student population in the United States, there is a clear need for alternatives to the traditional monolingual educational programs.

Although most current research supports the use of bilingual education programs and illustrates their many possible benefits, there are numerous outspoken opponents to the contrary. The factions that do not support bilingual education
maintain that English should be the only language used to teach content in public schools (U. S. English, 2009). These beliefs are based on three main points. First, English should be the official national language and opponents to bilingual education suggest that if English were the only language used to teach content in our public schools it would promote unity in our country. This principle is at the heart of the Official English movement. The Official English movement is a political movement that supports the establishment of English as the only official language of the United States. Supporters of this movement claim that teaching content only in English will help to bring together the diverse populations of the United States by improving communication between cultural groups with different linguistic backgrounds (U. S. English, 2009). The second main point used in the argument against bilingual education is the fear that if ELLs are placed in a bilingual program they may never become proficient in the English language and continue to rely on the use of their native language. This leads to the prevailing idea within the official English movement that immersion in an English only program is the best way to help ELLs become proficient in the use of the English language. Thirdly, there is a widespread belief that bilingual education has been a waste of taxpayers' money and that bilingual programs do not work and should be abandoned (Olsen, 2009).

The debate surrounding bilingual education comes not only from groups that advocate an English only approach, but also from within the supporters of the bilingual education movement. There are differences in opinions about which
specific type of bilingual program is the most successful. The main argument revolves around the long term goals of the different bilingual programs. One side of the internal debate focuses on transitional programs that only use the students' native language to help in the acquisition of English. This type of program is the most popular because it is the easiest to implement and their supporters claim that ELLs will learn English the fastest in this type of bilingual program.

The other side of this internal debate argues that developmental and two-way immersion programs that focus on developing both the students' native and target language can lead to better long-term achievement not only in language arts, but also in every academic subject. Even with these internal disputes, the supporters of bilingual education all agree that bilingual education programs can best provide ELLs the opportunity to succeed in our public school system.

The main goals of bilingual education are not only to provide students with the opportunity to become bilingual and biliterate, but also to attain a high level of academic achievement and cognitive growth in all subjects and areas of learning. In addition to these educational goals, bilingual programs are designed to increase students' cultural awareness, multicultural competence, positive attitudes and behaviors, and to better prepare the students to compete in a global marketplace (Vance, 2008). These academic, social and employment goals drive bilingual education to continually evolve with the changing faces of our K-12 student population. This evolution is still in progress and has led to the development and
refinement of what is now promising to be one of the most successful bilingual education programs – the two-way immersion program (Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary, & Rogers, 2007). Both the criteria for and the benefits of a successful two-way immersion program will be analyzed fully in the next chapter.

The controversy over bilingual education remains on the forefront of educational debates. As a bilingual woman and dual language teacher, I will read and analyze current research on bilingual education with the intent to improve my individual instruction as well as the program in which I teach. By completing this research I hope to discover the characteristics of a truly successful bilingual program. I intend to share my findings with the dual language council and the principal at my school. In the next chapter, I will present the research that examines the controversial issues within and surrounding the bilingual education movement. The analysis will begin with the history of bilingual education and the origin of the different types of bilingual programs. My paper will continue with research about the arguments for and against these programs and finish with an investigation of the criteria for a successful bilingual program. Based on this research, I will conclude with my position on bilingual education and what I believe to be the best type of bilingual program.
Key Terms

**Bilingualism**: Bilingualism refers to an individual's ability to proficiently use two languages. Students who are fully bilingual should be able to read, write, speak and listen in two languages.

**Developmental Bilingual Education**: In developmental or late-exit programs, all students speak the same native language. Instruction in literacy and other academic subjects are given in both the student's native language and English.

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the 1968 comprehensive federal education legislation that provides guidelines and funding for federally regulated education programs. Under the administration of George W. Bush, the act was named the "No Child Left Behind Act" because it set academic proficiency goals for all students. Under this version of the ESEA, the Bilingual Education Act was eliminated in favor of provisions that favored English language acquisition.

**English Language Learners (ELLs)**: The term English language learners defines students who have another language as their first language and are now learning English.

**English Only Instruction**: In English Only or English immersion programs, students may share the same language background or they may be from different backgrounds. English is the only medium of instruction though academic content is modified to the students' level of proficiency.
Native Language: Native language refers to the language that a person has spoken from earliest childhood.

Target Language: The second language that is taught in addition to the native language.

Transitional Programs: Transitional, or early-exit programs, are the most common form of bilingual education in the U.S. The goal of a transitional program is for students to acquire English as quickly as possible. To that end, the student’s native language is used to teach literacy and core content in the primary grades while the student simultaneously studies English.

Two-way Immersion Programs: In two-way bilingual education programs, 50% of the students in the program speak one language, and 50% of the students speak a second language. Instruction in literacy and other academic subjects are given in both the student’s native language and English.
Chapter II: Review of Literature

History of Bilingual Education in the United States

Bilingual education has a long history in the United States and actually dates back to the colonial period before the United States was formed. As James Crawford (2004a) has noted, “language diversity in North America … has existed in every era, since long before the United States constituted itself as a nation” (p. 59). Branching out from this early beginning, bilingual education has been used continuously in one form or another throughout the formation and development of the United States leading to the bilingual programs that are used today (Ovando, 2003). The debate surrounding bilingual education has been more heated recently due to current political and social concerns regarding the current wave of primarily Spanish speaking immigrants. Because this debate is currently unresolved, bilingual education is destined to be an important part of the educational process of the United States for some time.

Early history

The United States has long been known as a great melting pot of peoples and cultures. This is primarily because the United States was formed and influenced by wave after wave of immigrants dating back to the first colonists interacting with the native populations. These immigrants brought with them multiple nationalities and language backgrounds. Therefore, out of necessity, the educational system of the
early U.S. colonies started as many small private schools that were formed to educate specific groups of immigrants. Although the common language of the colonies was English, each group of immigrants had their own private schools that taught in their native language and English (Ovando, 2003). As each new wave of immigrants arrived in the United States, pressure was placed on the new arrivals to conform to the previously established cultures and languages. This pressure arose from the colonists' fears that their established languages and cultures might be overridden by those of the more recent immigrants. (Vance, 2008)

In an attempt to protect their own culture and language, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams formed one of the first groups of English only schools in order to assimilate the growing number of German immigrants into their English speaking culture (Crawford, 1996). Despite Franklin's attempts to fully assimilate all of the immigrants into an English speaking culture, this struggle between the English speaking population and the newly arriving non-English speaking cultures continued throughout the colonial period and the formation of the United States (Nieto, 2009). This historical conflict has led to the modern debate surrounding bilingual education in the U.S.

**Modern history**

The modern history of bilingual education in the United States owes its roots to the civil rights movement in the 1960's that culminated in the Civil Rights Act of
1964. As women and African-Americans fought for their civil rights, linguistic minorities began to insist on their right to preserve their native languages as they learned English (Brisk, 1998). This political movement led to the inclusion of Title VII in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1968 known as the Bilingual Education Act. The ESEA of 1968 was the comprehensive federal education legislation that provided guidelines and funding for federally regulated educational programs. Although the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 officially approved the use of bilingual programs to educate linguistic minorities, it did not designate any specific type of bilingual program (Wiese & Garcia, 1998). Without specific federal guidelines, several different types of bilingual programs were developed to match the needs of specific populations throughout the US.

The next major legislation supporting bilingual education in the United States came from the Supreme Court ruling on the Lau v. Nichols case of 1974. In this Supreme Court case, non-English speaking Chinese students sued the San Francisco Unified School District for not providing them with English language instruction. The Supreme Court affirmed that English language learners (ELLs) need specialized instruction in English if they are to reap the benefits of their education (Lau v. Nichols, 1974). As a result of this case, the door was opened for the implementation of a wider variety of programs to serve bilingual students (Wiese & Garcia, 1998).
Types of Bilingual Programs

Due to the previously mentioned federal legislation and the lack of specific federal guidelines, bilingual programs have since become more numerous and varied. Although bilingual programs have developed into several different forms, most of the bilingual programs designed to teach ELLs can be classified into three commonly used programs: transitional, developmental, and two-way immersion; the most common of which is the transitional bilingual program (Genesee, 1999).

Transitional

Transitional bilingual programs focus on placing students into regular classes that teach only in the language that they were meant to learn (target language) as quickly as possible. To that end, the students' native language is used to teach literacy and core content in the primary grades while the students simultaneously study the target language. Once students are deemed to have learned enough of their target language, they no longer receive instruction in their native language and are placed in regular classes taught only in the target language (Genesee, 1999).

Although these programs have been somewhat successful, they do not take into account many factors affecting students' development. Because of this, there is often a steep decline in student achievement when they are taken out of the bilingual program and placed in classes taught only in the target language (Ramirez, 1992). Ramirez believed this to be a result of the removal of instruction and the support
system in the native language. Although ELLs may seem fully fluent in their target language, there is a difference between basic interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive academic language proficiency (Cummins, 1979). Klesmer (1994) found that conversational fluency is often acquired within a year or two while at least five years is usually required to develop the skills necessary to learn academic material in the target language in a classroom setting. Failure to acknowledge this distinction has resulted in the premature removal of bilingual students from their language support programs (Cummins, 1984). Thus, transitional programs do not allow enough time for cognitive language skills to develop.

Another drawback to transitional bilingual programs is that they make no attempt to maintain ELLs' native language, instead they focus on the short-term goal of acquiring the target language. This decreases the likelihood that students placed in transitional bilingual programs will become fully bilingual (Genesee, 1999). Transitional bilingual programs have a limited outlook that may not benefit students' long-term achievement.

Developmental

The second most popular programs are the developmental bilingual programs (Genesee, 1999). Developmental programs are designed to teach ELLs a target language while preserving their native language. To accomplish this, developmental programs teach the target language to students from one language background by
giving instruction in literacy and other academic subjects in both the students' native and target language (Genesee, 1999). At the elementary level, developmental programs are usually designed to teach students in a comprehensive K-6 program, and often continue into middle and high school. By giving students instruction in both languages for a long period of time, developmental programs support the development of truly bilingual students, not just focusing on the acquisition of the target language while disregarding the students' native language. This approach has some promising results in maximizing students' English achievement while simultaneously promoting the retention of the native language. (Genesee, 1999).

There are two main types of developmental bilingual programs that are differentiated by the ratio of native language instruction to target language instruction. In the 50:50 developmental model, instruction is divided evenly between the native and target languages. The 90:10 program model, however, begins with 90% of the instruction in the native language in kindergarten, and then gradually decreases to 50% by the upper elementary grades (Genesee, 1999). The two developmental program models only differ in the early elementary grades and have the same goals of high academic achievement and full bilingualism.

Two-way immersion

The third most used and fastest growing type of bilingual program is the two-way immersion program (Center for Applied Linguistics [CAL], 2009a). Two-way
immersion bilingual programs are very similar to developmental programs. In two-way immersion programs, as with developmental programs, instruction in literacy and other academic subjects are given in both the students' native language and their target language with the same 50:50 and 90:10 program alternatives. Also like developmental programs, two-way immersion programs usually encompass grades K-6 in elementary school and often continue into middle and high school (Genesee, 1999).

The only difference between developmental and two-way immersion programs is that two-way immersion programs place students from two different language backgrounds in the same class. About half the class speaks one native language, and the other half speaks a different native language (Genesee, 1999). For example, in one class half the students' native language could be Spanish while the other half's native language is English. The students that speak Spanish have English as their target language and the students that speak English have Spanish as their target language. By incorporating students from different cultures in the same class, two-way immersion programs can cultivate multicultural awareness gained from everyday classroom experiences. Because of this, two-way immersion programs not only have the long-term goals of full bilingualism and high academic achievement for their students, but also strive for a rich cultural awareness through the interactions between the two cultures in each class (Howard & Sugarman, 2007).
Opposition to Bilingual Education

Even as bilingual programs increased in popularity, the opposition to bilingual education gained strength. There is a substantial contingent of United States citizens and politicians who believe English should be the only language used within the U.S. for social and political reasons. Some research has also suggested that bilingual education is not as successful as structured English immersion (SEI) programs. These arguments have become part of a social and political campaign known as the Official English movement which has led political activists to present legislation to eliminate bilingual education.

Official English movement

The Official English movement arose from two long standing fears. The first is that immigrant cultures will permanently alter the traditional English speaking culture of the United States. A great deal of the population does not want the U.S. to change and is afraid of losing the culture that it has known and loved. The second fear is that a population that speaks many different languages will become fragmented and weaken the United States. Many U.S. citizens presently consider the United States to be a world power and do not want to see the U.S. lose its prominent standing. Both these fears date back to the origin of the United States and have continuously been voiced throughout its history. Supporters of the Official English
movement believe that they need to act now to prevent these disturbing fears from becoming reality.

The two primary goals of the Official English movement are to establish English as the official language of the United States and to mandate that English is the only language used to teach content in U.S. schools. Both these goals are intended to promote national unity by requiring all U.S. citizens and residents to learn and communicate through the use of English only. Currently, thirty states have passed legislation to name English as their official language with active legislation in several more ("About U.S. English," n.d.).

Supporters of the Official English movement believe that requiring the use of one common language will increase communication and limit misunderstandings between the many different cultural groups within the U.S. This in turn will lessen the social tension between minority groups and promote a strong and unified country. To accomplish these goals, the Official English movement continues their strong political push to pass legislation to make English the official language of the United States and to limit or eliminate all bilingual programs.

Organizations

In order to increase the likelihood of passing their proposed legislation, supporters of the Official English movement have formed several social and political
organizations. The two largest organizations that support the Official English movement are U.S. English and English First.

According to its official website, U.S. English (n.d.) is the "... nation's oldest, largest citizens' action group dedicated to preserving the unifying role of the English language in the United States." U.S. English was founded in 1983 by Senator Hayakawa and has grown to be the largest organization that supports the English Only movement with 1.8 million members nationwide. Located in Washington, D.C., U.S. English is a powerful and well funded lobby group. Its goals are to make English the official language of the United States and to either limit bilingual programs to transitional programs or replace them with SEI programs that are as short as possible.

The second largest organization that supports the Official English movement is English First ("About English First," n.d.). English First is a national, non-profit lobbying organization founded in 1986 with 150,000 current members. Located just outside Washington D.C. in Springfield, VA, English First is an aggressive lobbying group with policies that do not accept the use of languages other than English in any form within the United States. Similarly to U.S. English, English First calls for English to be named the official language of the United States, but unlike U.S. English, English First calls for the elimination of all bilingual programs. English First ("About English First," n.d.) considers all bilingual programs to be "costly and ineffective."
In addition to these well-known organizations, there are several other groups that support the Official English movement which range from the national to local scale. These groups speak out against bilingual education and support legislation to end the use of bilingual education. In addition to the stated goals of the Official English movement, it has been speculated that some of these groups have ulterior goals that aim to limit immigration and the rights of immigrants (Draper & Jiménez, 1996).

Legislation

The aforementioned organizations have fought numerous political battles and supported a significant amount of legislation in opposition to bilingual education. Three major examples of recent legislation that have limited the use of bilingual education are Proposition 227, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and the Horne v. Flores Supreme Court case. Due to this legislation and the considerable ongoing effort to limit or eliminate bilingual education for social and political reasons, bilingual education remains a highly controversial topic and its future in the United States is presently unknown.

Proposition 227

California always has had one of the highest percentages of ELLs primarily due to the influx of Spanish speaking immigrants. Because of this, determining
successful methods to educate ELLs in California became a high priority. During the 1990s it became apparent that ELLs in California were achieving at a much lower level than their English speaking counterparts. This instigated a search for a better program to instruct ELLs that would allow them the opportunity to achieve at the same level as the English speaking students.

In 1998 Unz and Tuchman answered this call with a proposed program that they believed would increase the achievement of California's ELLs. Their plan was to mandate that all ELLs be placed in a structured English immersion (SEI) program for no more than one year. It was also mandated that all of the instruction and materials in the SEI programs be in English. At the end of the year, the ELLs would be switched into standard English only classes. This plan became known as Proposition 227 and was passed in June of 1998.

The passing of Proposition 227 was a major blow to bilingual education because it effectively ended all types of bilingual programs in California. After its inception, there have been conflicting reports on its success in increasing the achievement of ELLs. There was a four percent average increase in the ELL test scores the following year, but because of California's many other efforts to reduce class sizes, improve teacher training, and increase funding it is difficult to determine exactly which change caused this increase. It has also been argued that the increase was too small to be statistically significant. Also confounding the reports on the success of Proposition 227 was the non uniform implementation of the SEI programs.
Due to a lack of specific guidelines and limited preparation time, there was no consistency in the implementation of the SEI programs created across California.

In a study conducted for the California Department of Education five years after the passing of Proposition 227, the American Institutes for Research (2006) determined that there was no conclusive evidence that the SEI programs had any effect on the achievement of ELLs in California.

No Child Left Behind Act

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is the 1968 comprehensive federal education legislation that provides guidelines and funding for federally regulated education programs. Title VII of the ESEA, known as the Bilingual Education Act, officially approved the use of bilingual programs to educate linguistic minorities (Wiese & Garcia, 1998). The use of bilingual education swelled with the official support of the federal government as different types of programs were established. The number of bilingual programs rose dramatically in the following years. This support of bilingual education by the federal government was not to last.

Under the administration of George W. Bush in 2001, the ESEA was reauthorized and named the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) because it set academic proficiency goals for all students. Under the new version of the ESEA, however, the Bilingual Education Act was eliminated in favor of provisions that
favored English language acquisition. The NCLB Act offered no support for native language learning, but rather emphasized accountability in English only, and mandated that all students, including ELLs, were tested yearly in English.

Originally, supporters of bilingual education were hopeful that the NCLB Act would draw greater attention to the needs of ELLs because schools would be judged partly by ELL test scores. Attention was drawn to ELLs and bilingual programs, but it was not positive. Crawford (2004b) sums up the shortcomings of the NCLB Act with respect to ELLs:

… the law [NCLB] does little to address the most formidable obstacles to their achievement: resource inequities, critical shortages of teachers trained to serve ELLs, inadequate instructional materials, substandard school facilities, and poorly designed instructional programs. Meanwhile, its emphasis on short-term test results backed up by punitive sanctions for schools – is narrowing the curriculum, encouraging excessive amounts of test preparation, undercutting best practices based on scientific research, demoralizing dedicated educators, and pressuring schools to abandon [bilingual] programs that have proven successful for ELLs over the long term (pp. 1-2)

Although the NCLB Act failed to solve numerous problems, forcing schools to focus on short-term results was the most devastating effect on bilingual programs. This caused many states to switch from long term bilingual programs such as
developmental and two-way immersion programs to minimalistic, short-term transitional bilingual programs or monolingual SEI programs.

_Horne v. Flores_

In 1992, a group of ELLs and their parents filed a class action, alleging that Arizona, its State Board of Education, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction were providing inadequate ELL instruction in the Nogales Unified School District. The case was named for Flores, one of the parents involved in the case, and Horne, the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction. Flores et al. argued that the school district failed to teach their children English. The state courts of Arizona decided in favor of Flores determining that the state had to improve programs to educate ELLs. The outcome of this case supported the restructuring and creation of bilingual programs to improve student achievement. After the ruling, Arizona announced it would appeal the decision, and the case proceeded to higher courts. After several appeals, the case eventually reached the Supreme Court.

While the case was in the appeal process, both state and federal legislation which significantly impacted its final outcome was passed. The first was Arizona's Proposition 203. Following his success of passing Proposition 227 in California, Unz proposed similar legislation to restrict bilingual education in Arizona. Despite having the longest history of bilingual education in the United States, Arizona passed Proposition 203 in November of 2000. Like Proposition 227, Proposition 203
eliminated bilingual programs in favor of short term SEI programs which focused on learning English as quickly as possible. The second piece of legislation which significantly impacted the final outcome of this case was the NCLB Act passed in 2001. Both Proposition 203 and the NCLB Act focused on the acquisition of English as quickly as possible for all ELLs which eliminated longer, more developed bilingual programs.

Partly due to these new laws that were in effect in Arizona at the time of the decision, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Horne in June of 2009. The Supreme Court sided with Proposition 203 and the NCLB Act and concluded that “research on ELL instruction indicates there is documented, academic support for the view that SEI is significantly more effective than bilingual education” (Horne v. Flores, 2009, p. 24). This decision continued the trend of state and federal governments to require SEI programs for all ELLs.

All of the legislation mentioned previously reflected the conclusion that a SEI program is more effective than bilingual education. If this trend continues, it will bring an end to all bilingual programs that not only focus on the acquisition of English, but also value the development of students' native languages and overall achievement.

22
Benefits of Bilingual Education

Supporters of bilingual education have claimed that the research that shows SEI programs to be more successful than bilingual programs is often based on comparing SEI programs to substandard bilingual programs. When research has compared the achievement of ELLs when placed in a successful standard English program, a successful SEI program, and a successful bilingual program, it has found that the bilingual program has the most to offer ELLs (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Despite the strong opposition to bilingual education, the number of bilingual programs has grown dramatically in recent years. This is primarily a response to the growing number of ELLs and the substantial amount of research that has delineated the many possible benefits of bilingual education. Presently, eleven percent of the students enrolled in the public educational system of the United States are ELLs. This number is expected to rise to an astounding 25% by the year 2018 (Saunders, 2009). Developing educational programs that best suit this significant percentage of U.S. students is crucial.

Although transitional, developmental and two-way immersion bilingual programs are structured differently, they all seek to maximize ELL success through the use of two languages. Supporters of bilingual education claim that these bilingual programs may provide more benefits for ELLs, as well as English speaking students, than an English only approach. Specifically, research shows that bilingual programs
may increase students' bilingualism, cognitive development, academic achievement, multicultural awareness, and preparedness for a global society (Garcia, 2009).

**Bilingualism**

One of the most obvious and important benefits that bilingual programs may provide students is the opportunity to become fully bilingual. To be considered fully bilingual, a student must be able to read, write, speak and listen in two languages. The educational programs that can best help students become bilingual are the programs that teach using both students' native and target languages; otherwise, there is the danger of weakening the students' native language through lack of use (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). Hasson (2008) has shown that native bilingual students that participated in any type of bilingual program during elementary school perform better on language ability and communicative competence assessments than native bilingual students that were enrolled in English only programs. This research suggests that bilingual programs are more likely to produce truly bilingual students than English only programs, even with native bilinguals.

The benefits of bilingualism are far reaching and may have both academic and societal benefits. Bilingualism may lead to greater cognitive ability, cultural awareness, and preparedness for a global society (Garcia, 2009).
Cognitive development

One of the most interesting benefits of bilingual programs is the possibility that helping students to become fully bilingual may increase their overall cognitive abilities. Recent research has linked bilingualism to an increase in executive functioning (Bialystok et al., 2005). The executive system is a theorized cognitive system in psychology that controls and manages other cognitive processes.

Bialystok, Craik, and Ryan (2006) found that bilinguals may be able to manage conflicting attentional demands better than monolinguals which enables bilinguals to resolve various types of response conflicts faster than monolinguals. Bialystok (2007), one of the lead researchers in this field, pointed out that bilinguals "... must have a mechanism for controlling attention to their two language systems in order to achieve fluent performance in each language without intrusions from the other" (p. 210).

Bialystok concluded that the need for this mechanism may boost the development of executive control processes in bilinguals which may give bilinguals a cognitive advantage in other more generalized areas. Carlson and Meltzoff (2008) then validated the findings of Bialystok et al. (2006) and reached a similar conclusion. This advantage not only improved children's cognitive abilities, but research also indicated that it may prevent the decline of these abilities associated with aging (Bialystok, 2007; Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2008).
Due to the similar findings of the previously mentioned researchers, it is quite possible that bilingualism does indeed increase the cognitive abilities in bilinguals, young and old. Because this increase in cognitive abilities could likely increase a bilingual's ability to select relevant sensory information from a myriad of inputs, it could also be generalized to benefit bilingual students in all academic and social situations (Bialystok, 2007). Research conducted by Bialystok, Craik, Klein, and Viswanathan (2004) found that bilingual children responded more rapidly to conditions that placed greater demands on working memory supports this claim. Most recently, Bialystok and Viswanathan (2009) found that bilingual children responded faster than monolinguals in conditions based on cognitive flexibility. This research suggests that bilinguals would outperform monolinguals in situations which demand quick cognitive assessments when faced with multiple, varied stimuli (Bialystok et al., 2004). Because situations requiring these abilities are quite common in today's fast paced, technologically driven society, one could conclude that bilinguals would have an advantage over monolinguals in most social and academic situations.

**Academic achievement**

The main goal of every educational program is high academic achievement for all students. Thus, if bilingual programs are a viable option for the public educational system of the United States, they must increase the academic
achievement of the participating students. As bilingual programs became more popular, there was a rising need for research to determine if they increased student achievement. In response to this need, researchers began to conduct investigations comparing standardized English test scores of students in bilingual programs and students in English only programs.

It was found that students in bilingual programs scored the same or better on standardized English achievement tests than their monolingual peers in English only programs. In addition to their high performance levels on the English tests, the bilingual students also scored well on Spanish tests. The conclusion was drawn that bilingual programs were able to teach students Spanish while meeting the need for academic achievement in English; having instruction in a second language did not negatively affect English test scores (Barnett, Yarosz, Thomas, Jung, & Blanco, 2007; Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Slavin & Cheung, 2004; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

A more detailed study was conducted by Jepsen (2009) in which the academic achievement levels of students in bilingual programs were measured and compared to students in English only programs by each individually grade. Jepsen found that students in bilingual programs were behind the achievement of students in English only programs on standardized English tests in the first and second grades. Although this seemed to be a blow against bilingual programs, Jepsen also found that students in bilingual programs that were behind in the first two grades were able to close the
gap and score equally as well as students in English only programs on standardized
English tests in grades three and four. These findings verified earlier studies which
indicated grades three and four as the turning point for student achievement in
bilingual programs (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Tinajero & DeVillar, 2000).

In addition to research dealing with students' English achievement levels,
research also indicated that students in bilingual programs scored equally well as
students in English only programs on standardized tests of mathematics achievement
(Barnett et al., 2007). Earlier research by Ramirez (1992) indicated a steep decline in
math achievement scores for students that were removed from bilingual programs and
placed in English only programs. These results suggest that instructing ELLs in both
their native and target languages benefits not only their English and Spanish
achievement, but also their math achievement levels. In a comprehensive review of
the effect of bilingual programs on student achievement, Howard et al., (2007)
concluded that bilingually educated students achieved equally or higher than students
in monolingual programs. This conclusion included an analysis of reading
achievement, mathematics achievement, grade point average, attendance, school
completion, and attitudes toward school and self (p. 29). This research clearly
suggests that bilingual programs are additive in nature; teaching content in a second
language does not negatively affect student achievement in English language arts or
any other subject. Howard et al. (2007) concluded that bilingual programs are not
only likely to improve students' achievement levels, but also the likelihood that they will graduate.

Clearly there is great evidence that bilingual education can benefit student achievement. This conclusion not only validates the use of bilingual programs, but indicates that bilingual programs may be the best way to educate not only ELLs, but all students.

**Multicultural awareness**

Although academic achievement is the main goal of all educational programs, bilingual programs have an additional goal of promoting multicultural sensitivity and awareness. At first glance, these goals are two separate entities having very little to do with each other. Recent research, however, has linked multicultural attitudes with self-perceptions, attitudes toward school in general, and academic achievement (Fort & Stechuk, 2008; Genesee & Gándara, 1999).

ELLs are especially at risk of feeling alienated from the English speaking culture that dominates the public school system of the United States. These feelings of alienation often lead to low academic achievement and a higher risk of dropping out. Bilingual programs that support multicultural awareness work toward student acculturation and the accompanying feelings of acceptance that this brings for all students while preserving students' native culture. Improved self-esteem and positive cross-cultural attitudes are obvious benefits, but the importance of these benefits are
only fully understood when their direct link to student achievement is realized (Genesee et al., 2006; Kirk Senesac, 2002).

Cavazos-Rehg and DeLucia-Waack (2009) investigated the link between self-esteem, ethnic identity, and grade point average (GPA). Cavazos-Rehg and DeLucia-Waack found that students with a high sense of self-esteem and ethnic identity were more likely to graduate and have higher GPAs than students with feelings of low self-esteem and ethnic identity. Thus, not only are there obvious personal and societal benefits to promoting high self-esteem and ethnic identity in students through a multicultural bilingual program, but there is also a direct benefit to student achievement and graduation rates.

**Preparedness for global society**

The ultimate goal of education is to provide students with the opportunity to become well-adjusted, contributing members of society. All of the previously mentioned benefits build toward this broader goal which encompasses the preparation of students to enter society and the marketplace. The advancement of communication technologies has increased cross-cultural communication worldwide which has placed a growing importance on the ability to understand multiple cultures and languages. Students graduating with these capabilities have significant social and employment advantages over the students that were not exposed to multicultural experiences in school. In fact, according to Tokuhama-Espinosa (2008), “To be truly successful in
the international arena, whether as an immigrant, student, businessperson, or tourist, openness toward other cultures is vital and the most obvious door to those cultures is through language. Learning a second language is no longer an option for many, it is both a survival tool and an opportunity.” The ability of bilingual programs to provide students with experiences that promote bilingualism and a robust multicultural awareness is widely recognized (Genesee & Gandara, 1999; Krashen, n.d.; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Although multicultural experiences can be incorporated in an English only program, they do not compare to the deep, personal multicultural experiences that bilingual programs can provide everyday. In fact, according to Garcia (2009), “… monolingual schooling seems utterly inappropriate” (p. 16). Garcia goes on to say that bilingual education is “… an enterprise of love for the children of the world who will be the men and women of the future” (p. 383). Such emotional statements indicate that Garcia truly believes bilingual education is superior to English only programs in meeting the needs of the population today and in the future. She is not alone. Bolstered by new research which has indicated the great benefits bilingual education may provide, the support for bilingual education is again on the rise (CAL, 2009a).

Current research suggests bilingual education may have several benefits. Yet the questions still remains; what are the characteristics of a successful bilingual program, and which program model would be the most beneficial to ELLs? The
following section will analyze research on the characteristics of successful bilingual programs to determine which type of bilingual program is the most promising.

Components of a Successful Bilingual Program

There is a long history of researching effective teaching methods and their supporting school contexts. Much of the research has found what works for standard monolingual English programs is applicable to any educational program, including bilingual programs; there are commonalities between all good educational programs. These commonalities include (a) a positive school environment; (b) a strong commitment by students, parents, teachers, and administrators; (c) a shared vision with clear goals and expectations; (d) effective use of professional development; (e) proper allocation of funds; (f) vertical and horizontal consistency; (g) strong, effective leadership (Howard et al., 2007).

General program criteria

All successful schools must begin with creating a safe, positive learning environment within their walls. Students can only learn when this most basic need is met (Marzano, 2003). It takes a strong commitment by students, parents, teachers, and administrators to foster a school climate which allows students to reach their potential without being concerned for their safety. This strong commitment is also needed to develop a cohesive, school-wide shared vision that everybody can believe
in and strive to promote everyday. A school's vision statement can be a focal point that keeps the school community motivated to provide every possible opportunity for the students to succeed (Montecel & Cortez, 2002; Slavin & Calderón, 2001).

In addition to providing a safe environment and a common vision, schools need specific, clear goals that define their expectations for achievement. These goals need to be measurable and result from an instructional focus and commitment to achievement and high expectations that are shared by students, teachers, and the entire school community. In order to support a successful bilingual program specifically, there must also be a clear commitment to bilingualism and a multicultural experience (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Montecel & Cortez, 2002). The bilingual program must be a welcomed part of the school, incorporated in the school-wide vision, and supported by all of the cultures in the community. It is especially important for administration to display open support for their bilingual programs and show that these programs are a truly valued component of their school (Riehl, 2000).

One powerful vehicle to further these goals is professional development. Meaningful professional development opportunities can promote faculty cohesion and collaboration while encouraging a sense of collegiality. This is especially important because the attitudes and expectations exhibited by the staff often set the tone for the whole school climate. Also, when teachers collaborate there is a greater possibility of quality instruction as each teacher shares their own successes. A close-knit staff is
more likely able to stay united and focused on the school's vision and goals (Howard et al., 2007).

Professional development can also be used to share information gained from systematic reviews of literature. It is important to continually develop best practices based on the latest research which are aligned with the school's goals and educational standards. All school decisions should be grounded in sound theory and focused on improving student outcomes (Montecel & Cortez, 2002). In-service training can be a valuable tool for both new and experienced teachers that can help update the faculty on the latest research and best practices. School based professional development could also be used to keep the staff informed about the vision, goals, and functioning of their bilingual program specifically.

Another important general criteria is to ensure the proper allocation of funds to every school department. Underfunded programs are not given the best opportunity to succeed. Because bilingual education may not be valued at every school, bilingual programs may receive an inadequate share of the school's resources. For a bilingual program to be successful, this must not happen. There should be ample resources in both the native and target languages for each bilingual classroom (Montecel & Cortez, 2002).

Once these other criteria are in place, it is important to maintain a consistent program that is aligned both vertically and horizontally. Vertical alignment coordinates the fluid transition from grades K-6 while horizontal alignment
coordinates all of the classes within the same grade. The alignment of the program must be consistent at all levels throughout each student's entire time at the school (Téllez, 1998). Téllez found that ELLs who participated in a patchwork of different programs had the lowest outcomes of all. Thus, to give each student the best possible opportunity to succeed, a consistent, sustained educational program is paramount.

All the components of a successful educational program mentioned above need the support from strong, effective, and consistent leadership (Castellano, Stringfield, & Stone, 2002; Riehl, 2000). Having a plan that incorporates all of these components is ineffective without the ability to put them into practice. The responsibility of the practical implementation of these ideas rests with the leadership of the educational program. Leadership for a program may come from a principal, vice principal, program coordinator, resource teacher, or a management team composed of teachers. In fact, it is probably most advantageous to have a team with a designated leader coordinate the program, rather than one person. If a program relies on just one person for leadership, even the most successful program can collapse if that leader departs (Castellano et al., 2002).

All of these general criteria are necessary for any educational program to be successful. Developing a strong foundation which incorporates these criteria is the first step toward implementing a successful bilingual program. The next step is to design a bilingual program that is based on current research and provides the most benefits to ELLs (Howard et al., 2007).
Bilingual program criteria

In order to promote full bilingualism, bilingual programs must add a target language while supporting the native language. Adding a target language without negatively affecting the native language is known as additive language acquisition. In order to prevent the loss of the native language while promoting the target language, both the native and target languages must be developed simultaneously (Cloud et al., 2000; Genesee et al., 2006; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Unlike transitional bilingual programs which only use students' native language to teach the target language, developmental and two-way immersion programs focus on developing both students' native and target languages and are therefore more likely to produce fully bilingual students. This is mainly due to their early and continual instruction in the native language (Tong, Irby, Lara-Alecio, & Mathes, 2008).

Research has indicated that when students are first taught language arts and literacy skills in their native language they score higher on literacy tests in both their target and native languages than students who have been provided literacy instruction entirely in their target language (Genesee et al., 2006; Howard, Christian, & Genesee, 2003). This suggests that providing a strong foundation in the native language leads to higher achievement in both languages. Because developmental and two-way immersion programs are designed to provide a strong foundation in the native language, they may provide greater opportunities than transitional programs.
In order to provide students with a strong foundation in their native language while simultaneously teaching the target language, research suggests that at least 50% of the instruction should be given in the native language at all grade levels (CAL, 2009b; Howard et al., 2007). In fact, research has shown that 90:10 programs are more likely to produce fully bilingual students than 50:50 programs because they place more emphasis on the native language (Lindholm-Leary, 2001).

The challenge that bilingual programs face is not only teaching ELLs the target language, but preventing the loss of their native language. Native languages are at risk of being supplanted by the language of the surrounding dominant culture. One example of this effect is that ELLs tend to switch from reading for pleasure in their native language to reading for pleasure in their target language by grades three or four (Lambson, 2002). Lambson has found that this is partly due to the significant pressure on ELLs to learn the dominant language of their community in order to feel accepted. Some ELLs even shun their native language in an attempt to fully join the dominant culture. Also contributing to this transfer from reading for pleasure in the native language to the target language is the lack of available books in the native language (Lambson, 2002).

This transfer is significant because Lindholm-Leary and Ferrante (2003) have found that reading for pleasure is associated with performance on both English and Spanish reading achievement tests. Thus, maintaining positive attitudes toward the native language and promoting full bilingualism become important goals in order to
maximize achievement. This suggests that developmental and two-way immersion programs could lead to higher achievement than transitional programs because they value the retention of native languages and cultures more than transitional programs which are limited to the acquisition of the target language (Genesee et al., 2006).

Preventing this switch from reading for pleasure in the native language to the target language is a major step toward producing fully bilingual students. Because 90:10 programs primarily focus on the native language in the early grades, they are more likely to produce students that continue to enjoy reading in their native language (Lindholm-Leary & Ferrante, 2003). This research suggests that 90:10 programs are more beneficial than 50:50 programs in this regard. Lindholm-Leary (2001; 2004) has similarly found that the students placed in a 90:10 program consistently scored higher on standardized reading achievement tests in Spanish than students in a 50:50 program while there is no significant difference in student achievement between these two programs on math or English achievement tests.

One of the most significant benefits that developmental and two-way immersion programs give to students is time to develop not only their basic interpersonal communicative skills, but also their cognitive academic language proficiency. These two types of programs are the only bilingual programs that allow the necessary time for students to reach native-like proficiency and grade level achievement in the target language. Research suggests that in order for bilingual programs to succeed, students need to develop both their native and target languages.
for a minimum of six years (Genesee et al., 2006). This suggests that because transitional programs are of significantly shorter duration, they can not provide the full benefits of bilingual education.

Much of the research mentioned above suggests that developmental and two-way immersion programs can provide the best possible opportunity for ELLs to become full bilinguals and to achieve at grade level in all subject areas. More research must be analyzed, however, to determine which of these two programs hold the most benefits for ELLs.

Howard et al. (2007) found that both developmental and two-way immersion programs have similar outcomes for ELLs in all areas except multicultural awareness. Two-way immersion programs are better suited to promote positive attitudes toward the native language than developmental programs because they have a mix of cultures and language backgrounds in each classroom. This juxtaposition of cultures and languages can be used to cultivate feelings of acceptance and belonging for both ELLs and native English speakers in both cultures (CAL, 2009b). The mingling of cultures can then be used to support positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors in all students enrolled in two-way immersion programs. Research further suggests that to maximize the cross-cultural interactions which lead to the previously stated benefits the optimum ratio of ELLs to native English speakers is one to one; half the students in each classroom are ELLs and half are native English speakers (CAL, 2009b; Howard et al., 2007).
With all of this evidence suggesting the positive outcomes of two-way immersion programs, it is also important to keep in mind the major concern that native English speakers will score lower on tests of English achievement than their peers in monolingual programs. This concern has mainly been shown with putting English speaking students into 90:10 two-way immersion bilingual programs because only 10% of the instruction is given in English the first year. Research suggests that teaching English speaking students literacy through their target language does not cause them to be behind in their English achievement (Cloud et al., 2000). By the third or fourth grade they usually score at least as high as native English speakers from monolingual classrooms on standardized tests of reading achievement (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Tinajero & De Villar, 2000). These results hold true even for low and middle income students that enter the program behind grade level (Lindholm-Leary, 2001).

Thus, Howard et al. (2007) concludes that any school wishing to create a successful educational program should include the following general criteria:

- create a safe, positive learning environment
- gain a strong commitment from the entire school community
- develop effective professional development opportunities
- provide adequate funding
- maintain consistency
- find strong, effective leadership
Furthermore, Howard et al. (2007) concludes that any school with the goal of producing high achieving, bilingual students with positive multicultural attitudes that are prepared for the global society should create a two-way immersion bilingual program which:

- promotes additive language acquisition
- teaches literacy skills and language arts in native language first
- has a minimum length of six years

Schools which follow these guidelines should have the best opportunity to educate not only ELLs, but all their students.
Chapter III: Reflection

After reviewing the literature on bilingual education, I have realized what a truly controversial topic bilingual education is in education today. It is an issue that will continue to evolve as the context of education changes in the United States. Bilingual education is simply not a program that can be added to a school with little thought; it is a philosophy that needs to be embraced by everyone involved. Bilingual education is a philosophy of achievement for all, regardless of one's cultural background. It is an idea that is currently spreading because the number of ELLs has increased dramatically over the last twenty years and research is proclaiming its successes.

As I have found from the research, bilingual education has many different aspects that make it such a debatable issue. The debate is not just for or against bilingual education, but its supporters also discuss which type of bilingual program is the best. One thing is clear, however, it requires a lot of preparation and commitment to establish and maintain a successful bilingual program. It is not just a fad; it will be needed as long as immigrants enter our country without the knowledge of English. As our history shows, the influx of immigrants has been consistent and will undoubtedly continue for quite some time. The United States has always taken pride in the fact that we are a diverse culture created by many influences from around the world. It is time that the advantages of diversity again be realized as the current wave of immigrants are welcomed to our country.
Research has identified the three most popular forms of bilingual programs; transitional, developmental, and two-way immersion. Genesee (1999) provided a thorough overview of these three bilingual program alternatives which enabled me to understand the basic structure and goals of these programs. Research has identified the benefits of transitional bilingual programs to come from early instruction in students' native language.

As an experienced teacher in a bilingual program, I can attest to these benefits. I have seen early instruction given in the native language to benefit students' confidence levels as it eases the transition from one language to another. This promotes a stronger sense of identity and belonging to not only their native culture, but also the culture of their target language. I believe students with these qualities will be more likely to succeed in both their social and academic development. I also believe that early instruction in students' native languages can lead to increased academic achievement in the first few years because they are given content instruction in a language that they already understand. English can be taught simultaneous to this content area learning.

Further research revealed that although transitional bilingual programs may benefit ELLs, there are several concerns associated with such a short-term program. I agree with the distinction Cummins (1979) made between conversational and academic language proficiency. This difference in language proficiencies is apparent when students in my class are able to converse with other students in their target
language but have trouble understanding content instruction in the same language. The decline in academic achievement associated with the removal from a transitional bilingual program and placement into an English only setting is noted by Ramirez (1992). Many researchers have since demonstrated the need for bilingual programs to allow at least five or six years for students to achieve full academic proficiency in the target language. Because of these findings, I do not think transitional bilingual programs are the best programs for ELLs, but I still believe that transitional bilingual programs can offer ELLs more valuable benefits than English only programs.

The other two most popular types of bilingual programs are developmental and two-way immersion programs. Research has identified the benefits of these two programs to be quite similar. Unlike transitional programs, both of these programs provide enough time for students to develop academic proficiency in their target language. Research has suggested that this is the key to allowing ELLs the full benefits of bilingual programs.

Another similarity between developmental and two-way immersion programs is that they have alternative program models that differ in the amount of instruction given in the native language at the early elementary grades. Although some research has indicated that 90:10 programs are more likely than 50:50 programs to produce fully bilingual students, research has also indicated that the two program models have produced similar levels of achievement. More research must be done in this area to
better understand the differences in student achievement between 90:10 and 50:50 bilingual programs.

The one difference between developmental and two-way immersion programs that researchers have found is that two-way immersion programs are more likely to foster positive cross-cultural attitudes. I believe that this benefit should not be overlooked or undervalued. Students need to be taught not only tolerance, but acceptance of other cultures. Two-way immersion programs offer students the opportunity to go beyond basic acceptance by providing rich, multicultural experiences in the classroom everyday. I have seen these interactions lead to a lifelong connection with a culture other than their own.

Despite these apparent benefits, research has shown that bilingual education has strong opposition. Arguments against bilingual education have risen from deep fears and misunderstandings about new languages and cultures. The fears of having the current culture of the United States replaced by a Spanish speaking culture does not take into account that goal of bilingual education to teach ELLs English as well as possible. Assimilation of ELLs into the dominant English speaking culture of the U.S. can be done while still valuing their native cultures.

The main opposition to bilingual education comes from organizations such as U.S. English and English First that support the English Only movement. Although I disagree with their goals of limiting or eliminating bilingual education, I do support their goal of establishing English as the official language of every state in the United
States. I agree that English should be learned by every person in the U.S. and that the English language could be a unifying instrument. I disagree with any policy, however, that does not accept the preservation of native cultures and languages.

As evidenced by recent legislation to limit the education of ELLs to structured English immersion (SEI) programs, opponents to bilingual education believe SEI programs are superior to bilingual programs. This is perhaps the most controversial point in the argument against the use of bilingual programs. Although many researchers proclaim the benefits of bilingual education, several state and federal governments have decided to support the use of SEI programs. With such a difference in opinion and the increased number of both SEI and bilingual programs, more research is needed to determine which program best fits the needs of ELLs. After reviewing the literature which explored the benefits of bilingual education and based on my own personal experiences teaching in a bilingual program, it is my belief that additional research will indicate that bilingual programs are best suited to maximize the overall achievement of ELLs. As research on bilingual education's successes build and bilingual programs grow in popularity, it is my hope that a greater understanding of their benefit is achieved.

The main advantage bilingual programs have over SEI programs are that SEI programs are not designed to promote bilingualism and positive cross-cultural experiences and attitudes. These two goals are extremely important in today's global society. I know that in education, bilingual teachers are highly sought after and more
likely to be hired and receive a higher rate of pay than monolingual candidates. In my school district, bilingual education is considered a high needs area and are therefore given a monetary bonus. The ability to connect with a greater variety of students is highly valued. As the percentage of ELLs in the U.S. increases, I agree with Garcia's (2009) statement which indicated that bilingual education is a needed part of the educational system of the United States.

The research that identified the components of a successful bilingual program indicated that many of these components are needed for any educational program to succeed. I believe above all else, successful programs need strong leadership, a positive learning environment, and consistency throughout the entire program. My education, experience, and knowledge gained through this research support this opinion. I believe strong leadership is the most powerful component of a successful bilingual program. Talented and motivated leadership has the ability to create, implement, and maintain these components.

In addition to these general components of a successful bilingual program, researchers have concluded that learning a second language is most beneficial when it is acquired in addition to the native language. I agree that language acquisition must not focus on replacing native languages with English, but adding English to native languages. This will promote full bilingualism while supporting English acquisition in the native language. In order to maximize this benefit, research suggests that instruction in literacy skills and language arts be given in the native language first
Unfortunately, after reviewing the bilingual education literature, I have realized that the bilingual program in which I teach is dysfunctional. My program is designed to be an English-Spanish 90:10 two-way immersion program. However, teachers generally give too much instruction in the native language. Also confounding this problem is the policy to accept English speaking students into the program up to second grade, and allowing Spanish speaking students to enter the program at any time. These two discrepancies lead to a lack of consistency and vertical alignment. Despite the problems my program is facing, I truly believe that a bilingual program is more effective than a monolingual program for educating ELLs. It is my hope that with the knowledge gained from this experience, I can help to improve my bilingual program.

Research suggests that a 90:10 two-way immersion bilingual program offers ELLs the most opportunities to succeed. The benefits provided by bilingual education which include bilingualism, academic achievement, multicultural awareness, and preparedness for a global society are needed in today's society. Although the program in which I teach is not ideal, I still see my students benefiting from their bilingual education. Many of my students have achieved full bilingualism, but the benefit that I value the most is their positive cross-cultural attitudes.

Although some students do not become fully bilingual, I can see an increased multicultural awareness in all my students. For example, there is a stark difference
between the attitudes of my English speaking African American students compared to the English speaking African American students that are not in the bilingual program. Many of my African American students enjoy learning about the Hispanic culture, and all of them leave the program with a better understanding and respect of a culture that is not their own.

I fully support bilingual education and the benefits that it can provide. I am currently on the dual language council at my school and represent this council at school based meetings. I plan to use this review of literature to improve my program and advocate for the integrity of the program model, necessary policy changes, and the adequate distribution of my school's funding and resources. Despite the problems with the bilingual program at my school, it is supported by the administration and the surrounding community. With this foundation of support, I am hopeful that my program will be able to achieve all of the benefits the research has shown to be possible. Schools should not doubt whether to implement a bilingual program, but instead invest in their own research to determine which bilingual program can provide ELLs at their school the most benefits and how they can implement this program successfully.
References


