# Rethinking the Education of English Language Learners: Transitional Bilingual Education Programs

Abelardo Villarreal
Intercultural Development Research Association

## Abstract

School reform initiatives have become the hope for upgrading the achievement levels of all students. Of concern to many administrators are the English language learners who remain the most neglected and shortchanged in the school reform movement with little significant increases, if any, on their achievement levels (Moss & Puma, 1995). The struggle to achieve equity-based excellence in education points to a need for rethinking the educational goals, strategies, and processes that presently shape these educational programs. The author identifies two contextual dimensions that are primarily responsible for the success or demise of the transitional bilingual education program. These dimensions are (1) support of the program at all levels of the school hierarchy, and (2) level of knowledge of bilingual education as evidenced through curriculum and instructional activities implemented in the program. Using these two dimensions, the author describes a framework for classifying transitional bilingual education programs. The purpose of this article is to provide campus principals, in particular, insights about the impact of an inappropriate transitional bilingual education program for English language learners, in an effort to demonstrate how negative attitudes, prejudices, biases, and misinformation about bilingual education programs lead to inappropriate practices and unfounded, unsubstantiated, and misinformed policies. In addition, it attempts to provide well-intentioned principals with ideas and strategies that can enhance the quality of their transitional bilingual education programs.

Campus principals can be bold and courageous people, but all of them must answer for the success or failure of students to reach high achievement standards. Having to answer for student success can be a rewarding and exhilarating experience that triggers the spirit for more of the same. Rationalizing student failure can be a demoralizing and belittling experience that can jeopardize a job and any hopes for upward mobility in the educational hierarchy.

School reform initiatives have become the hope for upgrading the achievement levels of all students. Of concern to many administrators are the English language learners who remain the most neglected and shortchanged in the school reform movement with little significant increases, if any, on their achievement levels (Moss & Puma, 1995). The struggle to achieve equity-based excellence in education points to a need for rethinking the educational goals, strategies and processes that presently shape educational programs. This article provides campus principals, in particular, insights about the impact of

an inappropriate transitional bilingual education program for English language learners. It is an effort to demonstrate how negative attitudes, prejudices, biases, and misinformation about bilingual education programs lead to inappropriate practices and unfounded, unsubstantiated, and misinformed policies. In addition, it attempts to provide well-intentioned principals with ideas and strategies that can enhance the quality of their transitional bilingual education programs.

Genesee (1999) defines transitional bilingual education as "the most common form of bilingual education for English language learners . . . [it] provides academic instruction in English language learners' primary language as they learn English" (p. 13). Research and experience show that most transitional bilingual education programs are segregated and anemic. They operate in isolation, lack public and administrative support, languish in poorly designed models of instruction (August and Hakuta, 1997), and are staffed by personnel with preconceived notions on the innate and acquired abilities and aspirations of English language learners (Moss & Puma, 1995) and their families.

If recent population trends continue, the number of English language learners will increase to at least an additional one million students within the next decade (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1998). Although the educational level of English language learners has increased incrementally over the years (Moss and Puma, 1995), the overall results have been disastrous and have had a grave impact on this growing student population. This is evidenced by the fact that about 25% of English language learners repeat a grade by third grade (Moss & Puma, 1995).

There is a ray of hope, however. A small percentage of effective programs have provided some valuable insights about what works for English language learners (August and Hakuta, 1997). These successful programs have gone through the complete cycle of the change process—defining a quality program, acquiring buy-in from staff, and providing an environment conducive to change—as shown by their institutionalization into the mainstream curriculum, while those struggling transitional bilingual education programs are stuck in the first step of the change process. All of these steps are key ingredients in a successful innovation.

During my 30 years of involvement in bilingual education as a parent, then as a teacher, curriculum developer, elementary school principal, secondary education director, university faculty and educational consultant, I visited numerous bilingual education programs and collected copious notes on what I observed. Also, over time, I have reviewed and analyzed numerous articles and research studies that support or oppose bilingual education. My recollections and conclusions are the major sources of information used to frame this article. There is a saying in Spanish that best characterizes the approach: *"Mas sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo."*

## Condition of Education for English Language Learners

Elementary English language learners ordinarily trail other students academically and are retained in higher percentages. Prospects, a national, longitudinal study mandated by the U.S. Congress in 1995 (Moss & Puma, 1995), summarizes key findings as they relate to academic performance, instructional programs and practices, and competency of teaching personnel. Key findings include the following:

### Academic Performance

- When compared to all third graders, 7% received a grade of unsatisfactory in reading compared to 16% of English language learners and 19% of English language learners in high-poverty schools. In mathematics, the gap is slightly higher ranging from 8% of all third graders receiving an unsatisfactory grade, to 18% of English language learners and 22% of English language learners in high-poverty schools.
- When teachers were asked about their perceptions relative to student ability and performance, they reported an even larger gap with perceptions of English language learners being lower.
- By third grade, 25% of English language learners compared to 15% of all other students have been retained in at least one grade.

### Instructional Programs and Practices

- Approximately 52% of English language learners receive content area instruction in a language other than English. Wherever a language other than English is used, 40% of the instruction in first grade classrooms is in English, while 50% of the instruction is in English in third grade classrooms. The percentage between the use of English and other language varies depending on high or low concentrations of English language learners. Traditionally, schools with high concentrations of English language learners tend to use the native language in higher proportions.
- Approximately one-third of first and third grade English language learners do not receive a special language program such as bilingual education or English as a second language (ESL).

### Staffing

- Many English language learners are in schools with no role models with the same ethnic background. This is an example of "a mismatch between the diverse population of students and the relatively homogeneous population of teachers [that] makes it difficult for all students to have role models in school with whom they can readily identify" (Latham et al., 1999, p. 23).
- An alarming percentage of teachers of English language learners do not have the credentials or training to teach atypical students with diverse

needs. For example, approximately one- third of first grade English language learners and one-fifth of third grade English language learners receive instruction by a teacher credentialed in bilingual education.

• Henke et al. (1997) reported that although minority students comprised 32% in 1993-94, only 13% of teachers are minority teachers.

Since the early 1970s, pioneers of bilingual education, Dr. José A. Cárdenas and Dr. Blandina Cárdenas, have pinpointed areas of incompatibilities between school practices and the educational needs of minority children. In the midst of those tumultuous times involving litigation after litigation that sought an answer to a problem of national scope, Cárdenas and Cárdenas conceptualized the Theory of Incompatibilities, a framework for schools to use in understanding the factors contributing to the dismal failure of Hispanic children, the problems plaguing the education establishment, and the adequate instructional responses. Cárdenas and Cárdenas (1977) identified five areas of incompatibilities.

1. Poverty: Schools must adapt the program that "fails to take into account these unique early development patterns and assumes (and requires) the same developmental level normally found in middle-class children" (p. 23).
2. Culture: Minority children bring a culture that schools sometimes fail to acknowledge and integrate into the curriculum.
3. Language: A student's first language must be considered in adjusting the curriculum and delivering instruction.
4. Mobility: English language learners are highly mobile; curriculum is designed for stable populations.
5. Societal Perceptions: Negative perceptions about these students create an environment of neglect and low levels of expectation.

More than 25 years later the research on effective bilingual education programs is providing evidence to support the "theory of incompatibilities."

## Framework for Classifying Transitional Bilingual Education Programs

Many states require school districts to implement, at a minimum, transitional bilingual education programs for English language learners at the elementary grades and ESL at the middle and high school grades. For example, the majority of elementary schools in Texas have strategically chosen transitional bilingual education programs over developmental bilingual education programs. It is the most politically expedient approach to take, less threatening and closest to maintaining the status quo, minimally disrupting the standard way of doing things.

A vast majority of schools choose transitional bilingual education programs simply because of their temporary nature and a philosophy that

places the learning of English and through English as the ultimate and only goal of the program. Furthermore, many schools place the mainstream program as the only instructional program that will ultimately provide the English language learners with the minimal education that they need in order to survive and function in our political and economic system. Many of these programs operate in a cloud of covert prejudices and biases against these students' abilities and their families' beliefs about the need for an education.

Since their inception, transitional bilingual education programs have been doomed to failure. There is, however, "superficial" understanding of the need to teach in the native language (sometimes required by legislation and state mandates) and an assumption that English language learners learn content only in English. Many of these transitional bilingual education programs are based on the premise that English language learners reach the school doors with a language and a culture that interfere with the schools' learning opportunities. Then, there are administrators who firmly believe in the principles of good bilingual education instruction but succumb to the pressure of preparing students as soon as possible for the state's standardized achievement measure that is administered in English.

In all cases, principals find themselves in difficult predicaments, often times mandating instruction that favors the use of English and limiting the use of Spanish or any other language to only a few minutes. Contrary to what some bilingual education critics say, transitional bilingual education programs are overwhelmingly taught in English. Many lack a spirited and determined leadership necessary to make education work for English language learners.

Although limited in addressing the potential which language minority students bring to school, transitional bilingual education programs can have a positive impact on the academic achievement of English language learners. Philosophically, its major limitations stem from political expediency and a degree of public xenophobia that have corrupted efforts to provide a quality educational program for these students. English language learners already bring proficiency in a language other than English, a language that could be developed formally side-by-side with English, creating bilingual citizens with minimal effort. This student asset is ignored.

Furthermore, it is politically expedient to minimize the demands that a bilingual program will have on the existing teacher preparation programs, on existing teaching staff and administrators, and on the cost of education. If the academic performance of English language learners was the measure of instructional effectiveness of transitional bilingual education programs, one would have to conclude that this program type has been a dismal failure. There is, however, evidence that transitional bilingual education programs, when implemented correctly, can have a positive impact on the academic achievement of English language learners.

A close examination of existing transitional bilingual education programs in Texas reveals that two contextual conditions are primarily responsible for

the success or demise of the program. These two conditions, called "dimensions," embody the attributes of successful transitional bilingual programs in varying degrees. These dimensions are (1) support of the program at all levels and (2) knowledge base of bilingual education as evidenced through curriculum and instructional activities. Knowledge base refers to research-based knowledge in first- and second-language learning, bilingual education practices, and ESL methodologies. It ranges from the presence of a strong knowledge base in some key individuals in the school district to operational evidence of research-based practices at all levels of the school hierarchy. Support refers to moral, physical, and fiscal support for bilingual education and ESL methods. It is evidenced by educators' commitment to make education work for English language learners and by full fiscal support for competent staff and a quality curriculum. Figure 1 describes four classifications based on the degree to which transitional bilingual education programs show evidence of these two dimensions. The first prototype illustrated in Quadrant I represents those programs that have all the major attributes of a successful program. Quadrant II is the prototype that is perhaps most in use by many schools. It is referred to as an "acquiescent" bilingual program because it adheres closely to the law. Quadrant III includes programs in schools with high concentrations of English language learners, which lack knowledge and sophistication, and which are underfunded both at the district and school levels. The last quadrant includes those programs in school districts that overtly oppose any special programs for English language learners.

*Figure 1: Framework for Classifying Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Programs*

**Quadrant I-Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program**

- Low student outcomes and limited school engagement.
- Supportive and caring campus environment; low resources.
- An instructional plan that meets minimum requirements; integrated with mainstream curriculum.
- Good relations with community/parents; family involvement is limited to working to help the school.
- Lacks knowledge sophistication at all levels.

**Quadrant II-Model TBE Program**

- Positive student outcomes and school engagement.
- Family/supportive campus environment.
- Pedagogically sound curriculum and instructional practices.
- Community/family involvement seen as imperative and encouraged.

**Quadrant III-Recalitrant TBE Program**

- Low student outcomes and isolated from the mainstream campus.
- Hostile and stereotypical campus environment; low student expectations.
- Regular mainstream curriculum with some adaptations provided through teacher aides who can speak the language.
- Parents/community perceived as a liability; minimal parental involvement activities.

**Quadrant IV-Acquiescent TBE Program**

- Low student outcomes and limited school engagement.
- Supportive campus environment to comply with minimum requirements.
- Pedagogically sound instructional plan, but poor implementation and poor integration with mainstream curriculum.
- Limited community/family involvement eg. min

The quadrants illustrate the unique characteristics of four categories of transitional bilingual education programs. Quadrant I represents programs that are responsible and produce high academic achievement results in English language learners. Quadrant II represents those with little support but that strive to comply with minimum requirements of the law. Quadrant III are those that provide a high degree of moral support but lack the knowledge, sophistication, and competent staff to implement a quality instructional program. Quadrant IV lacks moral support and shows little empathy with a concern for a quality educational program for English language learners. Programs in Quadrants II, III, and IV are referred to in this article as the struggling programs—programs responsible for the overall poor academic performance of English language learners.

## Successful Transitional Bilingual Education Programs-Quadrant I

Quadrant I transitional bilingual education programs "talk the walk" (articulate what needs to be done) and "walk the talk" (do what should be done). These programs evolve in academic environments that are determined to succeed and have no excuses for anything less than success. A major limitation is their philosophy to phase out the use and teaching of the native language once proficiency in English has been obtained. This philosophy negates what the English language learners bring—another language and another culture that are not part of the mainstream. Instead of seeing the language and culture as national assets that should be preserved and capitalized on, they are abandoned as soon as the child exits the bilingual education program.

A successful model of a transitional bilingual education program is based on the most recent knowledge of the linguistic, cognitive, and social development of language-minority children. Even though it is based on the most current knowledge about what works for English language learners, any model of instruction will require a more extensive evaluation that allows for applying findings to new situations with varying levels of similarities and differences. Successful transitional bilingual education schools have been able to neutralize or circumvent the effects of contextual issues (poverty, violence) within families and communities on the quality of education and achievement outcomes of English language learners.

Figure 2 is a checklist that elaborates on the attributes of Quadrant I transitional bilingual education programs. It is provided to help struggling programs establish improvement goals. It is also the backdrop for descriptions of schools with struggling transitional bilingual programs.

*Figure 2: Checklist of Attributes of Successful Transitional Bilingual Education Programs*

### Conducive Environment

- Values and celebrates student linguistic and cultural diversity (Lein et al., 1997; Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi, 1986).
- Values all students, communicates high expectations (Lien et al., 1997; Villarreal and Solis, 1998).
- Integrates instructional program and all students in the overall school operation (Berman et al., 1995; McLoed, 1996; Tikunoff et al., 1991).

### Spirited and Determined Leadership

- Supports educational equity and excellence for all students (Carter and Chatfield, 1986; Lucas et al., 1990).
- Imparts a sense of urgency for maintaining high academic standards for all students (Lien et al., 1997).

- Nurtures and sustains a family environment that is inclusive of parents, students, and teachers (McLoed, 1996).
- Expects and exerts pressure to excel (Goldenberg and Sullivan, 1994).

### Dedicated and Knowledgeable Staff

- All staff members "walk the talk" and team up to excel in the bilingual education program.
- Teachers consistently receive training and are provided technical assistance when the need arises.
- Teachers receive training that is aligned with the instructional plan prepared for English language learners (Milk et al., 1992).
- Teachers are equipped with strategies and techniques consistent with phonetic and meaning-based approaches.
- Recruitment procedures are strict and seek the best-qualified staff for the bilingual education staff (Maroney, 1998).
- Teachers demonstrate a commitment to make education work for English language learners.
- Teachers receive training and know how to assess areas of student needs and plan instruction accordingly.

### Partnering with Community and Families

- Relationships with the community and families go beyond just helping at school; they are characterized by a strong desire to get parents involved in the educational process (Robledo Montecel et al., 1993).
- Community and families are perceived as assets that should be capitalized on and integrated into the school resources in a manner that values and seeks their contributions (Moll et al., 1992).
- Families play a key role in promoting the cognitive and academic development of their children, and their contributions should be coordinated and integrated into the learning environment (Montemayor, 1997).
- Schools care for the welfare of families by providing opportunities to access various social services available in the community.
- Schools and families join forces to advocate children's rights (Robledo Montecel et al., 1993).

### Accessible Learning Environment

- Schools use a diversity of teaching approaches to ensure that all children have access to learning in the most efficient and effective manner (Lucas et al., 1990).

• The learning environment is modified in a number of ways to accommodate the varying needs of English language learners (Berman et al., 1995).

• Classroom teachers use family and community's "funds of knowledge" to base and enrich instruction (Moll et al., 1992).

### Program and Curriculum Alignment

• Schools have a clear understanding of levels of language and content instruction and use these levels for instructional planning to facilitate transition and efficient progress (Berman et al., 1995).

• Teachers from different grade levels produce and implement a seamless curriculum that flows uninterrupted (McLoed, 1996).

• Goals and objectives for the bilingual program flow from the mainstream curriculum; learning standards are not lowered.

• Schools support students exiting from the bilingual program and transitioning to the mainstream curriculum and address obstacles that could lead to failure in the mainstream program.

### Capitalizing on the Student Language and Cultural Resources

• Schools celebrate and value a diversity of languages and cultures as community assets and valuable to the national interest (Lucas & Katz, 1994).

• Schools acknowledge the power of the first language in learning English faster and more effectively (Moll & Diaz, 1985).

### Inclusive and Comprehensive Curriculum

• The curriculum is balanced to ensure that its literacy program develops basic and higher order thinking skills (McLoed, 1996).

• Teaching approaches are eclectic, customizing instruction with phonetic and meaning-based approaches (Adams and Bruck, 1995; Purcell-Gates, 1996).

• Schools ensure that reading comprehension and writing skills are developed in the strongest language and provide opportunities to demonstrate their transfer in English (Wong-Fillmore et al., 1985).

• Instruction of skills and concepts addressed in the state-mandated test or standardized tests receive special attention through explicit skill instructional activities.

• Time is allocated specifically for explicit basic and higher order thinking skill instruction; time schedules vary accordingly (Escamilla, 1994).

• Teachers provide opportunities for student-initiated and student-directed learning activities.

- Teachers relate instruction to practical and meaningful student experiences (Pease-Alvarez et al., 1991).
- English language learners have access to grade-level content; curriculum is not watered down (McLoed, 1996),

## Instructional Practices and Strategies

- Teachers use periodic, systematic, and multiple student assessment measures to inform the instructional decision-making process (Valdez-Pierce & O'Malley, 1992).
- Assessment is conducted in the student's native language and English when appropriate (McCollum, 1999).
- Student assessment results are discussed and used collaboratively with other teachers to plan and coordinate instruction (McCollum, 1999).
- Successful classrooms use cooperative and collaborative approaches to learning (Calderon et al., 1996).
- Teachers build in redundancy in critical skills areas (Saunders et al., 1998).
- Ample opportunities are provided for English language learners to hear adults who are native language speakers both at the social and academic levels (Calderon et al., 1996; Gersten, 1996).
- Students are provided opportunities for interaction with English-speaking peers (McLoed, 1996).
- Questioning strategies requires students to clarify and expand on understanding of text (Gersten, 1996). Teachers develop students' metacognitive skills and provide opportunities for students to show competence in selecting and using metacognitive skills (Dianda & Flaherty, 1995). Teachers check that instruction is comprehensible and modify instruction accordingly.

## Equity-Based Education Excellence

- English language learners are integrated in both academic and social contexts with native English-speaking students (McLoed, 1996).
- The instructional program for English language learners maintains the high academic standards required for all students
- TBE programs are an integral part of the mainstream curriculum.
- TBE programs have the facilities and resources available to do what it must do.

## Quadrant II, III, and IV Programs: The Struggling Program

Three profiles of transitional bilingual education programs (Quadrants II, III, IV) not only fail to address the attributes of effective educational programs, but also are flawed conceptually and operationally. Their flaws are consistent

with the degree to which each prototype shares the following characteristics and myths:

1. Struggling programs usually share the philosophy that learning through English is crucial and perhaps the only and best way to teach English language learners.
2. All believe that using the native language may have some value but ignore that learning in the students' native language can lead to greater facility in learning English.
3. All maintain that achievement in students' native language must be verified in English before it is acknowledged.
4. There is blind faith on the appropriateness of the mainstream curriculum in English to meet the diverse needs of students.
5. There is a strong sentiment that students who speak a language other than English must strive to conform. The onus of responsibility for education is on the family and student.

Struggling programs differ among themselves; however, on their commitment to make education work for English language learners, their belief on the abilities of English language learners to succeed, and their ability to use theory and make it operational through practice.

The following scenario represents the attitudes of a counselor in Quadrant II and Quadrant IV schools as she indirectly attempts to influence and guide the parent to deny student enrollment in bilingual education.

## Scenario A

Mr. Comesalsa is an elementary counselor who is responsible for the identification and placement of students who are eligible for special services because of their limited proficiency in English. He is responsible for following up with parents who indicate in the home survey that they speak Spanish at home most of the time.

"Good morning. Are you Victoria's parents?" asks Mr. Comesalsa. "You state in this form that your family speaks Spanish at home all the time. Because of that we will have to test Victoria. Do you know what will happen if we test Victoria and she is found to need special instruction because she does not speak English well?"

"No," answers the mother.

"Well, she will be placed in a bilingual education classroom that is located in one of the portables. She will be learning Spanish."

"Spanish! I thought she was coming to school to leam English. I can teach her Spanish at home. In fact, Victoria and my other kids speak English all the time at home. Let me correct that form," answers the mother.

Quadrant II school districts (the acquiescent group) have the knowledge necessary and have made the commitment to at least comply with minimum state and federal guidelines. They "talk the walk" but fail miserably in "walking the talk." These schools are, however, guided by an urgency to exit students from the program as soon as possible. Consequently, one will witness the phenomenon that students at the lower grades are doing exceptionally well but show a decline and a widening of the educational gap between English language learners and majority students.

The second scenario represents the conceptual shallowness of a Quadrant III transitional bilingual education program that is implemented in a context of support for English language learners' success academically.

## Scenario B

> Mr. Puro Corazon is a principal at an elementary school which has 65 students who have been identified as English language learners. During his first staff meeting with the faculty of La Esperanza Elementary School, he reviews the requirements of a bilingual education program.
>
> "This year, our enrollment of English language leamers has increased by about 20 students. We will have three bilingual education classes. In this school we must do whatever is needed to succeed with our English language learners," comments the principal.
>
> "What happens in these bilingual education classes? I hear that they teach only Spanish. Is this correct?" remarks one of the new teachers in the campus.
>
> "In our bilingual education classes, teachers are instructed to use as much English as possible. We value the students' language and culture. However, these students must develop their English as soon as possible. We stress the development of English," comments the principal.
>
> "I took a course at the university in bilingual education methods and what was impressed on us was that state guidelines require the use of Spanish most of the time to ensure that concepts are learned. We were also told that state guidelines were just minimums and sometimes were in conflict with what research tells us needs to happen. Are we not following state guidelines?" reacts the new teacher.
>
> "We are in compliance with state law and regulations. Keep this in mind, we do what we think we must do. Does that answer your question?" responds the principal.

Quadrant III schools have the "heart in the right place" and are willing to do whatever is needed to improve the education of English language learners.

In this paradigm, they are the committed, unenlightened schools. However, these schools are limited by a lack of knowledge and apathy toward upgrading their knowledge base. It is not uncommon to see such schools staffed with people whose whole career has been spent in that campus. There is a feeling of despair with the inability of many students to achieve, but learning takes place in a loving and caring environment. Students usually stay in school, but lack the necessary life skills to compete with other students in the real world, both academically and in their preparation for the workplace.

The third scenario represents the negative attitudes of a teacher in trying to influence a beginning teacher in a Quadrant IV school.

## Scenario C

> Ms. Maniorca is a second grade teacher who has been at this school for almost 25 years. She is well known in the community as a strict disciplinarian and one who retains at least 25% of her class every year. This community is approximately 75% Latino and 25% Anglo students. She regularly complains because the school has banned the use of lower first and high first grade classrooms. Consequently, she feels her students are not quite ready for second grade.
>
> "It is that time of the year again. I have to decide who will be promoted and who will be retained. Somehow I will have to prove to this school that most of my students come with a number of deficiencies and need more than one year in first grade to begin to work close to where my regular students are," comments Ms. Maniorca to Ms. Ojald, a beginning teacher.
>
> "What do you mean when you say 'regular students'?" asks the beginning teacher.
>
> "My regular students are those who already speak English and come from families where they care for their children. Many of my students come from families that speak only Spanish. This already puts them behind my regular students. Their parents are not high school graduates, some of them have only four or five years of schooling. They really don't care; why should I?" answers the frustrated teacher.
>
> "So, what is our responsibility to these students?" asks the beginning teacher.
>
> "Take care of them until they reach the seventh grade. By then, they will be ready to drop out. There is no hope."

Schools in Quadrant IV are referred to as recalcitrant schools. These schools refuse covertly to comply with the minimum requirements established by state and federal guidelines. They operate in environments where negative

and stereotypical preconceived ideas exist about the abilities and aspirations of English language learners. Not only are their staff indifferent, but they also are hostile and are convinced that these students will eventually leave school.

## Challenges for Program Improvement

Struggling schools demonstrate school practices that are less than or diametrically opposed to what we know about successful transitional bilingual education programs. I use the major attribute categories in the checklist of the model program to describe the contrasting practices observed in the three prototypes of struggling programs. These practices provide a snapshot of what is happening in struggling schools. Furthermore, I provide some insights on key challenges for a struggling school principal. The list of challenges is not exhaustive but includes the most critical challenges. If addressed adequately (con ánimo y corazón), principals will definitely see an improvement in the program.

### Dimension 1: Program Support and Commitment

#### *A Conducive and Supportive Climate*

A key finding is that community and school beliefs about the ability of English language learners to succeed academically and an ethos of high expectations for students are prerequisites to creating a sense of purpose and a shared commitment to *sí se puede.*

**Challenge: Make TBE an integral part of the mainstream curriculum.** It is not uncommon to find the bilingual education program operating in isolation with few, if any, links to the mainstream curriculum. It is also not rare to find schools garnering resources to upgrade the mainstream curriculum with few, if any, allocated for the bilingual education program curriculum. Had it not been for federal resources such as Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act, and additional funds provided for bilingual education by states, the bilingual program would probably be suffering from total neglect. In fact, curriculum content (grade level skills, concepts, and knowledge) should be basically the same for English language learners and other students. The delivery occurs in the students' native language or by using ESL techniques. Some schools begin by including bilingual education teachers in the campus committee designed to align the mainstream curriculum to the state-mandated test or academic standards. When the time comes to align materials to the locally approved academic standards, bilingual teachers form their own committee to select the appropriate materials to deliver the instruction. This alleviates the fears that bilingual education does not prepare students as well as the mainstream curriculum. The principal's responsibility is to communicate to teachers, parents, and the community that bilingual education is tantamount to the local mainstream curriculum and is not a remediation program. Students who progress academically through a bilingual education curriculum will be

| **Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program** | **Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program** | **Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program** |
|---|---|---|
| • Minimizes the importance of learning in the native language.<br>• Stresses the importance of teaching in English most of the time.<br>• Establishes responsibility to take advantage of learning opportunities for students.<br>• Maintains a remediation program until students are ready to exit bilingual education. | • Feels an urgency and cares for students' welfare.<br>• Articulates a high level of commitment to make education work for English language learners.<br>• Establishes programs with little direction or vision. | • Ignores and many times demeans the language and culture of English language learners.<br>• Provides "sink or swim" approach to learning English and concepts.<br>• Has preconceived negative misconceptions of English language learners' abilities and aspirations.<br>• Isolates English language learners and provides basically remedial attention. |

just as prepared as any other student in the district. In fact, the student in the bilingual education classroom will have also developed some proficiency in reading and writing in the native language.

**Challenge: Improve the school climate.** The climate that surrounds the instruction of English language learners must be positive, encouraging, and inviting for teachers, students, and their families. A sense of optimism and commitment must prevail. Administrators and teachers can communicate high expectations to students, including English language learners, and can show particular manifestations of high expectations. Some schools do this by creating banners that convey high expectations in both English and the native language. One school had a banner that read: "Only apathy will stop us from reaching the highest star *Sólo la indiferencia nos puede parar de lograr la meta más alta.*" This banner was on the school marquee and would be placed at the entrance of each wing. Furthermore, teachers were asked to discuss with students what this meant each morning. Teachers and students collaboratively would identify their goal for that day. Families received training from the school on ways to set and communicate high expectations for students. Whenever the school failed to reach its goal, the focus was not on finding an excuse but on how to adjust the instruction.

In a study, Successful Texas Schoolwide Programs, the authors outline their findings around seven themes. One theme, "No Excuses," describes how in spite of numerous obstacles and difficult odds, teachers and administrators are able to do what they feel is needed in order for students to be successful. A task for the principal is to get teachers, administrators, families, and communities together to develop a vision that is inclusive of all students. Non-negotiable at these meetings are the following ideas: strive high; every student has the potential; no excuses; *Sí se puede.*

A diversity of languages and cultures in the school was validated through various cultural celebrations and the integration of English language learners in as many classes as possible. For example, at the first staff meeting of the year, the principal made it a point to talk about the different languages and cultures represented at the campus. Part of the principal's message was to use this campus asset and capitalize on it by discussing in teacher meetings and classes about the benefits of diversity. Students were provided an option to learn another language. In this particular case, a paraprofessional who was a teacher in Mexico but did not have the credentials in the United States was hired to teach Spanish. Each class had at least 45 minutes a week of Spanish language instruction.

### *Spirited and Determined Leadership*

A key finding is that leadership at both the administrative and classroom levels determines the level of commitment to make bilingual education programs a success that is manifested in increased academic achievement, low dropout rates, high graduation rates, and low retention rates.

*Practices that Collectively Demonstrate Weak Campus Leadership*

| **Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program** | **Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program** | **Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program** |
|---|---|---|
| • Provides limited support when resources are specifically available to address English language learner needs.<br>• Experts pressure to excel with certain students.<br>• Feels responsibility to do only what the law requires.<br>• Allows for the minimal use of the student's language in the instruction. | • Shows poor leadership but "talks the walk" effectively.<br>• Maintains and protects the status quo.<br>• Confuses management with leadership.<br>• Is an advocate of the rights of ALL children.<br>• Chides away from innovation and experimentation.<br>• Allows bilingual education teachers to do what they feel they need to do. | • Provides minimal support to enrich the curriculum for English lanuage learners.<br>• Is indifferent and does little to address the school's ineffectiveness when working with English langugage learners. |

**Challenge: Establish and nurture human relationships among educators, teachers and administrators, educators and students, and educators and families.** Goldenberg and Sullivan (1994) describe leadership as the “cohesion that makes the other elements and components” of a program work together to create positive change (p. 12). Principals are charged with the task of establishing and nurturing relationships that collectively can have an impact on the quality of transitional bilingual education programs in a school. The issue of relationships cannot be underestimated as potent factors in creating a conducive environment.

In 1992, the Institute for Education and Transformation at Claremont Graduate School issued a report of research involving four culturally diverse schools that demonstrates the power that human relationships have on keeping and engaging students in school. Sergiovanni (1994) summarizes these findings around seven themes, each stressing the importance of caring relationships based on mutual respect and trust. Furthermore, each theme relates some of the problems that emerge when such relationships are nonexistent or weak. Lessons learned from the study include the following:

1. Student depression and hopelessness are the byproducts of poor relationships between educators and students. Schools must emphasize the importance of creating a partnership relationship with students and families based on a desire and commitment to make education work for students.

2. Students are conscious of race, culture, and class issues and seek to know and understand each other's culture. Schools must address these issues as part of the curriculum and consider them in the planning and delivery of instruction.
3. Students seek adult guidance from teachers and parents and desire to talk about values and beliefs. The myth that poor families have radically different values is debunked by this study.
4. Schools usually do not view these critical human relationships with much seriousness. Principals should revisit their campuses and study the relationships that prevail relative to the implementation of a transitional bilingual education program. If any of the answers to the following questions is no, it is critical that some form of intervention occur. The questions are:
   - Do all teachers feel a responsibility for the academic achievement of English language learners?
   - Have you created a "community of mind" as reflected on a shared vision and expectations of English language learners?
   - Does your faculty consider community people and families of students as assets that must be tapped to form partnerships with school people to design and deliver the best education possible for all students?

Other challenges to the principal include: (1) create an impetus and a vision of success without boundaries; (2) nurture exemplary educational environments that promote academic success and a safe, orderly, and caring environment; (3) leverage funding to garner necessary resources; (4) establish and consistently nurture a "sense of family;" and (5) provide opportunities for staff, students, and the community to celebrate their successes.

*A Dedicated and Knowledgeable Staff*

A key finding is that teachers need support in various ways: exposure to new research findings, crafting an instructional model that meets the needs of English language learners, training and technical assistance on teaching skills critical to the instructional model, opportunities for collaborative planning, and a system of mentoring and coaching.

**Challenge: Provide opportunities for collaborative planning and designing of curriculum plan and lessons**. Sergiovanni (1994) describes the context in which a request for collaborative planning occurs as an "ambivalence between the value of individualism and the need for community accounts for our discomfort whenever someone suggests that teaching practice become more collective" (p. 49). The fact that successful schools for English language learners require some degree of collective and collaborative planning presents a challenge for principals. Experience has shown that, although learning communities exist in most schools, the benefits of communities that were formed with some trepidation are minimal. Principals must face this challenge by allowing time for groups of teachers to define the role of the committee and the committee members and to establish rules that support partnerships.

| Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program | Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program | Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program |
|---|---|---|
| • Helps teachers to implement an instructional plan developed externally. • Training is focused in the development of English proficiency as soon as possible. • Training, for the most part, is not connected directly to the instructional plan; it is haphazard and unfocused. | • Training on effective bilingual education methods and techniques is available and adequate. • Districts and schools rely on external consultants for new knowledge about bilingual education programs. • Capacity to design and implement a quality bilingual education program is not present in the district. | • Very limited efforts are made to train teachers and administrators on the linguistic and cultural needs of students. • Recruitment of teachers can communicate and work with English language learners is not a priority. |
| • Training for bilingual teachers is not a school district priority. • Some bilingual teachers are not proficient in students' native language; many just barely communicate in that language. • Some bilingual education classes are staffed with a monolingual English-speaking teacher with a paraprofessional who speaks the students' native language. | • Bilingual teachers possess adequate proficiency in the students' native language. • District personnel fail to make the connection between bilingual education theory and practice. | • Training is not differentiated to address the needs of English language learners. • At most, paraprofessionals receive training on ESL techniques. |
| • Knowledge about bilingual education is centralized with the director and supervisors of the bilingual education program. • Knowledge about bilingual education is not dispersed among administrators and other key stakeholders. | | |

Principals must set the example, provide ample opportunities for communities to form, celebrate successes of communities, provide support to fledgling ones, and guard the concept constantly.

**Challenge: Provide staff development opportunities to learn effective teaching strategies**. High expectations is a key training area—perhaps one of the hardest areas to address through professional development activities. August and Hakuta (1997) affirm this by acknowledging that "one important way to raise teacher expectations is to raise student achievement by helping teachers acquire skills and knowledge needed to be more successful with students, rather than exhorting teachers to raise their expectations" (p. 185). The need to provide professional development opportunities that are closely associated with the instructional design or model cannot be overemphasized. The topics include specific learning and metacognitive strategies, cooperative learning, and thematic units in the native language and English.

Most of the literature on effective bilingual programs documents teaching practices (Berman, et al., 1995; Collier, 1995; Garcfa, 1988; Solis, 1998) that have been observed in classrooms where English language learners succeed academically. For example, Collier (1995) identifies three major themes: (1) highly interactive classrooms, (2) problem-solving activities, and (3) inquiry and discovery learning activities. Zehler (1994) augments this list to include a predictable environment, active participation in meaningful and challenging tasks, and providing support for understanding.

**Challenge: Recruit competent bilingual education teachers.** Recruiting bilingual education teachers who have their heart in the right place and are well informed on the most recent research on effective instructional practice is at the core of the problem. Principals in successful schools "kept their ear to the ground" and always identified teachers who demonstrated the will and the competency to implement quality bilingual education programs.

Cárdenas and Cárdenas (1977) make recommendations about staffing a bilingual education program. Staff must be informed and acknowledge the unique characteristics of language-minority students. Second, staff differentiation is an alternative to adequately staffing a bilingual program. Third, the program must embark a massive retraining of teachers that includes "regular" teachers. Last, there should be a program for lateral and upward mobility of bilingual education staff.

**Challenge: Provide guidance to new bilingual teachers; protect them from the influence of other teachers who overtly or covertly are sabotaging the bilingual education program.** New bilingual teachers are vulnerable individuals who learn quickly to accede to the whims of indecisive administrators and an apathetic faculty. Many new bilingual teachers are placed in "no-win" situations and are overwhelmed by a feeling of "loneliness in the wilderness." In successful schools, principals provide opportunities for subdominant groups like new bilingual teachers to have "access to decision making, creating internal advocacy groups, building diversity into organizational information and incentive systems, and strengthening career

opportunities" (Bolman & Deal, 1997). New bilingual teachers are acknowledged for their atypical skills and commitment to equity-based educational excellence for English language learners.

## Partnering with Community and Families

A key finding is that strong parental and community involvement programs create a synergy between the school and the home that translates to greater student engagement and more meaningful participation in the educational process.

*Practices Common to Struggling Schools*

| **Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program** | **Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program** | **Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program** |
|---|---|---|
| • Minimal parental involvement that provides learning activities for parents to work more effectively with their children.<br>• Some literacy classes that are minimally related to preparing parents to teach their children. | • Parent involvement is usually strong; parent centers are the rule.<br>•School provides information to parents on social services. | • Parents are dissuaded from getting too involved in school activities.<br>• School perceives parents of English language learners as possessing values that are radically different. |
| • Provide enough parent activities to meet the requirements of the state or federal program.<br>• Parents are perceived as ill–prepared to meet their obligations as parents of school-age children. | • Although parents are involved in the political arena of the school, they usually have blind faith in teachers and administrators to teach their children.<br>• Parental involvement activities include supporting teachers in the classroom by volunteering their services. | • Parents are asked to come to school when problems arise with their children.<br>• School does not value the input of parents of English language learners.<br>• Schools have double standards in working with parents of English language learners. |

**Challenge: Map the assets represented in the community and in families and integrate them into the instructional plan**. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) acknowledge the power that an asset-based partnership between the school and families can have on student academic success. This asset-based approach focuses on strengths of the family and embraces the “we” concept where schools and families share an attitude of mutual resolve to seeking solutions that affect the quality of education. A caring and responsive school is the best guarantee of a community’s future. The partnership that ensues provides a firm foundation for educational renewal and community regeneration. This partnership shares a vision and develops a blueprint for making that vision a reality. This strategy begins with the acknowledgment of strengths, the assets that are present, and not with what is absent or with what is problematic. Families and schools are not deficit-driven; they are strength and asset-driven.

## Dimension 2: Pedagogically Sound Curriculum and Instructional Program Accessible Learning Environment

A key finding is that English language learners bring to school a diversity of assets and needs that require customized learning environments and approaches. No two schools and classrooms will have an identical approach to serving the needs of their student population.

*Practices that Collectively Describe an Unresponsive Learning Environment*

| **Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program** | **Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program** | **Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program** |
|---|---|---|
| • Teachers primarily design their own bilingual education program.<br>• Teachers base their use of English or native language on readings that they make of what the principal wants. | • District develops one bilingual education program design that is used for all English language learners.<br>• Little modifications are made to the regular program. | • English language learners are consistently placed on "sink or swim" situations.<br>• The onus of responsiblity for learning is placed on the student.<br>• Most of the instruction for English language learners occurs in English.<br>• English language learners are consistently placed in remediation classes. |

**Challenge: Organize instruction in innovative ways; build flexibility in the bilingual education classroom.** There is no single way to specifically address the profile of a bilingual education classroom. No classroom is exactly the same; modifications and adjustments must be made to ensure that the instructional approach responds to the contextual conditions (Berman et al., 1995) and is aligned with the characteristics and needs of English language learners. The challenge of creating the most appropriate instructional model rests with the school and community. Furthermore, schools with effective transitional bilingual education programs create small organizational arrangements (Villarreal and Solís, 1998) e.g., families and academic teams to build cohesion and unity of purpose, to augment communication among teachers and to create a system of support. Principals must acknowledge, embrace, and promote diversity, and encourage innovation in instructional design.

**Challenge: Provide a challenging, intellectually enriching curriculum.** Bilingual education programs have been mislabeled as remedial programs since their inception. They were created to address a deficit-driven program of instruction for English language learners. It is not uncommon for parents to deny the enrollment of their children in bilingual education because of the stigma of remediation attached. The students' language and culture should be valued and seen as an asset and a strength to build upon and not as a deficit that must be obliterated. The instructional program for English language learners should be the same as the mainstream curriculum. The major difference lies in the language used for the delivery of instruction. The delivery will either be made in the students' native language or in sheltered instruction in English. The curriculum should be intellectually challenging, interactive, and meaningful. In addition, successful classrooms are print-rich. Books are available in the students' native language and English. Administrators, teachers, and community members should promote reading by allocating times for everyone including cafeteria workers, janitors, and office clerks to spend time reading.

*Program and Curriculum Alignment*

A key finding is that curriculum and instructional alignment between primary and elementary school, elementary school and middle school, middle school and high school, and high school and university is critical for the smooth transition of English language learners from one level to the next. Fragmentation of curriculum and philosophical differences creates an ethos of confusion and disconnectedness.

*Practices that Collectively Describe a Fragmented Curricula*

| **Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program** | **Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program** | **Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program** |
|---|---|---|
| • Bilingual education teachers plan unilaterally without any coordination with regular teachers.<br>• There are no clear guidelines for the transitions from one language level to another or from one grade to the next.<br>• Exit level transitions are usually abrupt with no plan to smooth the impact of the change. | • Coordination between bilingual teachers on the same grade and between grades is minimal.<br>• All English language learners are given the same curriculum; little attempts are made to work with language levels.<br>• English language learners are provided ample opportunities to remain in the program as long as they need it. | • Students receive the general curriculum with little adjustments made to address the special needs.<br>• Repeating grades is the response for English language learners not at grade level.<br>• Early dropout signs are commonly found in English language learners since the early grades. |

**Challenge: Align curriculum both horizontally and vertically**. Curriculum fragmentation is perhaps one of the most irresponsible school practices that contributes to the educational chaos in this country. Study after study reveals that scaffolding instruction in a manner that is incrementally more difficult is a more responsible approach. Teachers across grade levels must have opportunities to discuss the chain of skills and content that form the school's curriculum. Elementary teachers must have opportunities to align their curriculum by communicating with middle school teachers. Likewise, middle school teachers must communicate with high school teachers.

Bilingual and nonbilingual teachers at each grade level should meet to plan their grade level instruction collaboratively thus ensuring alignment horizontally. This alignment is realized not only through planning but is extended to include team teaching, pairing of classes, and regrouping students (McLoed, 1996). In other words, English language learners should have the same opportunities as their English-speaking counterparts to take advantage of the curriculum.

*Capitalizing on Student Language and Cultural Resources*

A key finding is that the use of the native language for instruction and the integration of the culture into the curriculum form the foundation for concept development and the acquisition and learning of English.

*Practices Common to Struggling Schools in Using the Native Language and Culture*

| **Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program** | **Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program** | **Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program** |
|---|---|---|
| • Native language is used minimally during the class day.<br>• Culture is usually regulated to holiday celebratoins and other" surface culture" activities.<br>• English is used as the language of instruction as much as possible. | • Native language instruction is promoted and valued.<br>• An attempt is made to use student experiences in the curriculum.<br>• Cultural activities have a high priority and are included consistently.<br>• There is a surface understanding of the value of learning the native language in learning English. | • Native language and culture are denigrated and openly criticized.<br>• The students' culture and experiences are considered a liability and should not be discusses in school.<br>• English language learners will learn English faster when taught in English through an imimersion strategy. |

**Challenge: Establish a program that capitalizes on the linguistic strengths of students and families in the community.** Campuses with effective bilingual education programs celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity in different ways. Banners and other important public displays at the school are written in two languages, at a minimum. Cultural celebrations, especially associated with the cultures represented in the school, are conducted and integrated into the school's curriculum. Teachers use cross-cultural interactions where students and teachers learn from each other's differences. Instruction is based on the structured use of at least two languages. Initially, the use of a specific language is based on the relative proficiency of the student in the two languages. In a transitional bilingual education program, teachers stress the need to develop reading and writing proficiency in the first language as a prerequisite to successful learning of English. Children's books reflect the variety of cultures and the benefits of diversity, and they are written in the languages used for instruction.

*An Inclusive and Comprehensive Curriculum*

A key finding is that a curriculum, which capitalizes on the giftedness of all children, integrates instruction of basic skills and higher order thinking skills through phonetic and meaning-based instructional approaches and strategies.

*Practices that Collectively Demonstrate an Inadequate Curriculum*

| **Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program** | **Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program** | **Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program** |
|---|---|---|
| • Most of the instruction is skills based with a strong emphasis on phonetic skill development.<br>• For the most part, teachers feel that English language learners have an even more difficult task because they need to relearn these skills in English. | • There is strong emphasis on the need to develop the basic phonetic skills before any of the higher order comprehension skills are addressed.<br>• Although teachers talk about skills transferring to the other language, evidence in classrooms shows teachers reteaching skills in English. | • Strong emphasis on the development of phonetic skills in English, sometimes extending through the fourth and fifth grades.<br>• English language learners are isolated from the mainstream program both intellectually and physically. |
| • English language learners are placed in group with intensive instruction on basic skills; little effort is shown to include the higher order skills.<br>• English language learners are drilled in material they cannot comprehend; they also participate in state-mandated test practice.<br>• Little opportunites are provided for students to take control of their learning.<br>• Classes use cooperative strategies in isolated classrooms with little opportunity to learn with other students. | • The major reason for grouping students is to facilitate the instruction of particular skills where certain students need help.<br>• A large portion of the day is used for training English language learners on passing the state-mandated test.<br>• Students are rarely provided opportunities to take part in the decisions affecting what they will learn. | • Classes are already remediation classes and English language learners are tracked in remediation activities all through their years at the elementary.<br>• English language learners are, for the most part, exempt from the state-mandated test and rarely participate in any program designed to develop test-taking skills. |

**Challenge: Ensure and deliver grade level content**. Successful schools challenge English language learners with grade level content. They are aware that content is the same as that expected in the mainstream curriculum; delivery is different. In the bilingual education classroom, delivery can occur in the native language or in both English and the native language. The education of English language learners is also guided by the same educational standards that have been adopted by the local district. The selection of textbooks and other supplementary materials must be carefully scrutinized to ensure that these materials challenge English language learners at their grade level. Particular problems exist at the secondary level where English language learners are often denied "access to regular science and mathematics courses because of poor English skills" (McLoed, 1996, p. 12). Successful schools conclude that English language learners are intellectually capable to learn this content. Schools must find ways of delivering this content by teaching in the native language, using sheltered instruction and other ESL methods. Anything less than grade level content will retard their normal progress in school and block them from access to an equal educational opportunity.

*Instructional Practices and Strategies*

A key finding is that successful teachers of English language learner students know how and when to use an array of instructional strategies that foster first and second language acquisition and develop cognitive and metacognitive skills.

*Practices that Demonstrate a Limited Set of Instructional Strategies*

| **Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program** | **Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program** | **Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program** |
|---|---|---|
| • English language learners participate in some classes with English-speaking peers.<br>• Experiences to hear role models in English and in the native language are limited.<br>• The program for developing English language proficiency is rarely planned and connected to the students' proficiency level in the native language. | • Instruction in basic skills is redundant, making the instruction reach a level of frustration and boredom.<br>• Not enough opportunities are provided for students to hear adults speak the native language and English from native speakers of those languages.<br>• Most of the talking is done by the teacher who must not "waste precious instructional time." | • English language learners remain with basic skills all through their elementary years.<br>• English language learners are usually in classes with native English language speakers. Their neglect shuts down English language learners and they rapidly disengage.<br>• Limited attention is placed on the pace and quality of the English language instruction. |

*Practices that Demonstrate a Limited Set of Instructional Strategies (Continued)*

| **Quadrant II Acquiescent TBE Program** | **Quadrant III Committed, Unenlightened TBE Program** | **Quadrant IV Recalcitrant TBE Program** |
|---|---|---|
| • Questioning strategies usually require an answer explicit in the reading material or experience.<br>• Student assessment is often done in English, in a language that the student does not understand.<br>• Student assessment results rarely drive the instruction.<br>• Bilinugal teacher does the assessment and makes unilateral decisions with the results.<br>• Instructional strategies are selected for their popularity and not for what best suit the needs of the English language learners.<br>• There is a preoccuupation with development of metacognitive skills, but little is done because of the overemphasis on basic skills.<br>• Questioning strategies are basic and rarely challenge the student to think beyond simple answers.<br>• An attempt is made to use students' experience or capitalize on assets of the community in the instruction. | • Questions usually require a "yes" or "no" answer or a fill in the blank using the same statement from the reading material.<br>• Assessment is in English and the native language; but assessment results are rarely used to design instruction.<br>• Strong emphasis is placed on passing the state-mandated test.<br>• The most popular instructional strategy is direct teaching. Many of the other strategies are considered too difficult for the English language learners.<br>• Metacognitive skills are perhaps the last thing in the minds of many of these teachers.<br>• Instruction is comprehensible in the sense that students are rarely challenged to tackle higher order comprehension skills. | • Assessment is usually in English.<br>• Assessment results are used not to plan instruction, but to retain students in the same grade.<br>• English language learners are usually being taught in isolated groups by a paraprofessional who rarely has the opportunity to plan instruction with the teacher. |

**Challenge: Promote instructional approaches that foster biliteracy development and the acquisition of content.** Biliteracy development requires teachers to have a deep understanding of the role of the first language in the development of the second language. Teachers involved in delivering content instruction should be trained in second language teaching methodology and be able to pace and modify instruction to make it comprehensible. Collaborative and cooperative learning strategies provide opportunities for English language learners to interact with other students in meaningful and constructive ways that promote the use of biliteracy skills and cultural understanding by creating a forum for students to learn and appreciate each other's cultural differences and similarities. Thematic units have been used effectively by some successful schools. A living skills curriculum reinforces the benefits of positive character traits, personally and academically.

Research indicates that there is no set of instructional strategies that were present in every successful school that has been studied; each used a variety of instructional strategies and collaboratively adjusted instructional strategies to achieve better academic results. They were, however, guided by a shared and dynamic vision of success that kept them seeking for more effective methods to deliver instruction.

## Framing the Change: A Principal's Major Task

Bolman and Deal (1997) identify four sides of leadership that must be adjusted when introducing or adjusting a school innovation. Adjusting transitional bilingual education programs to create an environment that supports the attributes of a successful instructional program for English language learners requires a re-examination of the four sides of leadership and how action on the part of the principal can set the tone for successful change. These four sides of leadership include (1) structural, (2) human resource, (3) political, and (4) symbolic. Bolman and Deal (1997) state: "ideally, managers combine multiple frames into a comprehensive approach to leadership. Wise leaders understand their strengths, work to expand them and build teams that can provide leadership in all four modes" (p. 317).

Below is a list of activities that a principal in a struggling transitional bilingual education program can implement to place the program on the road to recovery.

1. **Structural Leadership** (Organization designs which promote maximum efficiency and success.)

    - Conceptually and physically integrate the bilingual education program to the mainstream curriculum.
    - Coordinate activities with grade level lead teachers to involve bilingual teachers in planning and implementing grade level instruction.

- Redefine tasks and responsibilities to show how every staff member can share in the responsibility to increase the academic achievement of English language learners.
- Develop policies and procedures that are consistent with equity-based excellence in education for ALL students, including English language learners.

2. **Human Resource Leadership** (Capitalizes on skills, attitudes, energy, and commitment to reach goals.)
   - Create a philosophy and a vision of equity-based excellence as the cornerstone of a renewed way of seeing English language learners and their potential for success.
   - Map existing interpersonal relationships that promote the vision; create relationships that form partnerships among teachers and personnel including the ones who were never involved in these matters.
   - Nurture these relationships, redirect those relationships that are counterproductive, and celebrate relationships and partnerships that promote the vision and create a sense of family among all staff.
3. **Political Leadership (**Organizations respond to the whims of political interests.)
   - Plan overall strategies to address the hostility and the indifference that exist in the campus (and in the community) as a viable response to the needs of English language learners.
   - Establish and nurture a critical mass of staff members who promote equity-based excellence for the English language learners.
   - Work with the "opposition" by creating coalitions of individuals with differing views on tasks where they share views. Being able to work together builds a bond that allows for differences to be openly discussed and negotiated.
4. **Symbolic Leadership** (A perspective guided by meaning, belief, and personal commitment.)
   - Unite around the vision of the school and discuss its meaning for all students, including English language learners. Come up with manifestations of this new definition at all levels of the school operation. For example, English language learners may also be gifted and talented. Therefore, the school should manage to adjust the existing gifted and talented program to be inclusive of students with other diverse needs.
   - Develop stories about the successes in education at the campus. Create stories about reasons for celebrating. Talk about ways to create more stories that relate successes with students including the English language learners.
   - Divide the school into "houses," each named after a university campus. The school's primary reason for calling each "house" after a university is

to provide an alternative to affiliation with gangs or other dysfunctional groups in the community or in school.

The knowledge about what to do is easy once these major leadership challenges are addressed. Principals in struggling transitional bilingual education programs must communicate the need and commitment to improve the quality of the program at the campus. The task is not easy, yet it is not impossible. Research shows that campuses have taken a 180-degree turn and have changed from a low performing to an exemplary status where all staff are one family having a powerful, positive impact on the lives of children. Buena suerte!

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