

No Language Left Behind

The focus of this issue is early childhood education for children of limited English proficiency. Illinois is an exceptionally diverse state, with some 17% of our state's overall public school enrollment made up of young people whose primary language is Spanish and more than 6% of the state's 2 million students enrolled in a formal bilingual education program.

Of course, for many school districts the proportion of students of limited English proficiency is much greater – more than 14% in Chicago, 22% in Elgin, and 34% in East Aurora, to name a few. Altogether, Illinois schools provide more than 150,000 students bilingual education programs in more than 120 different languages.

FACING THE CHALLENGE

Early childhood bilingual education is challenging for students, families, and teachers. Parents want their children to learn English, but English may not be the language spoken at home. Young children in our at-risk or special education programs, by their very nature, may already face difficulties with their cognitive, physical, and social/emotional development. The need to be understood in two languages presents additional obstacles.

Teachers trained and experienced in techniques perfected in a monolingual environment quickly discover that they need additional pedagogical tools to meet the demands of a multilingual enrollment.

Toward that goal, districts that enroll English language learners in their early childhood education programs have developed a wealth of innovative ways to make certain that all children are served.

CENTRAL BELIEFS

In this issue of Little Prints, we provide a detailed look at two of the state's most aggressive and successful solutions to the needs of an early childhood bilingual program. These are certainly not the only programs that work, but they demonstrate principles that we at the Illinois State Board of Education consider to be extremely important.

continued on page 2

contents

	3	The Research
Chicago's Dual Language Program	5	
	7	Case Study: Dual Language
Bilingual Education Resources	11	
	12	Case Study: Blended Bilingual

In brief:

- All children can learn, and all children must be served. This is a bedrock belief, policy, and requirement that applies to all schools, all children and all communities.
- All children and communities benefit when schools recognize, celebrate, and respect our many diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- While we certainly must make English acquisition a priority for children from other linguistic backgrounds, educators of young children must approach this task in partnership with parents, recognizing that before children can fully comprehend and become fluent in a second language, they must first be thoroughly grounded in their native tongue. The research consistently shows that efforts to immerse English language learners in English, with no regard for their native language, often means that children are poorly grounded in both.

We are fortunate in Illinois to have outstanding resources for teachers and schools that want to improve their bilingual education skills. The Illinois Resource Center in Des Plaines, an ISBE contractor, is among the leading bilingual professional development organizations in the nation, and the state is blessed with educators at all levels who have put effective bilingual education theories into early childhood practice.

So as you think about your local needs, do so knowing that the counsel and training you may need to succeed are available to you. And as always, please regard the Division of Early Childhood Education as a resource to help resolve questions or issues that you may have.

Best regards,



Kay Henderson



ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

MAKING ILLINOIS SCHOOLS SECOND TO NONE

100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer
Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois, March 2004 30M 901 No. 504

Please direct
comments about
Little Prints to:

Kay Henderson,
Division Administrator
Early Childhood
Education, ISBE
100 North First St.,
Springfield, IL
62777-0001

telephone:
(217) 524-4835

email:
hhenders@isbe.net



A Firm Ground
in One Language
is Needed to Absorb

Although educators have devised many different approaches to bilingual education, the body of research clearly demonstrates the need for young children to be thoroughly grounded in their native language before they can acquire a second one.

"You can't build English skills on a shaky foundation in the native language," says Dr. Else V. Hamayan, director of the Illinois Resource Center, a Des Plaines-based professional development organization that has provided training and support for bilingual and English as a second language educators for about 30 years.

"The most important things," says Dr. Fred Genesee, an expert on bilingualism and a McGill University professor, "are when children are exposed to the additional language, and the *quality* of the language instruction programs. We have found that instruction of children in their native language is generally beneficial."

THE MULTILINGUAGE ADVANTAGE

These findings fly in the face of those who advocate English immersion as the best way introduce children to English. Such programs, although politically attractive in some areas, are not rooted in persuasive data.

For example, a 16-year study, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, of how language-education programs influence the later academic achievement of language-minority students, found that dual language enrichment and bilingual programs "are the only programs we have found to date that assist students to fully reach the 50th percentile ...in all subjects, and to maintain that level of high achievement or reach even higher levels through the end of schooling. The fewest dropouts come from these programs."

That report, prepared by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, adds: "Parents who refuse bilingual/ESL services for their children should be informed that their children's long-term academic achievement will probably be much lower as a result...[and] they should be strongly counseled against refusing bilingual/ESL services when their child is eligible.

"The research findings of this study indicate that ESL or bilingual services...raise students' achievement levels by significant amounts," the report said.

REAL-LIFE PARALLELS

That study, conducted from 1985 to 2001, squares perfectly with the experience of Genesee and Hamayan, who say that truly bilingual children tend to reach higher levels of academic achievement than their monolingual peers.

"Multilingual children engage in conceptual development earlier than monolingual children," Hamayan says. "Their problem-solving ability is enhanced. They show an ability to separate symbols earlier. Is it 'tomato' or 'tomate' in Spanish? Children see words as labels, and not as the thing itself, and so bilingualism makes it easier for them to be mentally agile."

The first step towards multilingualism, says Hamayan, is to value it as an educational and personal goal. The next step, she says, is to find a preschool program with a staff trained in bilingual development – comparatively rare in this country.



Else Hamayan has been the director of the Illinois Resource Center since 1982 and has extensive teaching, research and administrative experience in bilingual education and second language teaching and learning. She has conducted teacher training internationally for ESL, bilingual and EFL teachers on issues of language and culture education.

Hamayan has a Ph.D. in psycholinguistics from McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, and has written extensively on topics of assessment, literacy, second language acquisition and holistic teaching approaches. Her most recent publication, *Dual Language Instruction: A Handbook for Enriched Education*, is a research based, practical guide for dual language teachers, which she co-authored with Nancy Cloud and Fred Genesee.

continued on page 4

continued from **A Firm Grounding** page 3



Dr. Fred Genesee is a professor of psychology at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec. He has conducted extensive research on alternative forms of bilingual education for majority and minority language students, including immersion programs. He has taught courses on bilingualism and bilingual education in Canada, the U.S., Japan, Spain, Czechoslovakia, and Australia. Genesee, who earned his Ph.D. from McGill, has authored several books on bilingualism, including *Learning through Two Languages: Studies of Immersion and Bilingual Education*, and *Educating Second Language Children*.

"It's up to the parents to decide whether they want their children to be raised bilingually," says Hamayan. "If so, they must use the native language at home and seek out programs that use the native language as the primary language of instruction in the classroom. That's because English is overpowering in this society. Children hear it everywhere. The only way to maintain bilingualism is to emphasize the native language."

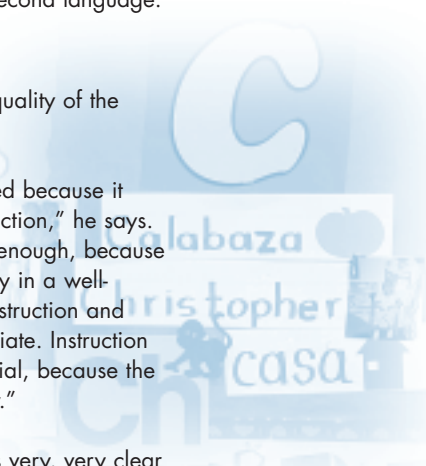
Emphasis on the native language also embeds in children a much stronger understanding of its nuances and meanings, she says. This is absolutely essential if the child is to transfer those understandings to a second language.

QUALITY IS THE KEY

Of equal importance, says Genesee, is the quality of the language program.

"The movement towards English-only is flawed because it doesn't take into account the quality of instruction," he says. "Even just native language instruction is not enough, because like any educational program, kids learn only in a well-designed program that has a sequence of instruction and that's logically and developmentally appropriate. Instruction in any language is not automatically beneficial, because the issue is not just the approach, but the quality."

In the right environment, Genesee says, "it is very, very clear that preschool and school-age children are cognitively and neurologically capable of learning two or more languages fully. It's not a problem for children. It's a problem for adults who have to create appropriate learning environments."



1

McGill University's Dr. Fred Genesee, in a career spent studying how people acquire multiple languages, has encountered four concerns commonly expressed by childcare professionals and parents. He lists them in an article available on Earlychildhood.com.

Myth No. 1 – Learning two languages in childhood is difficult and can result in delays in language development.

2

In fact, Genesee says, young children can easily learn two or even more languages at the same time. "Children who have regular and rich exposure to both languages on a daily or weekly basis from parents and other caregivers exhibit the same milestones in language development, and at roughly the same ages, as monolingual children," he says. "It is important that parents of bilingual children provide systematic exposure to both languages all the time, and that they avoid radical changes to the language environment of the child."

Myth No. 2 – Bilingual children have less exposure to each of their languages than monolingual children. As a result, they never master either language fully and, compared to monolingual children, they never become as proficient.

Provided children are given regular and substantial exposure to each language, bilingual children can acquire the same proficiency in all aspects of their two languages over time as monolingual children, even



Four Myths about Bilingual Acquisition

Chicago's Dual Language Program

In the late 1960s, Janet Nolan, a founder of Chicago's dual language preschool program, spent six years in Merida, Mexico teaching English to Mexican children in an early childhood center. Nolan was amazed that her young students spoke both Spanish and Mayan and were also learning English.

During one visit to a preschool in Mexico City, Nolan watched as students were taught Spanish from a native speaker in the morning and English from a native speaker in the afternoon.

"I saw that young children have the capacity to learn more than one language," says Nolan. "It was not considered amazing there. I also knew it was possible [to replicate this in the U.S]."

Back in Chicago, Nolan and a friend, Adela Coronado-Greeley, created their own school following the same dual language principles. Using state and federal grants, they hired two teachers and two aides, purchased materials and found an old yellow school bus. They persuaded a struggling school on Chicago's far north side to set aside two classrooms for preschool students.

continued on page 6

3

Myth No. 3 - Young bilingual children can't keep their languages separate. They use both at the same time. They are obviously confused.

Although most young children will mix languages from time to time, research shows that this is because "they lack sufficient vocabulary in one or both languages to express themselves entirely in each" and not because of confusion, he says. Research has shown, Genesee says, that the most proficient

though they usually have less exposure to each language. However, Genesee says, bilingual children may have "somewhat different patterns of development" in some linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary growth or the language of interpersonal communications, which can differ substantially from language to language.

"When and if differences like these occur, they are short term and are likely to disappear by the time the children begin school," he says.

4

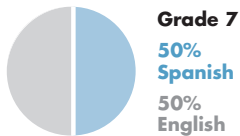
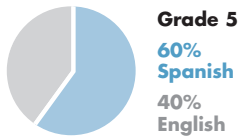
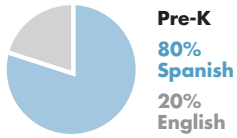
bilingual speakers mix languages the most, often in sophisticated ways that don't violate the rules of either language.

"In any case, mixing languages is a natural and normal aspect of early bilingual acquisition," he says.

Myth No. 4 - Using both languages in the same sentence is bad; parents can discourage this by making sure that they use only one language at a time with their children.

"Most parents mix their languages when talking with their young children because it is a natural and effective way of communicating," Genesee says. "It can be difficult and unnatural, if not impossible, to keep the languages completely separate."

Language Emphasis by Grade Level (Inter-American Elementary)



SMALL BEGINNINGS

Nolan and Coronado-Greeley's school began operating with 60 preschool students in 1975. "Our idea was that the school would be a microcosm of what we wanted Chicago to be," says Nolan. As parents learned about the program, it gained new support.

Now, nearly 30 years later, the 656 students at Inter-American Elementary Magnet School reflect Chicago's ethnic diversity, and the school is widely recognized as one of the top dual language schools in the nation. Test scores back the reputation. On state standardized tests, Inter-American students in 2002 topped the state average by nearly five percentage points and beat the district average by some 27 points.

When the Chicago Public Schools created its larger dual language program six years ago, it used Inter-American as the blueprint.

Inter-American, with 60 prekindergarten children, serves students in pre-K through grade 8. Of these, 65% are Hispanic and the rest are white, Asian, African-American and Native American. Preschool students spend 80% of their class time learning in Spanish and 20% in English.

"We place a very heavy emphasis on Spanish because the students are so exposed to English outside the classroom with TV and the rest of the culture," says Assistant Principal Maria Elena Villalpando. By the time students reach grade 5, the ratio is altered to 60% Spanish, 40% English and finally to 50/50 by the seventh grade.

SLOW PROGRAM EXPANSION

In the 1997-1998 school year, CPS introduced a dual language program in 11 preschools and has added a grade to the program each year. At the time, Nolan and Inter-American teachers helped train CPS principals and teachers. CPS also worked with DePaul University bilingual education professor Sonia Soltero.

The Ruben Salazar Bilingual Center in Chicago was one of the program's original schools. It is a pre-K-8 school that serves 36 preschoolers, most of whom are Hispanic and speak little or no English. Three days a week, math is taught in Spanish with a brief introduction in English as to what will be covered. The other two days it is taught in English with an introduction in Spanish. Social studies is taught in English and science in Spanish. In third grade, it switches to 50/50 model.

Student test results at the school have shown improvement. Over the last two years, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards on the writing and math portions of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) has increased. This year, slightly more than 70% of Salazar's students in the third through eighth grades met or exceeded the state writing standard. Just two years ago, only 40% of the students met standards. On the math test, 60% of the school's students met standards this year, compared with fewer than 40% the year before.

ISAT reading scores continue to languish below state standards, and the school has implemented several after-school programs to address this area.

ENROLLMENTS TOP 5,000

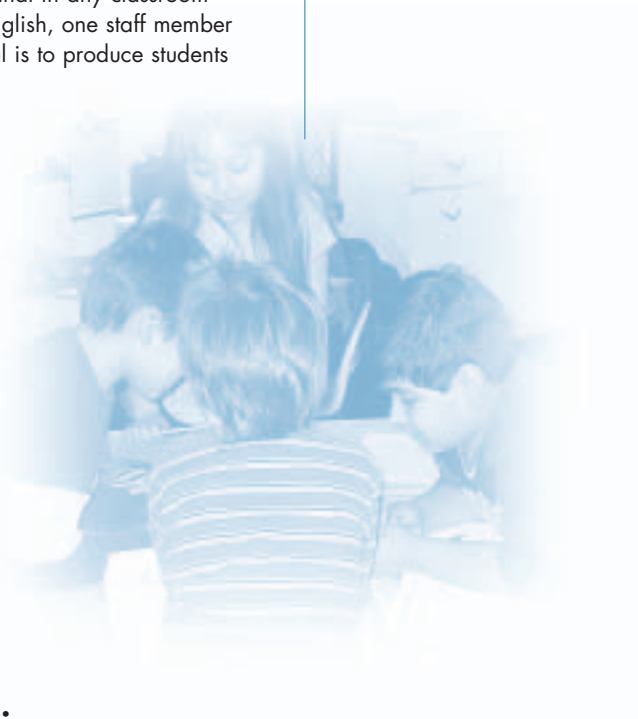
Salazar is currently one of 24 Chicago public schools participating in the dual language program that serves some 5,200 students. Students learn in two languages other than English – Spanish and Chinese. Soltero emphasizes that a child’s native language should play a prominent part in the learning process.

“In early childhood, the major vehicle for relationships and forming character is through language, and when children don’t speak the language of the school it becomes very difficult,” Soltero says. “If children develop a strong base in their native language, they will then transfer those skills to English.”

One of the central policies of the city’s dual language program is that in any classroom where more than half the students speak a language other than English, one staff member in that class should speak the native language. The program’s goal is to produce students who can read and write in two languages. To develop bilingual skills, teachers use a wide variety of activities, from singing and reading to games and activities that are played in both languages.

Martha Miranda, principal at the Ruben Salazar Center, says knowing two languages will provide the children with an edge in life.

“My whole idea is don’t lose that first language,” says Miranda. “They don’t have to lose what they have in order to learn another language. To compete in the world they will need both languages, or more.” ●



CASE STUDY:
John C. Haines Elementary School

Learning Chinese and English at the Same Time

The scene could be any prekindergarten classroom. A teacher sits in front of a group of squirming children, and they all sing:

*“London Bridge is falling down,
Falling down, falling down,
London Bridge is falling down...”*

But in this class, when they finish, instead of moving on to another song, or a different activity, the teacher says, “Let’s sing it in Chinese!”

And they all do.

*“Yat Jack Chuk Jia, Did Lok Shui,
Did Lok Shui, Did Lok Shui,
Yat Jack Chuk Jia, Did Lok Shui...”*

continued on page 8

This is Classroom 118 at Haines Elementary School in the heart of Chicago's Chinatown. It is one of only two programs in the city that offers a Chinese/English dual language program for prekindergarten students. All of the 23 other Chicago schools with bilingual programs for preschoolers are taught in Spanish and English.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS), of which Haines is a part, started its Early Dual Language Education Program in February 1998 with 11 preschools. Haines joined the program two years later. Every year since 1998, CPS has added one grade level to the program, so that now some children up to the fifth grade are learning in two languages. At Haines, however, the program is currently offered only for pre-K students.

FOLLOWING NAEYC GUIDELINES

Among other things, CPS followed the guidelines of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to develop its dual language program.

"The nation's children all deserve an early childhood education that is responsive to their families, communities, and racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds," NAEYC says in its official statement on multilingual education. "...The development of children's home language does not interfere with their ability to learn English. Because knowing more than one language is a cognitive asset, early education programs should encourage the development of children's home language while fostering the acquisition of English."

In Chicago, more than two dozen schools do. Says Blanca A. Treviño, CPS executive director of educational support services, "We know that this approach works because we have over 20 years of research. It creates a very effective learning environment where students don't just learn from the teachers, but also learn by modeling each other."

Several studies support this approach. A 1989 study by University of California at Santa Cruz professors Kenji Hakuta and Eugene Garcia, published in the journal *American Psychologist*, reviewed the literature on bilingualism and found cognitive and linguistic advantages as well as improved concept formation among children exposed to two languages.

A 2001 study by Katherine Lindholm-Leary, a child development professor at San Jose State University, examined the results of standardized tests and other academic measures of 4,900 students in 20 Spanish/English dual language schools over a four- to eight-year period. Lindholm-Leary found that students from both language groups developed high levels of proficiency in both languages, and that levels of proficiency increased with the amount of exposure to the second language.

MAJOR BILINGUAL STUDY

Another frequently cited study was published in 2002 by researchers Wayne P. Thomas and Virginia Collier of George Mason University and the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It was the largest federally funded study of bilingual education ever conducted in the U.S.

Thomas and Collier analyzed the records of more than 800,000 K-12 students who were schooled from 1982 to 2001 in a variety of settings, including English-only and bilingual models. Among other findings supporting the effects of bilingual education, they found that students in these programs outperformed comparable monolingual-schooled students in academic achievement after four to seven years in such programs.

At the Haines School in Chinatown, some 70 students are enrolled in the pre-K dual language program. Each of the two adjoining classrooms has a morning and afternoon session. The students are all of Chinese ancestry except for one Burmese student and four African-American children. They are all three and four years old. For the Chinese students, the goal is to strengthen their primary language while teaching them English. For the non-Chinese speaking students, the goal is to develop their English skills while introducing them to the basics of Chinese. The dual language model of bilingual education calls for four to six years of instruction in both languages for students to become biliterate.

While teachers and students use both languages in class every day, the Chinese dialect of Cantonese is the dominant language on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and English dominates on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Each class has a teacher and a teacher's assistant. One of them is a native Chinese speaker, and the other a native English speaker.

Pui Ling Lai, the Chinese-speaking teacher, was born in Hong Kong, where she taught English to elementary and high school students for 10 years before moving to Chicago in 1976. After running a restaurant with her husband for 12 years, she earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education and joined Haines as a teacher's assistant.

Sharon Olejniczak, born in Chicago and raised in the northern suburb of Winnetka, is the English-language teacher. A graduate of Southern Illinois University, Olejniczak taught in Catholic and public schools before joining the pre-K program at Haines in 1997.

A MULTILINGUAL STAFF

Lai, as she prefers to be called, is fluent in Chinese and English and leads classes in both languages with help from two native English speaking assistants. Olejniczak does not speak Chinese, and leads the class on days that English is the main language, while her assistant, Regina Cheong, takes the lead role on the Chinese days. Cheong is a native Chinese speaker from Macau who taught elementary school there for four years. She has lived in Chicago nearly 20 years and worked in a day care center prior to joining the staff at Haines in 1993. Olejniczak and Cheong are assisted in the mornings by aide Mary Thomas.

In two recent visits to the school, the children were fully engaged in their activities and appeared to truly enjoy what they were learning. The teachers were energetic and interacted closely with the students.

One afternoon, Lai sat on a carpeted section of floor with her students, reading aloud from one of the Spot books, written in Chinese. "Siu pao ma ma wu siu pao shui hawk hui," read Lai in Cantonese before translating into English, "Spot's mommy is taking little Spot to school."

After reading Spot and completing an exercise in which the students had to identify different animals, Lai announced in Chinese that it was play time. "Nee moon ho yee hui wan," she said to the class, and motioned to the various activity areas around the classroom for those that did not fully understand her.

Several students went to a small table and colored with magic markers. Lai bent down next to a little Chinese girl who had drawn a tree with colorful apples hanging from it, and asked her what her picture was about, "Nee did tao wah shuet shum more?" The little girl responded in a quiet voice that she had drawn an apple tree. "Ngor wah yat kwok ping guo," she said.

INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND ACTIVITIES

Another day, English was the predominant language, and Lai started the class by playing a tape of the national anthem while all the children stood in a circle, hands on their hearts, and sang along. Next, Lai asked the students, "How many children do we have today? Let's count." The class counted out loud 17 students.

Then, Lai asked the children to locate the number 17 from a chart of numbers on the wall. When they did, she said, "Everybody, say this number together," and they all chanted, "Seventeen." Next, they went over what day of the week it was, and the month and year. Then it was time for a frenzied version of "Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes."

Lunch was next, and even this was transformed into a learning experience. Two children are picked every day to set the two tables with one plastic tray and cup in front of each chair. Said teacher's assistant Rochelle Edwards, "That way we incorporate math lessons and one to one correspondence." As the children ate pizza and corn, Edwards asked them, "What vegetable are we having today?" "What color is it?" "What color is the pizza?" "What color is the milk?"

In Olejniczak's classroom next door, assistant teacher Cheong was at one table with five Chinese-speaking students helping them write with magic markers on eraser boards. Olejniczak was at another table with four others and made shapes with colored rubber bands on plastic peg boards called Geo boards. The exercise is designed to develop small motor skills, and it also develops artistic and creative abilities. Olejniczak sat with the children and said, "Make different shapes."

"I'm making a square," said a three-year-old Chinese girl to Olejniczak in very good English. Then she said, "Look, I made a straight line and a triangle."

"What color?" asked Olejniczak.

"A green triangle," answered the girl.

Olejniczak then addressed a Chinese boy at the table who had made numerous small squares with his rubber bands. "You have so many squares on there. Can you count them?" The boy counted out loud to 17 in English, and Olejniczak praised him.

continued on page 10

星期五

A Chinese boy across the table did not answer when Olejniczak asked him about the shapes and colors of his rubber bands. "He knows I'm talking to him, but I'm not sure he knows what I'm saying," Olejniczak said. Even so, Olejniczak says this boy and others who do not speak English are acquiring it by listening to her speak in class everyday. "If it's constant, they are learning," she says.

Then, Olejniczak announced, "It's time to read. Get a book to read." The children scampered over to a carpeted reading area lined with low bookshelves, grabbed a book and sat on the carpeted floor. Olejniczak sat in a rocking chair and read out loud from a book about a witch, a ghost and a pumpkin.

On another day with English the dominant language, a substitute assistant teacher read out loud to a small group of Chinese students from, *Officer Buckle and Gloria*, while, across the room, Cheong sat with four Chinese boys taking turns at two personal computers learning about shapes, colors and numbers.

QUICK STUDIES IN ENGLISH

Teachers and parents say the native Chinese students are able to master their own language and learn English quickly in this environment. "Of the children who come in speaking just Chinese, you notice such improvement [in their English], especially after two years," says Olejniczak.

Asked if English is hard to learn, one four-year-old girl in the second year of the dual language program, answered, "It's not difficult. My friends and teachers talk to me and I just learn it."

Her father, John Yon, a 38-year-old pharmacist, says that when his daughter started school last year she mainly spoke Chinese because that is the language "she felt comfortable speaking." She mostly spoke Chinese at home with her parents and spoke only Chinese with her grandparents, who live in the same building. Yon says she watches TV in English, Chinese, and even Spanish.

By the middle of that first school year, though, she started to speak to him in English. Says Yon, "I was thrilled. In this day and age, the job market is very competitive, and it will be even more so years down the road. I think it is important that she be as fluent as she can in as many languages as possible. I'd like her to learn Spanish as well. Eventually, maybe she can be trilingual. I think she is strong in English because of the school."

Haines Principal Diann Wright says other Chinese parents also want their children to be proficient in English. "They feel strongly that it is important that their children learn the English language," she says. "If they have a good command of English they will have a better opportunity to go on to institutions of higher learning, and they'll be able to get better jobs."

BENEFITS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

It is not just the native Chinese speakers who benefit from the classroom's bilingual approach. Even though the English speaking children are too young to gain proficiency in Chinese, they are learning basic Chinese words, greetings and numbers.

Lai and assistant teacher Cheong are both impressed at how well these three- and four-year-old native English speakers perform, especially when it comes to singing in Chinese. "Most of the American children sing the Chinese songs very well," says Cheong. "You cannot believe it, their pronunciation, and the words. If you didn't see who was singing, you would think it was the Chinese children. They understand the meaning of the whole song, but not word by word."

The students are also developing relationships with children different from themselves. This is important to parent Lakesha Broaders, the mother of a four-year-old boy in the program. "It challenges their minds to learn about another culture," she says.

Says Lakisha Tanksley, the mother of a three-year-old child in the pre-K program, "I know it's very beneficial for my daughter. At a very early age, she is dealing with the Chinese students and recognizes the beauty of other cultures. That is very valuable."

Tanksley says her daughter previously attended a "rambunctious" day care center in Chicago. She prefers Haines because, "It is more orderly. It's not just a play yard, but a learning institute where the teachers have the time and the patience to teach the children to sit still and to learn something."

Tanksley proudly announces that her little girl already knows how to say "thank you" in Chinese or, "Xie xie," and says that learning Chinese will only benefit her daughter in the years ahead. "This will help her as she grows up and becomes a dynamic woman," she says. "She will be able to relate to Chinese people. When you embrace other people's languages, they embrace you." ●

Resources at Your Fingertips

Early childhood educators seeking to learn more about bilingual education for young children can draw upon a wide range of resources to guide their inquiry.

One caution, however, is that very little of the bilingual literature is devoted to the pre-K student. Even so, because the principles of language acquisition are consistent across all age groups, bilingual experts say the materials for the early grades, K-2, often apply to pre-K activities.

Illinois Resource Center

This professional development organization, based in Des Plaines, Illinois, is considered a national leader in the techniques of bilingual education. The IRC is also a contractor for the Illinois State Board of Education for bilingual programs.

Illinois Resource Center
1855 South Mt. Prospect Road
Des Plaines, IL 60018
847-803-3535
www.thecenterweb.org

Illinois State Board of Education English Language Learning

ISBE's English Language Learning operations encompass a wide range of funding resources and programs for children of limited English proficiency. Although most information offered by the office focuses on K-12 education, the ISBE function offers resources, information, and guidance on bilingual issues.

Illinois State Board of Education
100 N. First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62777
866-262-6663
<http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/default.htm>

National Association for Bilingual Education

The National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) is the only national organization exclusively concerned with the education of language-minority students in American schools. NABE's Bilingual Research

Journal is the field's premier scholarly, peer-reviewed publication about bilingual education theory and practice.

NABE
1030 15th Street, N.W.,
Suite 470
Washington, D.C. 20005
202-898-1829
www.nabe.org

Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence

CREDE is a federally funded research and development program focused on improving the education of students whose ability to reach their potential is challenged by language or cultural barriers, race, geographic location or poverty. From 1996-2001, CREDE funded 31 research projects around the country.

During 2001-2003, seven synthesis teams extracted the key findings and practices from the field, including work done by CREDE's two predecessors—the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning (NCRCDLL) and the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP). The teams will produce range of publications and other tools to help teachers implement best practices in the classroom.

Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence
University of California,
Santa Cruz
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064
831-459-3500
<http://crede.ucsc.edu>

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition

NCELA, the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (formerly NCBE, the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement & Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA, formerly OBEMLA) to collect, analyze and disseminate information relating to the effective education of linguistically and culturally diverse learners in the U.S. It is housed at George Washington University.

NCELA
2121 K Street, N.W., Suite 260
Washington, D.C. 20037
800-321-6223
www.ncela.gwu.edu

ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistics

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics is operated by the Center for Applied Linguistics, a private non-profit organization. ERIC/CLL provides a wide range of services and materials for language educators, most of them free of charge. Products and services include the following:

- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions
- Resource Guides Online with links to Web sites, publications, and other sources of information

- An online newsletter, ERIC/CLL Language Link
- Information digests
- A semiannual print newsletter, ERIC/CLL News Bulletin
- A question-answering service eric@cal.org.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistics
<http://www.cal.org/ericcll/>

Office of English Language Acquisition

This U.S. Department of Education agency administers Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001). OELA also provides national leadership in promoting high quality education for English language learners (ELLs). Traditionally, this population has been known as limited English proficient students (LEPs).

OELA identifies major issues affecting the education of English language learners and helps support related state and local bilingual education programming.

Office of English Language Acquisition
U.S. Department of Education
330 C. Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html>

Blended Bilingual Classrooms

Learning More Than a Second Language

One morning last fall at the Independence School in the Chicago suburb of Bartlett, teacher Zahidee Marcano pushes open a floor-to-ceiling partition separating her preschool classroom from the one next door. Marcano, from Puerto Rico, teaches a class of 13 English language learners of Hispanic descent. Next door, teacher Apryl Lowe has a class of 15 native English speakers. As the partition opens, the children begin to mingle and move to various activity areas in both rooms.

In Marcano's classroom, two boys from her group and two boys from Lowe's class play on the floor with a wooden train set. In Lowe's class, three boys, two Spanish speakers and one English speaker, play together at a table with small plastic numbered birthday cakes.

Next to them, three boys from Lowe's class and two girls from Marcano's sit with Lowe in front of a felt board with white felt ghosts stuck to it, listening as Lowe tells a story about five white ghosts who turned different colors. "How do you say red in Spanish?" asks Lowe in English. "Rojo," answer the children in unison. "How do you say white?" asks Lowe. "Blanco," the students respond.

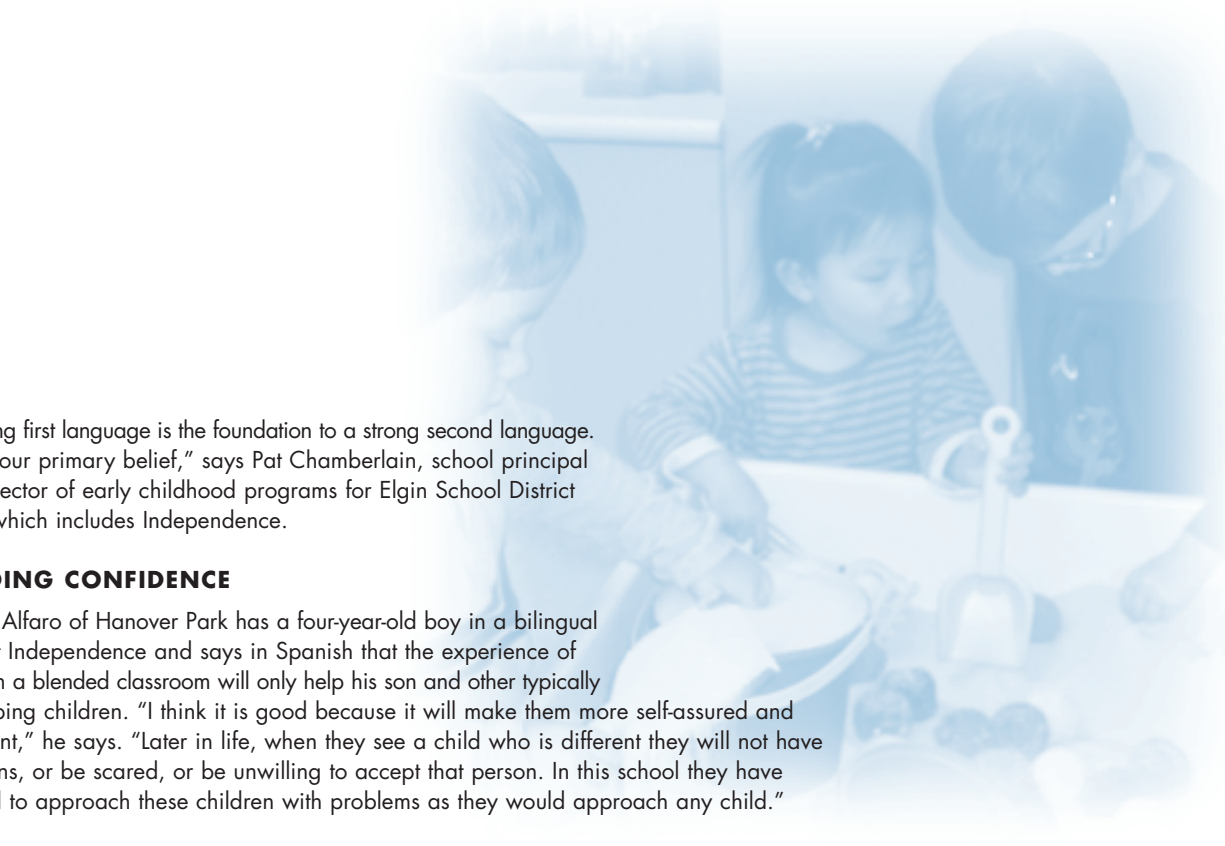
Nearby, four English-speaking girls play at a sand table filled with plastic toys. One of them, who receives speech therapy, shows off her Spanish with a smile, "¿Como estas?" (How are you?), "Hola," and "Adios," she said proudly. When asked where she learned this, she says, "In the Spanish-speaking class."

A LARGE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Chicago and its suburbs have the second largest Mexican population in the country after Los Angeles, and the student body at Independence reflects that. Close to half of the school's 300 students are classified as English language learners (ELL), and most are of Hispanic descent. Enter any of the school's four bilingual classrooms and you see three-, four- and five-year-old Hispanic children taught primarily in Spanish, with teachers and assistants from Puerto Rico and Mexico leading them. Spanish- and English-speaking classes are brought together for up to an hour once or twice a week so the children can interact.

Independence also has students who speak languages such as Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu and Polish. But, because none of these languages is spoken by more than 20 children, the school is not required by state law to conduct a bilingual class for them. These students are placed in classes with English speakers and receive some modified instruction, such as a greater use of visual aids.

Because many of the Spanish speaking children still struggle with their native language, they are taught mainly in Spanish before eventually being moved into English instruction no later than the fourth grade. It is a model known as Early Exit Transitional Bilingual Education.



"A strong first language is the foundation to a strong second language. That is our primary belief," says Pat Chamberlain, school principal and director of early childhood programs for Elgin School District U-46, which includes Independence.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Miguel Alfaro of Hanover Park has a four-year-old boy in a bilingual class at Independence and says in Spanish that the experience of being in a blended classroom will only help his son and other typically developing children. "I think it is good because it will make them more self-assured and confident," he says. "Later in life, when they see a child who is different they will not have questions, or be scared, or be unwilling to accept that person. In this school they have learned to approach these children with problems as they would approach any child."

Chamberlain and her colleagues are convinced that bilingual education is the best way to teach English language learners, as opposed to forcing them to speak only English using an immersion method. "Philosophically, I don't believe in it," Chamberlain says of immersion. "Also, there are no studies that show that high-poverty, low-income, language-minority kids do well in this approach. There are no models or studies that show this works. Research shows that bilingual education gives you a cognitive advantage and leads to greater flexibility."

Chamberlain points to research on second language learning and literacy development conducted by James Cummins at the University of Toronto. Cummins has found that when children develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. He also found that children develop more flexibility in their thinking as a result of processing information through two different languages.

AN IMPRESSIVE PEORIA SCHOOL

Chamberlain and 12 colleagues studied the professional literature and visited schools as part of a broad examination of what might work best. Chamberlain was especially impressed when she visited the Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Center in Peoria, an elementary school that integrates special needs kids into regular classes and has an innovative program of year-round instruction. She made special note of the high-quality learning environment, the school's authentic assessment model, and the fact that parents had to sign contracts when their children enrolled. Says Chamberlain, "I thought I had died and gone to heaven. It was incredibly impressive."

continued on page 14

After their tour of different programs, the group concluded that the ideal strategy was to meld the strengths of each individual program into one model. For instance, at-risk classes usually had the best supplies and furniture, bilingual programs seemed to have the highest level of parent participation, and special education teachers had the best intervention strategies. "We looked at the strengths of each of those programs," says Chamberlain, "and there it was. That was the program we wanted."

Independence bilingual education teacher Mei-Ling Clapp served on the committee and recalls thinking at the time, "Oh my God! A blended program; putting all these kids together." Adds Clapp, "In the beginning we were all scared."

But that fear gradually evaporated as the benefits of the blended classroom model became clear. On a recent visit to Independence, speech therapist Josefina Leautaud was teaching Clapp's students how to recognize and pronounce the letter "O." First, the children were asked to identify a series of photos of objects with "O" in their names such as "sol" (sun), "flor" (flower), "oso" (bear) and "Otoño" (autumn). Then, Leautaud, Clapp and a teacher's assistant set out several standing mirrors on three tables, as well as paper and markers, and had the children pronounce words with the letter "O" while looking in the mirror. They also showed them how to write the letter.

INCLUDING ALL CHILDREN

A child with limited language development skills who receives special education services sat in his chair and watched as a typically developing girl next to him drew a perfect red "O" on her paper and pronounced it correctly. With Leautaud crouched next to him making "O" sounds, and showing him how to shape his mouth, he looked in the mirror and tentatively said, "O," and then drew green "O's" on his paper. "Muy bien!" said Leautaud.

A short time later, Clapp sat on the floor with this boy and five others going over size comparisons. Said Clapp, holding up three different sized paper cutouts of squirrels, "Tengo tres ardillas, chica, mediana y grande. Enseñame grande. Enseñame chiquita." (I have three squirrels, small, medium and large. Show me the small one. Show me the smallest one.) The little boy squirmed impatiently. Clapp gently held his head for a moment so he could focus on the cutouts, and asked him the question again. He correctly identified both with a barely audible, "chiquita" and "grande" and then ran off to the other side of the room.

Clapp and her colleagues recall other children who have benefited from being in the school's blended classrooms. Clapp remembers one student who she says was very low functioning. "She learned how to follow routines, play with others and many important social things that she will need in life by being in these classes," Clapp says.

Besides learning to be compassionate, the children are also exposed to a second language as a result of the bilingual approach. Classes are conducted primarily in Spanish, and some English is spoken each day. The amount increases as the school year progresses. While most of the Spanish speaking children already





speaking some English, their native English speaking counterparts are introduced to basic elements of a second language. They are learning things such as greetings, basic vocabulary, body parts, numbers and letters. These skills are an important foundation that will serve the children well when they begin more intensive Spanish instruction in later years.

"They're not learning 10 words a day in Spanish, but they are learning appropriate greetings and other basics," says teacher Lowe of her native English speakers. "Hearing Spanish and experiencing it is beneficial. They're also learning about another culture. Who knows, maybe when they're in a high school Spanish class, they'll hear something and remember that they heard it here first."

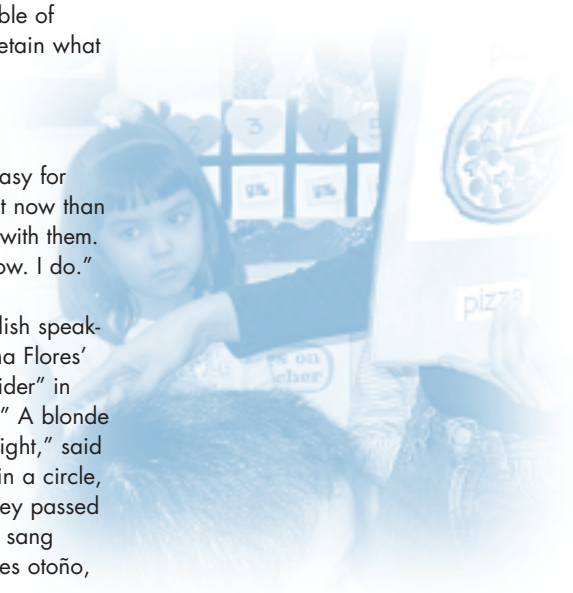
Chamberlain has no doubt that children of preschool age are capable of learning multiple languages and is equally confident that they will retain what they learn.

READY TO LEARN LANGUAGES

"At this age, kids are hot wired to learn languages, and it is very easy for them," says Chamberlain. "It is certainly a lot easier to start doing it now than when they are 17. Some of what they learn here absolutely will stick with them. No question. They'll certainly remember the songs 10 years from now. I do."

On a recent morning, the students from teacher Jill Gollwitzer's English speaking classroom were visiting the Spanish speaking students in Adriana Flores' class. All 27 children sat in a circle, and after singing, "Itsy Bitsy Spider" in both languages, Flores asked, "What is the name of our next song?" A blonde native English speaking boy called out, "Otoño" (Autumn). "That's right," said Flores, and they all started singing, "It's fall, It's fall, we're passing in a circle, it's fall, it's fall, we're passing round and round..." As they sang, they passed bead-filled plastic fruits and vegetables around the circle. Then they sang in Spanish, "Es Otoño, es otoño, pasamos en un círculo, es otoño, es otoño, pasamos alrededor..."

On the other side of the school, the English speaking children from Apryl Lowe's class gathered in Zahidee Marcano's class with her Spanish speaking students. Lowe directed her students, "Sit next to someone in Ms. Zahidee's class." Said Marcano to all the kids, "Buenos días, como están?" The children all responded in unison, "Bien." Then, Lowe and Marcano sat next to each



continued on back cover



continued from
Case Study:
Independence School
page 15

other in front of the students and read aloud from a book titled, "Pumpkin, Pumpkin." Lowe read, "The pumpkin grew and grew and grew," and Marcano translated, "La calabaza creció y creció y creció."

Next, they all stood and sang the "Pizza Song" in English and Spanish. It is a song about toppings found on pizza, and as they were mentioned, Marcano held up two plastic index cards with each ingredient written in Spanish and English. For instance, she held up, "cheese" and "queso" and "pimiento verde" and "green pepper."

Chamberlain has higher hopes for the children of the Independence School, beyond learning about pizza toppings, pumpkins, fruits, the seasons and other basics of a second language. She wants them to grow up to be compassionate and caring citizens because of what they learned at her school.

"I hope these kids will not grow up thinking kids who speak another language are bad or stupid," she says. "If we can promote tolerance at this age level maybe we will have a better world." ●

Little Prints

The Center:
Resources for Teaching and Learning

1855 Mt. Prospect Road
Des Plaines, IL 60018

Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Permit No. 213 Palatine P&DC IL
--