ACHIEVING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A PROMISING ANSWER FOR LATINOS IN WASHINGTON

Lillian R. Petersen
Politics 458
Whitman College
November 18, 2006

Introduction

In 2005, our nation's minority count totaled 98 million – one third of the population.[1] Given the rapidly increasing diversification of the United States, shifts toward effective intercultural systems everywhere are of utmost importance. Particular attention should be paid to accommodating our nation's Latino population, which alone accounted for half of the national population growth between July 1, 2004 and July 1, 2005.[2] Addressing issues of multiculturalism is therefore at the forefront of government. The field in which to address multiculturalism is in large part the public education system. The ability of the education system to address the disadvantaged status of Hispanic youth will shape the future of America.[3] In Washington State, current government is highly aware of the importance of quality public education. Given that Washington State's Latino population is growing at a rate double the national average,[4] it is important that swift steps be taken to tailor public education to fit and foster the State's increasingly diverse environment. Failure to take into account diversity and reassess the State's public education system will result in increased drop-out rates, increased disparities between ethnic majority and minority individuals, and noticeably ineffective public education. One of the most beneficial places to begin reassessing public education is in early childhood, a field which is currently in dire need of attention. Washington has fallen behind many other states which have adopted innovative and effective approaches to boost early learning. This age bracket (ages 0-5) is a window of opportunity, and investment in this field would increase success later in life, which is of particular importance for Latinos at this time.

As I will discuss, studies show that quality of early education is primarily contingent upon highly trained teachers. Thus, the body of my paper will address effective training for early childcare givers who feel prepared to succeed in diverse classroom settings. Frequently, success in a diverse early learning environment requires bilingual skills on behalf of the teacher, which can be taught in conjunction with a strong, culturally responsive training curriculum. However, bilingual skills are not necessarily required so long as the teacher has been taught how to respond to linguistic and cultural diversity. In researching effective teacher training, I examined a plethora of facts, policies, and curricula. I observed classrooms and spoke to various members of the Walla Walla community who are involved in the field of early learning. I will present several examples of innovative and culturally sensitive teacher training, one of which is currently being implemented across the State thanks to a grant from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Given recent initiatives in Washington State, particularly Washington Learns, I recognize that government is not only open to change in the field of early learning, but hungry for it. I also looked closely at current reports

---

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, "Press Release: Nation's Population One-Third Minority: 2006," May 2006. <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/006808.html>. (31 October 2006).
[2] U.S. Census Bureau, (2006).
[3] Melissa Roderick "Hispanics and Education" in *Hispanics in the United States: An Agenda for the 21st Century* ed. Cafferty & Engstrom (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002).
[4] National Council of La Raza, "State Fact Sheet: Washington," 2003. <http://www.ncl.org/content/publications/download/33185>. (25 October 2006).

and scholarly texts regarding bilingual education (and the role that early education plays in preparing students for this process). Together, I hope that this information will shed light on innovative and necessary changes to the early childhood education system – specifically with respect to teacher training – which will accommodate the reality of our State's population.

Thanks to the help of Melinda Brennan, who runs the Early Education program at Walla Walla Community College, and Andrea Valencia, a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Green Park Elementary School in Walla Walla and the instructor of the local Building Bridges preschool teacher training program (my primary case study program), I have been able to closely examine an exceptional model for preschool teacher training and gain much insight and wisdom.

A Theoretical Foundation

Recently, political theorists have flooded publishing houses and university bookshelves with scholarly literature in response to the growing number of minority voices in the United States. The majority of this theory supports adaptation to and support of multiculturalism. I will present one theoretical perspective to set the framework for understanding the goals of this paper and the reasons why government programs tailored to the needs of diversity are mandatory for the health of society. I will periodically reference the following ideas:

First, changes in the dominant curricula must occur so as to respect and affirm other cultures. In this same vein, minority groups must have the right to speak and act in culture-affirming ways.[5] Additionally, people must be recognized in their own cultural language or voice,[6] and that "[t]he post-imperial injunction to listen to the voices of others must invoke listening not only to what they say, but also to the way or language in which it is said, if the imperial habit of imposing our traditions and institutions on others in both theory and practice is to be abjured."[7]

Perhaps the quote from Tully's book that most directly pertains to the work I am doing here is this: "[Minority groups] ask to use their languages in the public sphere, to have appropriate schools and access to the media, to be acknowledged and affirmed in the curricula and narratives of the societies they have helped to build, and to be able to live in accord with their cultural ways without discrimination, so they too can participate in the governance of the constitutional association without oppression."[8] I have kept this idea – the fact that minority groups should be able to participate in all aspects of public and private life with their own language and cultural ways – in the forefront of my mind throughout my research.

---

[5] Tully, James. Strange Multiplicities: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity: (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[6] Tully, 34.
[7] Tully, 57.
[8] Tully, 165.

Following Tully's framework, I would like to work from the understanding that increasing national diversity is a fact and that in order to continue living in a healthy society, majority and minority groups alike must be recognized and supported by government. In the words of James Tully, "[c]ultural diversity is not a phenomenon of exotic and incommensurable others in distant lands and at different stages of historical development, as the old concept of culture made it appear. No. It is here and now in every society. Citizens are members of more than one dynamic culture and the experience of 'crossing' cultures is normal activity."[9] Tully continues on to assert the inherent interconnectedness of cultures, which is precisely why we must avoid "bleaching"[10] society and strive to uphold, celebrate, and promote cultural diversity from the beginning of child's life.

The Importance of Preschool and the Potential is Holds for Positive Change in the Lives of Latino Youth

Early childhood has continually been shown to be a time when the groundwork for the rest of life is set. Quality education (including social and emotional learning) prior to kindergarten therefore holds in immeasurable amount of positive potential and could be the key to many social and societal problems, including the disconcertingly low educational success of Latinos.

In 2005, the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study revealed that early learning significantly reduced difficulties for individuals later in life. More specifically, it found that for every dollar invested in early learning, $8 was saved in costs associated with school drop-out rates, remedial education, special education, abuse and neglect, health care, crime and incarceration, and teen pregnancy.[11]

Additionally, a national survey of kindergarten teachers was recently conducted that found that children entering kindergarten who had not attended preschool were far less prepared than their peers with preschool experience. Nine out of ten teachers polled agreed that "substantially more" children would succeed in school if they had access to quality preschool programs. Teachers also concluded that prepared kindergarten students suffered due to the abundance of unprepared students. The agreement rate in the poll was nearly 100 percent amongst teachers with mostly poor, minority children in their classes.[12]

Yet another report from the National Academy of Sciences on the education of children ages 2 to 5 found that 1) children who attend high-quality education programs tend to learn more and are significantly more prepared to master the complex demands of

---

[9] Tully, 11.

[10] The term "bleaching" is used here as a way to describe homogenizing practices which attempt to replace minority cultures and traditions with American ways.

[11] L.J. Schweinhart, J. Montie, Z. Xiang, W.S. Barnett, C.R. Belfield and M. Nores (2005) *Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40*, 2005.

[12] Rubin, Stephanie. "New Poll of Kindergarten Teachers Shows Kids Without Preschool Unprepared for School; Well-Prepared Students Suffering." California News Release: Fight Crime, Invest in Kids 11 August, 2004. <http://www.fightcrime.org/releases.php?id=107>. (1 November 2006).

formal schooling, 2) children's early environments have profound and lasting influences on their cognitive and emotional competence, 3) low quality early learning environments do not enhance learning and development and may even put them in jeopardy, 4) children who live in circumstances that increase their risk of school failure – poverty, low maternal education, maternal depression and other factors that limit access to opportunities and resources – are much more likely to succeed in school if they attend high-quality early education programs, and 5) this new knowledge of children's capabilities is not yet reflected in policies or programs for early learning care and education, which are out of step with children's needs and abilities.[13] Given that Latino children have extremely high poverty rates and low maternal education (just to name a couple of the many circumstances that increase their risk of school failure), it is extremely important that Latino children have access to quality early education.

When both parents work, sending a child somewhere that offers quality early care is indisputably one of the most beneficial decisions that a parent could make, so why do less than half of preschool age children in Washington State attend and why do Latinos in the State have the lowest preschool attendance of any demographic when they are arguably the group that could benefit from it the most? Preschool is expensive. In 2005, the average cost for full-time preschool for a 4-year-old was $6,091.[14] Given that Latinos are twice as likely as the general public to meet the federal standards for poverty and Latino children are three times more likely to live in poverty than other children their age,[15] it becomes difficult if not impossible for Latino children to attend preschool and thus reap the benefits associated with quality education in early childhood. Hispanic children are the least likely demographic to participate in early childhood programs, especially when the mother's first language is Spanish. Thus, Hispanic children are in the "catch-up" position even before they enter kindergarten. This "catch-up" position indicates that Hispanic children are at a higher risk of being retained in grade, which is one of the greatest risk factors for dropping out of school early.[16]

In order to explore this reality, I will present some additional barriers associated with the Latino child's early learning development. The following fact is widely known: Children of low income families and children whose mothers have a low level of education tend to experience more difficulty succeeding academically.[17] However, many scholars believe that cultural misunderstandings between a child's parent(s) and teacher(s), as well as unsupportive home environments result just as often in early academic difficulty.[18] Thus, it has been found that obstacles associated with low-income and low levels of parental education can be overcome by supportive home environments,

---

[13] Bowman, Barbara T., M. Suzanne Donovan, and M. Susan Burns, eds. Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).
[14] NACCRRA and Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network, "2005 Child Care in the State of Washington," March 2005. <http://www.naccrra.net/docs/data/national_data_set_WA.pdf>. (2 November 2006).
[15] National Council of La Raza, (2003).
[16] Roderick
[17] Roderick
[18] Roderick

improved cultural understanding on behalf of the child's teacher, and improved communication between the child's parent(s) and teacher(s).

Regarding supportive home environments: Reginald Clark conducted a study in which in which he highlighted several parenting strategies that distinguished poor children who were successful in school from those who were not. He found that parents who were involved in their children's home activities, who worked with their children daily in studying, and who praised their children's talents and achievements were able to provide home environments that laid the basis for success in school even in low-income homes.[19]

Regarding improved cultural understanding and communication between a minority child's authority figures: Guadalupe Valdes looked closely at family support programs with respect to Mexican-American families and found that, given the unique Mexican focus on developing respect and obedience in children (*respeto*), a Mexican mother may see the child's moral upbringing as her job and leave the responsibility of academic skills to the teacher. Though this may contradict goals to increase parental participation in a child's academics, which contributes greatly to a child's success in school (as found in Clark's study), Valdes uses the *respeto* example to stress the fact that attempts to change parenting practices in Hispanic homes must be culturally sensitive (i.e. understand that cultural differences exist between Latinos and other cultures and therefore attempt to find ways in which academic success and native culture can cooperate towards the well-being of the child). Programs or curricula that do not incorporate cultural sensitivity may lead to families de-emphasizing cultural values, and may force Mexican-American parents to choose between transmission of cultural values and academic success for their children.[20]

Thus it is clear that quality early education programs which operate on the basis of cultural sensitivity and strive to establish strong ties between the child's family and the care giver are extremely valuable and hold an immense amount of potential, particularly for Latinos.

Evidence that Bilingual Education is a Necessary Component of Education Reform

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Hispanic students accounted for 64 percent of the nation's total growth of school-age children between 1993 and 2003 – that's 3 million of the 4.7 million children who entered the public school system in a ten year period. All signs point towards the need to accommodate this huge number of minority students, with particular attention paid to the Spanish-speaking demographic, especially in Washington.

The difficulty in creating policy to deal with the tensions surrounding bilingual education is, in large part, the fact that the public school system has almost always chosen to teach English to successive waves of immigrants in place of their native

[19] Roderick
[20] Roderick

languages. With the exception of the Bilingual Education Act of 1967, Americanization practices aimed at assimilating Hispanics in the United States have attempted to homogenize the population. These practices continue to proliferate.

Americanization and assimilation practices exist due to the belief that Hispanics, like other immigrants, should learn the English language and begin to blend into the mainstream of American society. These practices are bound by goals to assimilate rather than include minority groups. They are constituted by providing English-only education, teaching American traditions, and failing to celebrate cultural diversity in society. They are formally in place in the education systems of California, Massachusetts, and Arizona.[21] Simply because the United States has a history of assimilation practices that have appeared, from the perspective of the Anglo-dominant culture, to succeed is not reason enough to continue these "bleaching" practices. The diverse environment in which we live has never been as obvious as it is now. In 2050, one in four Americans is projected to be Hispanic.[22] The concept of what constitutes "sufficient education" is "not only a pedagogical concept but also a pragmatic social judgment that varies with time and place."[23] Washington State has a rapidly increasing Latino population and therefore now is the time to make appropriate changes tailored to the changing environment.

Contrary to the belief that bilingual education will allow for minority language speakers to avoid learning English, there is strong evidence that among bilinguals, English language usage increases with age. Because English is the language of the majority in the United States, Latinos – just like past waves of immigrants – will speak increasingly more English as they become more settled members of society with or without bilingual education in the early years.[24] Bilingual education, however, improves their chances of educational success, which will, in turn, benefit society as a whole.

Though there is much contradictory and complex research surrounding the topic of bilingual education, I am going to highlight some the most persuasive studies in support of it. I will also address some of the articles that provide evidence against bilingual education in hopes of providing a well-rounded examination of the philosophies and facts behind it.

A study led by Alejandro Portes found Hispanics to be English-language dominant by the second generation even in communities such as south Florida where Spanish is widely spoken. Even second-generation immigrants from Cuba attending private bilingual schools in south Florida were found to be English-language dominant. Thus, it appears that concerns regarding bilingual education inhibiting the proliferation of

---

[21] National Association for Bilingual Education, *What is Bilingual Education?* <http://www.nabe.org/education/index.html>. (30 October 2006).
[22] Cafferty, Pastora S. J. "The Language Question" in *Hispanics in the United States: An Agenda for the 21st Century* Ed. Cafferty & Engstrom (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002).
[23] Cafferty, 79.
[24] Cafferty

the English language are unfounded. What is of particular interest in these studies is that, additionally, bilingualism showed a definite correlation with high cognitive skills.[25]

In a study of the San Antonio Independent School District, examining the schools in 1995 and 1996, it was found that children receiving instruction in both English and Spanish made gains in English vocabulary and grammar superior to those made by children in the English-only program.[26] Another study, released in 1991, which was federally funded, traced the progress of over 2,000 Spanish-speaking English language learners in nine school districts in five states over a four-year period. It found that students in developmental bilingual programs – which feature a gradual transition from Spanish to English, but still strive to maintain the native language – significantly outperformed their counterparts who were in quick-exit, transitional bilingual programs and in all-English immersion programs when all three groups were tested on their English skills.[27]

Yet another study, conducted by Oller and Eilers and released in 2002, compared 952 students in Dade County, Florida, enrolled in bilingual and English immersion programs. It reported that bilingual children scored higher in English literacy by 2nd grade – a gap that widened significantly by 5th grade.[28]

The federal government also conducted a report, released in 2002, which confirmed the patterns found in the Ramirez study. English Language Learners (ELLs) in Houston reportedly did better academically in programs that stressed native-language development. They fared best in two-way – a.k.a. dual-language immersion – programs in which English-speaking children learn Spanish alongside ELLs learning English.[29] Thus, there is clear evidence in strong support of dual language skills.

Before continuing on, I want to address the differences between the bilingual education programs listed above, as well as other variations. Due to the fact that children's backgrounds and needs vary, as do the needs and aspirations of parents and communities, there are numerous models used in bilingual education. According to the National Association for Bilingual Education, the most effective bilingual education programs include all of the following characteristics: English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, sheltered subject matter teaching, and instruction and skills in the first

---

[25] Portes, Alejandro and Richard Schauffler, "Language and the Second Generation," in the *Second Generation*, ed. Alejandro Portes (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996).
[26] Cafferty, 83
[27] Ramirez, J.D., Yuen, S., Ramey, D., and Pasta, D. *Longitudinal Study of structured English immersion strategy, early-exit and late-exit bilingual education programs for language-minority children* (Final Report, Vols. I & II). San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International. <http://www.nabe.org/education/index.html>. (31 October 2006).
[28] Oller, D.K. and Eilers, R.E., eds. Language and Literacy in Bilingual Children: Child Language and Child Development. (Tonawanda, NY: U of Toronto P, 2002).
[29] Thomas, W. P. and Collier, V.P. *The Astounding Effectiveness of Dual Language Education for All*. National Association for Bilingual Education: Journal of Research and Practice. <http://njrp.tamu.edu/2004/PDFs/Collier.pdf>. (25 October 2006).

language.[30] Effective, quality models are crucial in preschool, as this is when the child's language skills are first being established.

In spite of research and demographics pointing towards bilingual education, between 1980 and 1996 the U.S. Department of Education's budget for bilingual education programs dropped 51 percent, from $262.4 million to $128 million. Additionally, due to the vast increase in Spanish-speakers, the per capita expenditure decreased even more drastically. Out of the eight program areas in the U.S. Department of Education, the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Affairs is appropriated the fewest dollars.[31]

Language is a means of preserving culture in the history of every society. Though English is the dominant language in the United States, spoken by 215.4 million people, Spanish is the second runner up, spoken by 28.1 million people.[32] For this reason, bilingual education is needed. Bilingual education as defined by the National Association of Bilingual Education is "any use of two languages in school – by teachers or students or both – for a variety of social and pedagogical purposes." In the context of modern society, a period of demographic transformation in the United States, bilingual education refers, more specifically, to classroom approaches using the native language of the English language learner (ELL) for instruction, especially in early education. Goals of this approach include: 1) teaching English, 2) fostering academic achievement, 3) acculturating immigrants to a new society, 4) preserving a minority group's linguistic and cultural heritage, 5) enabling native English speakers to learn a second language, and 6) developing national language resources.[33] Upon observing the goals of bilingual education and the research behind it, I wondered why the issue was even in question. It seems to be a necessary step to ensure that the education system successfully survives.

In order to address the contradiction amongst reports in regarding bilingual education, I would like to turn to Stephen Krashen, who has conducted several recent studies in response to reports claiming support for "Engish-only" education. In an article from 2005 entitled "What works? Reviewing the Latest Evidence on Bilingual Education," Krashen reports that "study after study has reported that children in bilingual programs typically outperform their counterparts in all-English programs on tests of academic achievement in English."[34] Krashen cites numerous reviews of research proving the benefits of bilingual education, pointing out the significance of the fact that consistent results reached by various organizations, both private and public, and by various methods, should point policymakers to the answer to the question of bilingual education – that it is indisputably beneficial.

---

[30] National Association for Bilingual Education, (2006).
[31] Cafferty
[32] U.S. Census Bureau, "Nearly 1-in-5 Speak a Foreign Language at Home; Most Also Speak English 'Very Well,' Census Bureau Reports," October 2003. <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/census_2000/001406.html>. (31 October 2006).
[33] National Association for Bilingual Education, (2006).
[34] Krashen, S. and McField, G.. *What Works? Reviewing the Latest Evidence on Bilingual Education*. Language Learner online, Nov/Dec 2005. <http://users.rcn.com/langpol/Krashen-McField.pdf>. (1 November 2006).

According to Krashen, a method that has been recently adopted and is widely considered to be a sophisticated, more precise, and more objective methodology when assessing bilingual education, is *meta-analysis*. Given that many critics of bilingual education studies in the past found evaluations to be "inconclusive and contradictory,"[35] this new methodology holds immense value. In the past, two main methods for assessing bilingual education were used: The first, "vote-counting," entailed scholars collecting a body of studies, deciding which ones were worthy of inclusion (presumably which findings supported their belief or what they were trying to prove) and then characterizing each study as favoring either bilingual or all-English programs (based on their opinion). Essentially, they would "count the votes" for each approach and declare a winner. The second method, "narrative reviews," involved each study – regardless of how big of a difference it found in educational outcomes, how many subjects were involved, or how rigorous its research methods were – getting one vote. "Up or down, no or yes, for or against bilingual education."[36] Thus, given the poor evaluation methods of the past, it is clear why the majority of "studies" assessing bilingual education have been inconclusive and contradictory.

The *meta-analysis* method, which was employed in a study of bilingual education by the U.S. Department of Education in 2005 (a study which I will discuss in a moment), allows reviewers to take a more comprehensive approach. It employs powerful statistical techniques and controls for numerous variables in each study.[37] These techniques can minimize subjectivity in deciding which studies to exclude or include. The most important benefit of using meta-analysis (in this case, when reviewing previously conducted studies), is that it gives reviewers the ability to measure *effect size* – how big an advantage one educational treatment demonstrates as compared to another – which is often expressed in a single number. With the ability to measure effect size, it is possible to reach conclusions about the *relative* effectiveness of one pedagogical approach as opposed to another.[38] (The pedagogical approaches, in our case, are bilingual and English-only education.)

Using meta-analysis, Krashen reviewed several studies, some of which supported bilingual education and some of which supported English-only. He determined that the "strikingly similar results from different meta-analyses provide clear support for bilingual education as a means of helping children succeed academically in English. They also cast strong doubt on claims that all-English approaches are superior and should be mandated by law."[39] Thus, further evidence for the academic benefits of bilingual education is found, in addition to evidence disputing an individual's loss of English skills when encouraged to maintain his/her native language.

---

[35] Cafferty, 84.
[36] Krashen, 7.
[37] Krashen
[38] Krashen
[39] Krashen, 9.

The study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (which I mentioned earlier) that employed meta-analysis, was completed in 2005, though it was never released.[40] The Department of Education reportedly spent $1.8 million on the study, though it was abandoned while the National Literacy Panel (a panel of researchers chosen by the Bush Administration) was still editing the final report. The National Literacy Panel reportedly found "a small to modest impact for bilingual versus non-bilingual programs."[41] Like other meta-analyses, it noted that the most rigorous search designs – those that used random assignment in finding individuals for the study – showed the biggest edge for bilingual education. Though this study will not be officially released by the U.S. Department of Education, the D.O.E. has agreed to surrender the copyright and allow the National Literacy Panel to publish the study privately.

Moving on from Krashen, the last piece of literature regarding bilingual education that I'd like to address was released by the Education Alliance at Brown University in 1999. Similar to Krashen's studies, this comprehensive report addresses the inconsistent, subjective nature of much research regarding the failure or success of bilingual education. This report discusses effective bilingual education, and, whereas Krashen focuses on the academic benefits, Brisk (the author of the report) demonstrates the strong socio-cultural benefits of bilingual education by way of close case study examinations.[42]

Having discussed the importance of bilingual education, of which there are many models, I will now address the role of early education in securing the child's native language so that bilingual education can occur.

The Role of Early Childhood Education in Maintaining a Child's Dual Language Abilities

Most formal models of bilingual education, including the transitional model and the two-way (dual-language) model, do not begin until elementary school. Therefore, a primary role of early childhood educators is to prepare a child for kindergarten the best that they can – academically, emotionally, socially, and culturally. For a Latino child (or any child whose native language is not English), in order to maintain a strong connection to his/her native language and culture, is it not the case that an appropriate pre-kindergarten education would necessitate the opportunity to speak Spanish in a culturally sensitive environment? Research and interviews reveal that, living in a society where the overwhelming majority of people speak English, regardless of what language is spoken in the home, there is virtually no risk that a child will not learn English. Rather, the risk lies in losing the native language, Spanish.[43]

Regarding the importance of native-language dominance in early education, I will present two studies. The first is a report written by Augie Fleras, a professor at the University of Waterloo in Canada. Fleras begins by discussing the assimilation practices

---

[40] Krashen, 10.
[41] Krashen, 10.
[42] Brisk, M. E. *Quality Bilingual Education: Defining Success* The Education Alliance at Brown University online, November 1999. <http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/Defining_Success.pdf>. (26 October 2006).
[43] Appendix C.

in New Zealand, which served to dissolve the culture and language of the indigenous Maori people. Fleras found that the perpetuation of native language is perceived not only as sustaining a people's identity and cultural distinctiveness, but also as indispensable in facilitating a positive self-image and subsequent career success. In response to the marginalization of their culture, Maori people (primarily elders) developed "language nests," which took the form of community-based day-care centers staffed with primarily Maoris who speak to the children in the Maori language. Language nests serve to preserve the Maori language that was dying out, provide a valuable service to working parents, and, most importantly, strengthen the cultural values associated with the traditional Maori extended families.[44]

Starting in 1982, Maori grandparents volunteered to run day-care centers featuring an immersion program in the Maori language. With help from grassroots organizations, these "language nests" quickly expanded, and by 1988 there were 521 center with 8,000 children – 15% of the Maori children under 5.[45] Thus, in a childcare setting, Maori preschoolers were saturated with Maori language and culture, though they still learned English due to the fact that some native English-speaking children were included in the preschools, as well as the fact that English is the dominant language in New Zealand. With university help, language nests are also being successfully pioneered in Hawaii with native Hawaiian children.[46] More consideration should be given to the "language nest" approach when state and federal government, as well as private organizations, carry-out proposed plans to improve early childhood education programs.

Another report which sheds light on native-language dominance in early childhood was released in 1991. Fishman, the author of the report, reveals the need to focus societal efforts on getting parents and young children involved in language retention and renewal. He claims that the intergenerational transmission of native languages in the home is the key to native-language survival and that cultural traits can be strengthened primarily by the mother singing and talking often to the child in the native language, by exposing the young child to frequent conversations held with others in the native language, and by participating in community gatherings where the child can experience ethnic activities as often as possible.[47] However, due the increasing number of women in the work force, more and more children are spending the majority of their early days in early care/education centers. Latino women have the lowest median earnings of any demographic, nationally, and thus are forced to work even more, leaving their children in the care of others. All of this means that the culture of a Latino child must be supported by people other than the mother in order for Latino children to retain their native language and culture. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1997 a Hispanic woman's median wages for full-time work in a year in Washington State was $19,269, as compared to the overall median wages of a woman in the State, which was

---

[44] Fleras, A. *Redefining the Politics over Aboriginal Language Renewal: Maori Language Preschools as Agents of Social Change*. (Otago, New Zealand: U of Otago P,1989). <http://www.brandonu/ca/Library/CJNS/7.1/fleras.pdf>. (October 31, 2006).
[45] Fleras
[46] Fleras
[47] Fishman, Joshua A., ed. Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages. (England: Multilingual Matters Limited, 2001).

$25,370. In addition, between 1965 and 1997, the number of women working in the U.S. increased from 39 percent to 60 percent. In 1997, women made up 46.2 percent of the U.S. labor force.[48] As of May 2005, 46 percent of Hispanic women 16 and over with children under 6 years-old, were working full-time.[49] Given these statistics, there appears to be a significant number of Latino children in early care centers or homes. These children must be amongst culturally sensitive individuals who will encourage the use of their native language.

To wrap up this up, I want to reiterate the fact that English-only education in preschool conveys normative ideals of culture and language to a child in a very impressionable point in his/her life. Failing to provide Spanish language and culture in preschools in communities where this demographic is significantly represented denotes lesser and greater degrees of belonging according to how closely the minority children conform to "American ways." Above, I have evidenced the importance of bilingual education, which necessitates an early learning environment that supports a child's native language and culture. Due to the increasing number of mothers in the workforce, early care that supports a child's culture is necessary to avoid these normative ideals being instilled in children. The "language nest" example can be seen as an ideal place where children can go for care without losing their native language, culture, or heritage.

I will now shift gears and present multiple models by which culturally sensitive early childhood educators can be trained, in the interest of providing high quality early education.

Public and Private Initiatives: The New Jersey Example and Others

Despite the lagging effort by the Federal Government to help provide quality education for minority children, various public and private institutions across the nation are attempting to compensate for the lack of sufficient federal help in the way of bilingual education. For example, a few of the many 2006 state policy improvements of this nature include the following: In Iowa, the state legislature allocated an approximately $20 million increase in early childhood program funding. The Community Empowerment program, which provides funds to local communities for a wide variety of early childhood services, received the biggest share – an increase of $15 million. This increase includes $5 million targeted toward family support services and parent education programs for families expecting children or with newborn children and infants through age three.[50] The North Carolina state legislature allocated $26 million for a variety of early childhood initiatives, including: expansion funding for Smart Start[51] (30% of funds

[48] U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Teachers – Preschool, Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary." Occupational Outlook Handbook online, 2006. <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos069.htm>. (21 October 2006).
[49] U.S. Department of Labor, (2006).
[50] National Association for the Education of Young Children, "State Public Policy Developments Update," Fall 2006. <http://www.naeyc.org/policy/state/pdf/StatePublicPolicyDevelopmentsfall06.pdf>. (2 November 2006).
[51] A private, proactive community empowerment foundation

must be used for child care subsidies), T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project,[52] reducing the childcare subsidy wait list, and implementing a child care subsidy reimbursement rate increase for childcare centers and family care homes that are rated 3 stars or higher in the state's quality rating system[53] (QRS).[54] Ohio's School Readiness Solutions Group, which serves as an advisory body on early learning to the state board of education, released its recommendations for creating a fully implemented statewide early learning system by 2015. Some of the recommendations include: creating a sustainable financing model, creating a new governance structure for the early care and education system, reinventing the state's child care licensing system, creating a professional development system for early childhood professionals, mandatory statewide full-day kindergarten, and promoting parent and family involvement.[55] Several of these public proposals and programs involve diversity training for early educators. Additionally, though there is a significant gap between children who need programs like Head Start and those who actually qualify for this federally-funded early education for low-income families, it is a commendable program (though in many places, Head Start teachers have insufficient training in the area of linguistic diversity.)[56]

I would like draw particular attention to the New Jersey public school system. On May 21, 1998, New Jersey's Supreme Court mandated that three- and four-year-old children in New Jersey's Abbott districts – the 30 highest poverty districts in the state – receive a high-quality preschool education. The Abbott preschool program is distinguished by several unique characteristics: Abbott districts provide full-day, full-year preschool programs to all eligible three- and four-year-olds. In conjunction with the Department of Human Services, these classrooms now comprise a Department of Education (DOE)-funded six-hour, 180-day component, combined with a Department of Health Services (DHS)-funded wrap-around program that provides daily before- and after-care and summer programs. In total, the full-day, full-year program is available ten hours per day, 245 days a year. Abbott preschool programs are also staffed with one teacher and one aide and may not exceed 15 children. In June of 2004, the New Jersey Supreme Court granted an extension for all teachers that work in an Abbott contracted child care center that have 30 or less credits to obtain towards their bachelor's degree and a teacher of Preschool through 3rd grade (P-3) certificate. The extension allows for Head Start teachers to obtain the required credentials within four years from the date of the first Abbott contract for their classrooms. Districts provide one Master Teacher who is a curriculum specialist for every 10 – 20 classrooms, depending on classroom teacher experience. Health and social services are an integral part of the preschool program, and in addition to district social workers, child-care centers provide one family worker for every 45 children to ensure parents and children obtain referral to necessary services. Though this program is clearly very beneficial to low-income families (to reiterate, these

[52] A professional development system which offers funding to low-income teachers-in-training
[53] National Association for the Education of Young Children, (2006).
[54] See Appendix B for a brief explanation of the Quality Rating System or proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) as has been currently proposed in Washington.
[55] National Association for the Education of Young Children, (2006).
[56] Appendix B.

are disproportionately minority families), it took several years of preparation before it was implemented.

The DOE – Early Childhood Education has initiated several activities aimed at continued quality in the Abbott Preschool Program. During the summer of 2002, a task force, consisting of representatives from community organizations throughout New Jersey that support the interests of young children, met to revise and update the *Preschool Teaching Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*. The revisions were based on the latest research involving practices for developmentally appropriate education for three- and four-year-olds. Revised expectations consist of examples of high-quality teaching practices (which include cultural sensitivity in the classroom) along with learner outcomes. The revisions offer significant assistance to the classroom teacher for planning instruction. In addition, a three-year operational plan began in the 2003-2004 school year, which cemented in the Abbott Preschool Program several new additions: an Early Childhood Advisory Council, a Parent and Community Involvement Specialist, a Fiscal Specialist, a Summer Enrichment Program, a Child Study Team, a Social Worker, and Bilingual and Inclusion Master Teachers. The latter is particularly important with respect to this report. The Bilingual and Inclusion Master Teachers, who have dual- or multi-language teaching abilities, are generously provided in Abbott districts where they are needed.[57] Bilingual education is clearly a priority in the Abbott Preschool Program, as can be seen upon examining the "Abbott Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines," which were established in 2003 and revised in July of 2005. There is a detailed section entitled "Supporting English Language Learners," in which culturally sensitive approaches to teaching in diverse classrooms are laid out.[58]

These guidelines specifically instruct early childhood educators to "encourage, rather than discourage children's use of their home language" as well as "be aware of and sensitive to the languages and cultures of their students."[59] In addition, these guidelines instruct the preschool teachers to sing songs and read books in all languages represented in the classroom. They also instruct teachers to give children numerous opportunities to create and share their own pictures, books, and stories from their home culture. Parent-teacher meetings are other communications with children's families should always be conducted in the parents' primary language, according to these guidelines. Bilingual staff is available for written, phone, and face-to-face interactions with parents whose native language is not English, as well as for instructing the preschoolers. Clearly, the Abbott Preschool Program takes into account the reality of the diverse communities in which it exists and can be looked at as a model.

Now I want to shift to examples of programs in the private sector which promote cultural sensitivity by way of innovative and improved teacher training programs. These

---

[57] New Jersey Department of Education, "New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Early Childhood Education: Office Activities, End of Year Report: 2002-2003." <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/eoy.htm>. (29 October 2006).

[58] Appendix A – this is the portion of the "Abbott Preschool Program Guidelines" which details the culturally sensitive approach to early learning that teachers are expected to exhibit in the classroom.

[59] Appendix A.

models, which offer quality diversity training to teachers, are being tested and developed across the country. For example, Wheelock College in Boston requires teachers-in-training to partake in internships in diverse settings before they can earn their credentials. (Diverse settings in this case include inner-city or rural schools in which multiple socioeconomic and racial groups are represented.) These student teachers participate simultaneously in Reflective Seminars in which they explore the issues that arise during their internship time through discussion and readings.[60] In North Carolina, the Crosswalks Project (which receives public and private funding) is developing and testing a framework to support early childhood faculty in preparing students to work effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. This program is designed to integrate diversity-related strategies into course work, field experiences, and program practices through collaboration between faculty on the campuses of about 20 public and private colleges and universities across the state. Crosswalks is also building a database framed by various national standards in early childhood education that will enable faculty to search for high-quality, low-cost resources that address diversity. Among this project's goals are the following: to increase faculty knowledge related to integrating diversity into course work, field experience, and programs; increase the capacity of graduates (at their respective college and institutions) to work effectively with diverse children, families, and colleagues; disseminate a model (measures, framework, toolbox) that can be used by any faculty member or pre-service program to prepare teachers-in-training to be "comfortable, confident, and capable" resources for diverse children and families.[61]

The next example I'm going to present is another public program that was, in fact, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and serves as a successful example of a program that could be replicated and proliferated in the future. Given the fact that early childhood educators who speak a home language other than English must often meet an English-language requirement in order to begin early childhood course work, it becomes difficult for them when trying to get the education or degrees to satisfy the formal school requirements to become an early childhood educator. The Oregon Child Development Coalition in Portland, in collaboration with Pacific Oaks College Northwest, designed an innovative way to address this challenge. Through a three-year Bilingual Preschool-3rd grade Teacher Education Program funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, the coalition provided early childhood education courses in both English and Spanish, with translation offered during the first year. Translation services were gradually decreased over time, and by the third year of teacher training, translation services were not included. Half of the students enrolled in the program were Spanish-dominant and half were English-dominant. The program required that participants become fluent and literate in Spanish, Academic Spanish, English, and Academic English. By the end of the three-year period, the 40 graduates of this program were bilingual early childhood teachers (and thus could communicate with children in

[60] Wheelock College, <http://www.wheelock.edu/fld/fldhome.asp>. (2 November 2006).
[61] FPG Child Development Institute, "FPG Project Summary: Crosswalks: Outreach to Infuse Diversity in Preservice Education." <http://www.fpg.unc.edu//projects/project_detail.cfm?projectID=371>. (4 November 2006).

classrooms of mixed native languages). This model is currently being replicated and implemented at the Praxis Institute for Early Childhood Education in Seattle.

Clearly, there is a plethora of quality early education models that have been implemented across the country, as well as teacher training programs which make them possible. I would now like to take a close look at early childhood education in Washington State.

Evidence that Washington State Both Needs and Invites Early Childhood Education Reform

Washington State lacks affordable, culturally responsive early learning, and this disproportionately affects low-income, minority children. Without the behavioral experience of being in formal school and without a chance to develop the skills for success in later school, Latino children are unprepared for kindergarten and thus faltering.[62] Though it is agreed that the foremost important aspect of quality learning is highly trained, competent teachers, Washington State requires very little of child care providers.

Currently, a lead teacher (who is in charge of a group of children, planning and implementing activities for them) in a child care center in Washington State need only satisfy the following requirements: 1) Be at least 18 years of age; 2) Have completed a high school education or the equivalent; 3) Have documented child development education or work experience, *or* 4) complete STARS training within six months of becoming a teacher. To clarify these requirements: "Child development education" is constituted by a 20-hour basic STARS training course.[63] STARS (State Training and Registry System) is a career development system designed to improve child care through basic and on-going training for child care providers. However, if an individual lacks STARS training or a higher formal education, s/he may still be a lead teacher so long as they have provided direct care and supervision to children in the past.[64] State attempts to mandate any form of diversity training for preschool teachers are irrelevant based on the fact that an individual may start providing childcare with only prior work experience. Though childcare providers are required to take 10 hours of STARS training per year to maintain his/her certifications, many states have upped these requirements.

Recently, there have been several newspaper articles in the State drawing attention to the lack of Washington State regulations for running a preschool. For example, an article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* publicized the fact that "preschools that operate for four hours or less daily don't require a child care license and are not subject to any training requirements." It also found that the average preschool teacher in King County earned, on average, only $23,000.[65] Though this is only about half of what

---

[62] Roderick

[63] STARS (State Training and Registry System) is a career development system designed to improve child care through basic and on-going training for child care providers

[64] Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, "Requirements for child care: DCCEL Methods and Practice." <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/wccc/>. (1 November 2006).

[65] Bach, Deborah. "State has few regulations on starting up a preschool." Seattle Post-Intelligencer 22 April, 2006. <http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/267703_prekside22.html>. (29 October 2006).

an elementary school teacher makes in a year, it is significantly higher than the average annual salary of a childcare provider in Washington State, which was $18, 340 in 2005.[66]

To add to the vague requirements and underpaid status of preschool teachers in Washington, recent research indicates that early childhood educators across the board feel that they have not been adequately prepared to teach children from cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own; teachers are requesting that they be taught more specific skills to do so.[67] Examples of the specific training teachers could use include appropriate practices for teaching children whose home or native language is not English (in Washington, as well as nationally, the second most frequently spoken language in homes is Spanish[68]) or approaches for providing meaningful curriculum for both native English speakers and English-language learners who are in the same classroom. Strategies like these could be learned through course requirements such as internship placements.[69]

Now is clearly the time for improvement in the field of early childhood education, and because this issue is already in the limelight, it is crucial that issues of diversity – particularly with respect to Latinos – be accommodated as reform occurs. Governor Christine Gregoire is highly aware of the need for reform in this area. In the past year, several steps have been taken indicating upcoming change in early education. In June 2005, Gov. Gregoire launched Washington Learns, an 18-month comprehensive study to examine Washington's education system. She appointed the Early Learning Advisory Committee of Washington Learns, which is composed of experts and community leaders from across the State. The committee provides recommendations for improving the state's early learning opportunities. After much research, it was decided that: "As a society, we have a new understanding of how profoundly every child's capacity to learn throughout life is established in these earliest years. This new understanding challenges us to find new ways to satisfy this early hunger for learning, and to craft public policy that supports parents, child care providers and preschool programs in developing ways to do this."[70] In response, the State legislature and the Governor called for the creation of a new Department of Early Learning to better align the State's existing resources with improvements to early childhood education. The new department was approved with broad bipartisan support and took effect on July 1, 2006.[71]

The Washington Learns agenda has continued to progress and gain increasing support. On November 13, 2006, I drove to Seattle to attend the Washington Learns Education Summit. Hundreds of teachers, school officials, policy-makers, parents, donors, and others composed the crowd of participants. At this event, the *Washington*

---

[66] NACCRRA and Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network, (2005).
[67] Daniel, J. and Friedman, S. *Taking the Next Step: Preparing Teachers to Work with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children*. Beyond the Journal online, November 2005. <http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200511/DanielFriedmanBTJ1105.pdf>. (27 October 2006).
[68] U.S. Census Bureau, (2003).
[69] Daniel and Friedman
[70] Washington State Department of Education, "Washington Learns: Draft Report for Public Comment," 2005. <http://www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov/report/DraftReport.pdf>. (2 November 2006).
[71] Washington State Department of Education, (2005).

Learns Final Report was distributed and Governor Chris Gregoire spoke about the initiative. During her speech regarding Washington State's need for a "world-class, learner-focused, seamless education," Governor Gregoire clearly outlined the government's current vision for changes in the education system – early education, K-12 education, and higher education. She believes that the "rigor, relationships, and relevance" must be guiding aspects of an improved and innovative system. Rigor in that the material and learning environment is stimulating and challenging; relationships in that children must have strong and valuable relationships with the adults in their lives; relevance in that education must be pertinent to the student, regardless of his/her background. She also stated the following as goals for the near future (these are just a few which pertain directly to improved, culturally sensitive early childhood education): 1) to provide more parent information, 2) to ensure quality early childcare, 3) to promote kindergarten classes in which children are prepared to be there; 4) to ensure children's exposure to music, art, science, and a foreign language by age 8.[72] These goals are testament to the fact that Washington State is hungry for an improved education system which takes into account the diversity of our state's children.

The governor also made clear that she understands the importance of improved teacher training. She said: "great teaching is what hugely sets the difference."[73] She explicitly expressed interest in establishing a new and innovative program for effectively training teachers (this would include early childhood educators).

In addition to the very passionate and determined speeches from Governor Gregoire, Bill Gates, and members of the Washington Learns Advisory Committee, the *Washington Learns Final Report* contains a number of promising goals and strategies with respect early learning improvements:

[72] Governor Chris Gregoire. Speech. Washington Learns Summit, 14 November 2006.
[73] Gregoire's speech, (2006).

Table 1: Washington Learns: Relevant Strategies

Strategy	Entails	Assignments	Expected Results
Strategy 2	Support public-private partnerships focused on engaging the public and improving the quality of early learning	Thrive-by-Five, a program that joins the State and more than a dozen organizations in creating a statewide public-private partnership, which have together pledged up to $100 million for early learning over the next decade	Parents and teachers will have better knowledge about strategies that can improve the quality of early learning, communities will be more aware of the importance of early learning, and best statewide practices in early learning will be available statewide
Strategy 5	Phase in a five-star voluntary rating system that gives parents better information about the quality of childcare and early education programs, and expands the availability of high-quality early learning opportunities	The Dept. of Early Learning will phase in the five-star rating system in collaboration with the Thrive-by-Five partnership. Thrive-by-Five demonstration sites will phase in the rating system by July 2007.	Parents will have more information to choose among better childcare programs, and children will be better prepared to succeed in kindergarten and in life.
Strategy 6	Expand early learning teacher training to produce more well-trained, culturally competent, diverse and imaginative child care providers and early education teachers	The Dept. of Early Learning and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction will work to develop strategies for substantially increasing the availability of early learning teacher training.	The quality of early learning programs will improve; better early learning teachers will be attracted and retained; children and families will have a more stable early learning environment.

Washington Learns Final Report: 2006

The above chart outlines three of Washington Learns' strategies that directly pertain to my research. My work regarding improved early childhood education for

Latinos by way of improved teacher training programs appears to align itself with the Washington Learns vision – particularly with Strategy 6.

In addition to the Department of Education's moves toward improving the State's early education system, the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs recently released its detailed Strategic Plan for 2007-2012 which touched on related issues. The "education" section of the Strategic Plan confirms that Latinos have the highest drop out rate from high school. The Plan proposes that the Legislature provide "educational incentives for more bilingual and bicultural students to enter the education field." It also advises the Governor to provide the Latino community with early learning.[74] In conjoining the desire of Washington Learns to establish a "more responsive, more seamless [education] system" and "elevate the enterprise of learning to a new level," with the goals of the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs – to encourage more bilingual and bicultural teachers and help provide preschool opportunities for Latino children – it appears that culturally responsive early education and teacher training which helps to achieve this end would serve to achieve several important State goals.

Research Methods

Due to the newness of Building Bridges and the Abbott Preschool Program, virtually no significant data exists which could be used to quantitatively measure the programs' effectiveness. However, in the case of Building Bridges, I instead used student (teachers in training) evaluations and personal interviews to determine, as best I could, the quality of the teacher training program as assessed by the students, teachers, and community administrators. (The student evaluations were gathered by Walla Walla Community College in order to send them to DSHS in hopes of renewing the Building Bridges grant.)

I chose to look at the Building Bridges teacher training program for my primary case study, as it is an innovative and exemplary model for teacher training. It includes all of the components of a quality training program. Taught in both Spanish and English, Building Bridges will, in practice, help to supply the early education working force with more teachers who are able to foster culturally appropriate early learning environments and, in many cases, communicate with Latino children in their native language. Additionally, the curriculum stresses the importance of parental involvement by requiring homework assignments such as interviews with parents and adults of different cultural backgrounds than the student. In order to gain an accurate and rich understanding of the Building Bridges program, I spoke with Melinda Brennan, who aided in writing the grant proposal for DSHS – she informed me of the motivations behind creating the curriculum. I also spoke with Andrea Valencia, who teaches both the Spanish and English sections of the course. I interviewed one student in the class, as well as spoke in front of the class one day to solicit any anecdotes from the students – which they graciously provided me. I attended the class in order to get the feel of what attending the course was like. By attending the teacher training course, I also came to understand why it was offered in the

[74] Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Strategic Plan: 2007-2012," 2006. <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/budget/manage/strategic/118strategicplan.pdf>. (30 October 2006).

Green Park Elementary School library, as opposed to at the Walla Walla Community College. The atmosphere at the school was much warmer and comfortable, thereby compensating for the fact that many Latinos feel intimidated by formal college atmospheres.[75]

The personal interviews in this report offered me the most original and valuable information, in my opinion. Together the interviews offered me one key link in my argument: that early education must support and encourage the child's use of the native language and stress cultural understanding as much as possible. Each of my interviews shed light on the issue of bilingual education and revealed the effort and compassion that is necessary in order to run/participate in a culturally sensitive, quality early learning environment. My interviews also made very clear the importance of parental and family involvement in the early learning process.

For my first interview, I drove out to the Farm Labor Camp in College Place, Washington to interview Carla, a woman who had grown up at the Farm Labor Camp and now teaches at the Migrant Head Start Preschool. Yolanda Esquivel, an administrator at the Washington Migrant Council, suggested that I interview Carla. I arrived at the Farm Labor Camp at approximately 2:45 on Thursday, October 5, 2006. Yolanda invited Carla and me to talk in her office. I used a tape recorder to record my conversation with Carla. Though my intent was to interview Carla primarily about her experience in the Building Bridges class and what she believes to be the best method for educating a minority student in preschool, our conversation tended to deviate from my initial plan. However, she gave me several wonderful anecdotes which solidified my conclusions regarding the importance of native-language-based early education. Additionally, Carla's own story about losing her Spanish language skills in the U.S. and how she communicates with her sister and brother more naturally in English, gave me a solid understanding of why the issue I am addressing is so controversial and heated for many people.

My second "interviews" were significantly more informal, as they began with a casual conversation at my work, Merchant's Delicatessen in downtown Walla Walla. Two of my co-workers, Jillian (whose last name she didn't want me to use) and Veronica Beliz-Avila, had both had interesting experiences with bilingual early education. Veronica was raised in a bilingual household and Jillian mentored in a bilingual first-grade classroom. While we were talking, two other women from the community chimed in. One, a local bilingual 3rd grade teacher at Sharpstein Elementary School detailed her belief as to the best form of preschool education in a diverse community, and the other, Andrea Unck, whose informal preschool class I later attended, held similar beliefs. Due to the fact that I had no recording device for such an impromptu conversation, no notes were taken on this interview.

My third interview occurred on Saturday, November 4, 2006 from approximately 11:00am – 12:00pm. I used a recording device to record a conversation between Melinda Brennan, Andrea Valencia, and myself. We were sitting in the library at Green Park Elementary School after the Spanish section of Building Bridges was over. The goal of

[75] Appendix B.

my interview with them was to run my final ideas by them and get their feedback. The interview/conversation was very casual and informative. I learned significantly more information about the Building Bridges program and gathered some good leads as to more articles in support of bilingual education and the role of early childhood education in this process.

In order to provide suggestions as to what could be offered to early educators in training as means of achieving quality early learning environments, I also attended Andrea Unck's preschool class at the Parent-Child Center at Walla Walla Community College. I spent about an hour in Andrea Unck's class on November 9, 2006. There, I discovered two wonderful components of quality early education that could be added to teacher training programs.

The Building Bridges Teacher Training Program: A Case Study

Beatrice[76] immigrated to the United States from Mexico with her 5-year-old son in 1999. As a single mother, she needed to work full-time and therefore had to enroll her son in a childcare program. She found an affordable program, one that seemed safe and nurturing, however no one in the center was able to speak Spanish and none of the teachers had the skills necessary to support a child's native language when it was other than English. For these reasons, Beatrice (who spoke very limited English at the time) could not communicate with the childcare providers who were playing a large role in raising her only son. Beatrice's son quickly began speaking English both at the childcare center and at home with his mother. Though Beatrice tried to maintain her son's Spanish in the evenings when he was home with her, it proved more and more difficult as his dominant language shifted from Spanish to English. Today, Beatrice's son is in 7th grade at a Walla Walla public school and he speaks very broken, elementary Spanish. He speaks fluent English. Beatrice has been learning English, but still speaks more proficient Spanish. Thus, there is a language barrier between mother and son, which makes it difficult, even impossible at times, for Beatrice to be deeply involved in her son's academic and social life. Beatrice is now a childcare provider herself. She is enrolled in the Spanish-taught section of the Building Bridges teacher training program.

Beatrice approached me after one of the teacher training courses, which was held in the Green Park Elementary School library. I had attended the section that was instructed in Spanish and afterwards asked if anyone in the class had a specific story or reason as to why he/she was invested in culturally sensitive early childhood education, the likes of which would allow for bilingual education once the children entered elementary school and continued dual language abilities later in life. Beatrice very graciously recounted her story. Imbedded in her experience are the consequences of failing to tailor early childhood care and education programs to the State's diverse population. Building Bridges provides a model by which childcare givers can be trained to provide culturally sensitive early care environments.

[76] She did not want her last name included in this report.

Formally titled "Building Bridges with Higher Education: Infant-Toddler Caregiving," this is a three-part early childhood education course that is offered in English and in Spanish in 28 communities throughout the State. Walla Walla is one of these communities and will be the site of my case study. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Department of Early Learning (DEL) agreed to grant the money for this training program about six months ago. DSHS requires that each of the 28 sites apply for grant renewal every quarter in order to maintain their funding. The Walla Walla Building Bridges classes are facilitated through the Walla Walla Community College, but the classes are held in the Green Park Elementary School library. Andrea Valencia, whose primary job is teaching bilingual kindergarten at Green Park Elementary School, is the instructor of both the English and Spanish sections of Building Bridges. Each of the three modules of this course involves ten hours of instruction, which is offered over the course of four days. The days of instruction are spread out so that 2.5 hours of instruction occurs about once every two weeks. By participating in one module of Building Bridges, teachers earn the 10 STARS hours which are required annually to maintain a "licensed childcare giver" status in Washington State. Additionally, students earn 1 college credit.[77]

For the first module of the course, the DEL grant provided funding for 20 English-speaking students and 20 Spanish-speaking students to have full tuition and fees paid (an $84.30 value) and text books provided ($60.00 value). Though both the English and Spanish sections filled up, there was significantly more interest from Spanish speakers. (This makes sense given the high poverty levels of Latinos in Washington. It also shows that the adult Latino population in Washington is interested in education, and that when financial barriers are removed, commitment to education on behalf of Latinos is clear.[78]) When the grant renewal request was written for the second module of Building Bridges, Melinda Brennan (who is the Walla Walla Community College's Early Childhood and Educational Support Program Coordinator) requested funding for 20 English speakers and 30 Spanish speakers. The DEL agreed. The grant renewal for the upcoming third module requests funding for 20 English speakers and 40 Spanish speakers due to the fact that 43 Spanish speakers signed up for the second module class even though there was only funding for 30. Thanks to private donations and students paying their own way, all 43 Spanish-speaking students were able to take the course.[79] Clearly, there is significant interest and commitment on behalf of Latinos for this kind of teacher training.

Together, the three modules of the course have several goals which are closely aligned with the goals set forth in the Washington Learns initiative, as well as components of quality early learning that have been established through research discussed earlier – primarily the importance of family outreach efforts and cultural sensitivity on behalf of the educator/caregiver. I will first provide an overview of the

[77] Appendix B.
[78] For further information on this topic, refer to the 2006 Whitman College reports on higher education for Latinos.
[79] Appendix B.

three modules combined. Next, I will address the specific goals, strategies, and concepts introduced in the first module curriculum.

The Building Bridges: Infant-Toddler Caregiving course description reads: "The one credit modules are designed for caregivers working with children in the first three years of life. Early care and education professionals will learn about the emerging language of the young child, fostering secure caregiver-child relationships and the importance of culturally responsive partnerships with families. Caregivers will explore how to create safe, nurturing, predictable, and culturally responsive environments to support social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development in the earliest years."[80] It is apparent that Building Bridges has set appropriate priorities in the training which include fostering relationships with the children's families and ensuring culturally sensitive environments. The curriculum also states that each module will support essential learning in the following broad content areas: caregiver practices to support healthy development, milestones of development, developmental activities, responsive environment considerations, developmental red flags, culturally aware, responsive, and nurturing care practices, and partnerships with families. When the participants complete the Infant-Toddler Care Giving Building Bridges training (which includes all three modules), the curriculum states that they will be able to do the following: understand characteristics of quality care and care giving for infants and toddlers, identify infant/toddler cues and appropriate caregiver responses, describe stages of infant/toddler development and the caregiver's role in supporting secure attachment in early care settings, discuss and plan responsive, relationship-based infant/toddler learning environments that foster optimum social/emotional, physical, and cognitive development, and articulate strategies for culturally competent care giving and honoring family diversity.[81] Building Bridges clearly offers a broad quality childcare giving training and incorporates the components needed to provide childcare tailored to diverse communities.

The first module of the course, which was offered in Walla Walla in Summer 2006, focused on supporting healthy social and emotional development. Early care and education professionals learned about the emerging language of the young child, fostering secure caregiver-child relationships, and the importance of culturally responsive partnerships with families. The course required several out of class assignments be completed. For example, for the second class students were asked to find some baby music from their culture and record or document several favorite songs. They were then asked to write a page about one song, chant, or melody and how it creates cultural continuity, shows empathy for children's feelings, and supports the social and emotional development of infants and toddlers. This is just one example of the very hands-on, relevant approach that the Building Bridges curriculum employs in the process of training teachers.

Next, I'd like to take a close look at the fourth class of this module, which focused specifically on "cultural sensitivity and cultural reciprocity in building relationships with

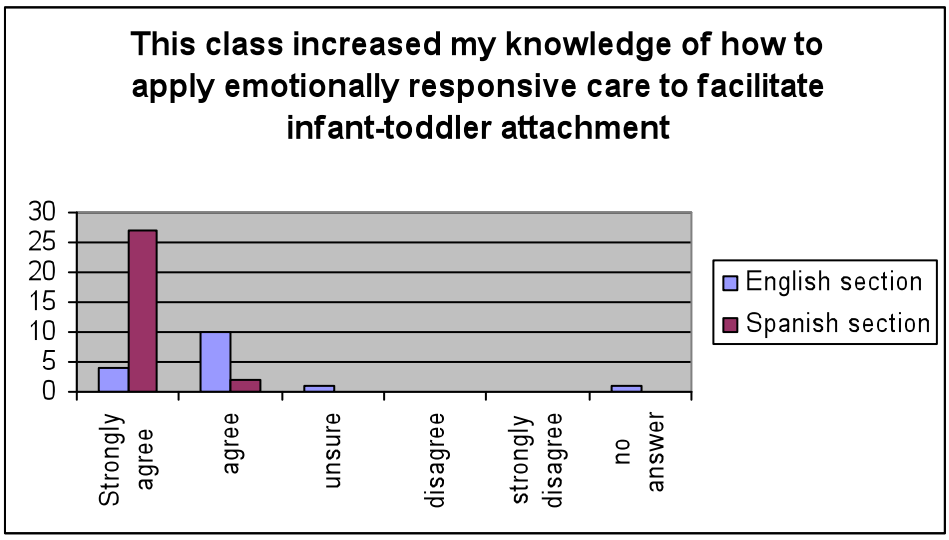
[80] Building Bridges curriculum
[81] Building Bridges curriculum

families and caregivers."[82] There were several key concepts discussed in this class: 1) culturally appropriate care and the earliest years, 2) the process of cultural reciprocity, 3) empathy and understanding, and 4) responsive guidance. The first, culturally appropriate care and the earliest years, consists of necessary knowledge for a teacher operating in a diverse classroom. The curriculum suggests that the teacher relay the following information in lecture to the teachers-in-training: "As professionals we are often mediators between the culture of research and culture of families or child care programs…We need to understand our own culture as if we were outsiders to that culture. We need to know what we bring to the interaction with caregivers. Don't confuse best practice with the dominant culture's practices…We can join with a parent or child care provider to better understand their communication style and cultural values. Use the behavior of the child as your language."[83] Clearly, this curriculum supports childcare environments in which families feel comfortable and connected. It also instructs childcare providers to strive to understand the cultures of the children under their supervision and to support the native language of those who speak in other languages. The second key concept discussed in the fourth class was the process of cultural reciprocity. Students used scenarios to explore the process for understanding families' goals for the child, how their own values are reflected in their words and actions and how the self awareness on behalf of the childcare provider/early educator makes partnering with families more effective and sensitive. Topics discussed were: self awareness, learning about cultures different from their own, telling personal cultural stories, and collaboration with people different from themselves. The third key concept discussed was empathy and understand. In order to learn about these topics, the Building Bridges instructor talked to students about reflecting feelings, toddler feelings, and caregiver feelings. The curriculum focuses on positive feedback and encouragement on behalf of the caregiver. The fourth key concept discussed was responsive guidance. Students were given scenarios and broken into small groups in order to discuss and reflect upon questions pertaining to the scenarios. These are some of the questions that were addressed in small groups: What are some positive behaviors you see in children, and how can they be encouraged? What in your care giving environment makes it easy or hard to use responsive child guidance? How can we help children in our care be more successful exploring their environment?[84] Being a responsive care giver entails compassion and understanding of the child's behavior. It requires gentle instruction and encouragement in *response* to a child's behavior. Together, these four concepts, when put into practice in a diverse classroom, would provide for children and families a quality early education environment. However, the teacher's presentation and instruction is crucial to the transmission of these valuable concepts to the students. Overall, students found Andrea to be very knowledgeable and effective teacher. Most of them said that they would recommend her to others.[85]

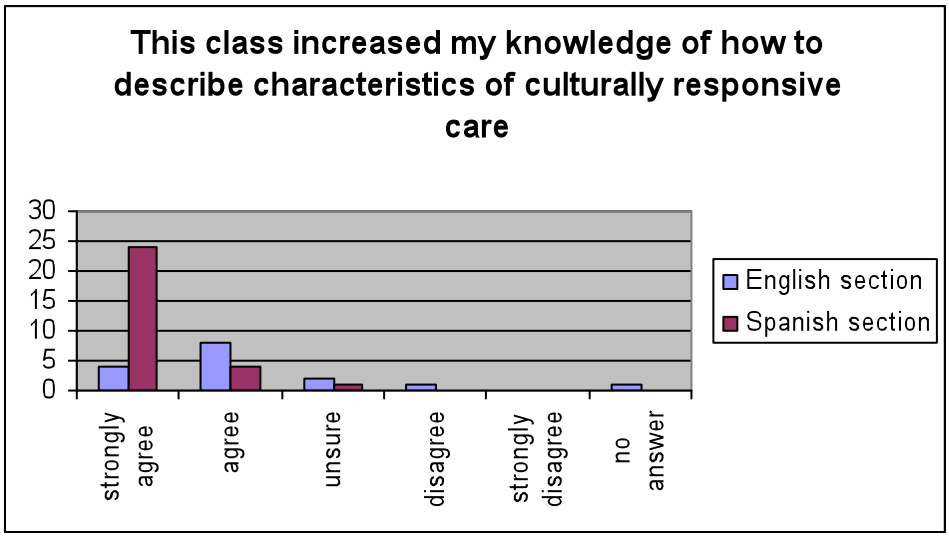
Melinda Brennan gave me copies of the students' evaluation from the first module of this class. The results provide a good estimation of how beneficial the students found

[82] Building Bridges curriculum, 37
[83] Building Bridges curriculum, 39
[84] Building Bridges curriculum, 42
[85] Appendix D.

this class to be and how well they feel as though they learned the above concepts (and others). The evaluation forms were offered in English and in Spanish, and the questions posed in each language were the same. There were 29 evaluations completed by Spanish speakers and 16 evaluations completed by English speakers. It is interesting to note that the Spanish-speaking section of the class ranked the class higher overall than the English-speaking section. For example, when asked the following questions, the results were as follows:

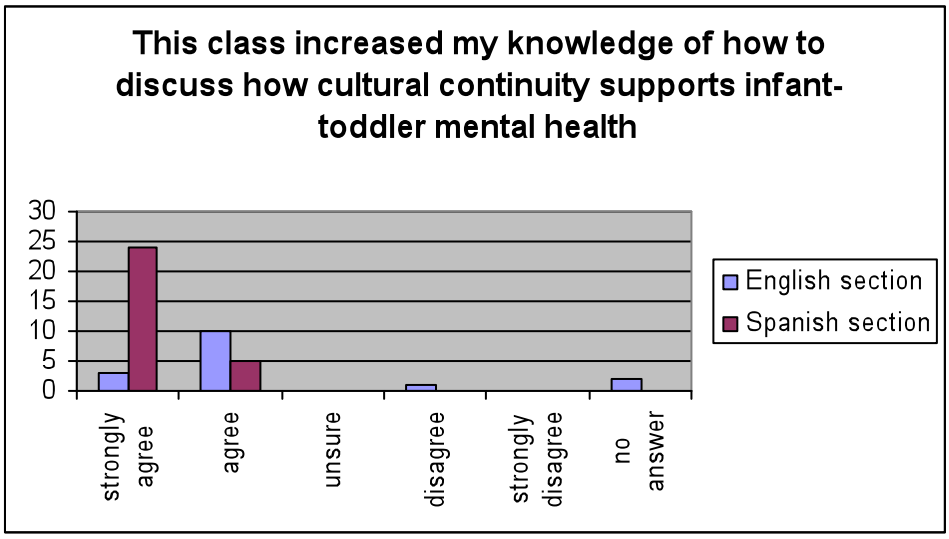


Building Bridges Module 1 student evaluations: 2006[86]

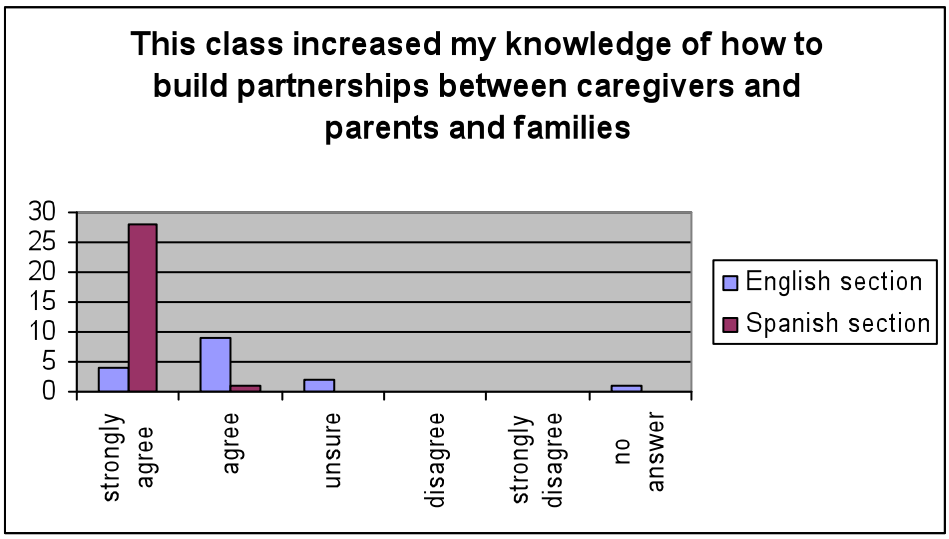


Building Bridges Module 1 student evaluations: 2006[87]

[86] Appendix D.
[87] Appendix D.



Building Bridges Module 1 student evaluations: 2006[88]



Building Bridges Module 1 student evaluations: 2006[89]

Upon examining the results of the student evaluations, I found that all students involved gained valuable training and information from the Building Bridges course. However, why is it that the Spanish section consistently rated the class higher? One possibility is that these students rarely have opportunities to receive instruction in their native language. Thus, the Building Bridges class was comparably more valuable to them. It is extremely important that Spanish childcare givers are provided with quality training, as these are the teachers who are able to communicate more proficiently with

[88] Appendix D.
[89] Appendix D.

Latino children in the native language and can easily connect with the children and their families on a cultural level.

However, if English-speaking students supplement the teacher training with even a few outside Spanish classes, they will have a significantly easier time interacting in the native language of Latino children as well as gain a broader understanding of Latino culture. For example, in Walla Walla, adult Spanish classes are offered at Garrison Night School for two hours, two nights a week for about three months. The classes are taught by Jackie Martinez and cost $150.[90] There are opportunities like this in many communities across the state.

I will now discuss the interviews I held with Andrea Valencia, Melinda Brennan, and Carla in order to complete an overview of the Building Bridges program.

Interviews

Though my interviews contained an immense amount of valuable information, I will focus on the issues specific to this research: the Building Bridges training program, the importance of Latino children maintaining their Spanish and the ways in which this is achieved, the importance of parental involvement in early childhood education, and the necessity for culturally appropriate early learning environments which foster respect and sensitivity amongst childcare providers, children, and families.

My interview with Carla (a bilingual preschool teacher at the Migrant Head Start School at the Farm Labor Camp in College Place, Washington) contained valuable anecdotes, personal experiences, and opinions that represent the Mexican-American experience. This is representative of a socially marginalized group whose voice should be more often listened to.

Carla was born in Mexico and moved to Washington State with her parents and siblings when she was a baby. She was raised at the Farm Labor Camp in College Place (where she now works and is raising her own family). When she was in seventh grade, her parents realized that she was losing her Spanish skills and becoming estranged from the Mexican culture. They decided to move the family back to Mexico for a year so that the children could regain their Spanish language and Mexican culture. Carla is entirely bilingual and works hard to ensure that the preschoolers under her supervision do not lose their Spanish language or native culture so that they too can be bilingual later in life. Carla firmly believes that, ideally, Latino children should speak primarily Spanish until they are at least seven-years-old. The reason for this, according to Carla, is that children get confused otherwise. They must learn one language very well before attempting to master another. However, according to Carla, preschool instruction in Spanish is a controversial issue here in the United States: "'Cause what we were told – teach English. We were told to teach English first and then Spanish. So we were doing that with the kids and the kids were getting confused, so when we told that to our Head Teacher, we think this is our point of view, we think it's right, can you do something about it? But

[90] This information was from an advertisement poster I saw at Walla Walla Community College.

she took that, 'cause that was a pretty big issue, she took that to the next level, the person in charge, and he came down here and told us the reason why we were teaching the children English first."[91] It seems, then, that culturally appropriate early childhood education is difficult to achieve, particularly when "appropriate" education in a community of children entails primary instruction in a language other than English. (The community at the Farm Labor Camp is almost entirely Latino and thus appropriate instruction would be in Spanish.)

Following Carla's discussion of the importance of native language use in early childhood, she provided me with an interesting anecdote which reveals an instance when a bilingual child's language skills enabled him to connect his parents to the community. "We had one incident here: The five-year-old was learning English. He bought a bike over at the store, and it was a bike he didn't like or something was wrong. And the parents took it back. And the five-year-old, in his own little way, talked to the person [at the store] and did the translation however he could. The parents didn't understand no English, no nothing. They were talking like, um, some other dialect, so they were talking to the child and the child was translating to the [employee]. I don't know how he did it, but they returned the bike, and the parents came and were like, oh, you know… My child did this."[92] After telling me this story, Carla told me that though this little boy was able to translate for his parents due to his dual language abilities, he was quickly losing his Spanish. If he loses his ability to speak Spanish, he will not only have communication barriers with his own parents, but will no longer be proficient in two languages. According to research discussed earlier, dual language abilities are extremely beneficial. Thus, if this little boy loses his Spanish due to low quality, unresponsive early education, he will suffer in several respects.

Carla continued on to stress the importance of cultural sensitivity in children and in the environment in which they learn. She believes that one of the most important lessons that a young child can be taught is that of respect for the differences of others: "I think that's the most important thing we should teach children – that there's other, diverse cultures – have respect for others. I think we are losing that. And then, all these things come in the world, changing everything, and it causes conflict, and people feel bad about what other people are saying, and you got all these different things… And even the kids, you know, the little kids I'm working with, say things like "si, se puede" – yes we can! – or whatever. Why? 'Cause they learn that at home. They are soaking up everything they see."[93] Carla remembered hearing a couple of her 3-year-old students saying "si se puede," which is the political action statement that Mexicans who disagree with the anti-immigration movement use. She was shocked at the fact that these young children were already picking up on the cultural rifts that exist in society. This story goes to show how important culturally sensitive and appropriate early childhood education is. It will shape who a person becomes and how they regard cultural, linguistic, and other differences between groups and individuals later in life.

---

[91] Appendix C.
[92] Appendix C.
[93] Appendix C.

Carla is also a student in the Building Bridges class in Walla Walla. She attends the Spanish section, although she has attended the English section in the past. She thinks that Andrea is a wonderful teacher and appreciates that the class is taught in someplace other than the Community College campus: "I think it's much easier for [the Spanish speakers students – her peers]. Like for us, people feel insecure at the Community College. So, I think, having it [at Green Park], they are with people of the same, you know, background. They can express whatever they want to."[94]

Carla's beliefs align themselves with those established through research presented earlier. She strongly supports culturally appropriate early childhood education and native language use in the early years. Due to the fact that Carla supports the Building Bridges class and greatly respects the instructor, one can conclude that the Building Bridges class supports a Latino woman's idea of quality early childhood education.

In my interview with Melinda Brennan (the Coordinator of the Early Childhood and Educational Support Program at Walla Walla Community College and one of the people who helped write the grant proposal to receive funding for the Building Bridges training program in Walla Walla) and Andrea Valencia (who teaches the Building Bridges classes), I gained additional valuable perspectives on my research issues.

I discussed bilingual education with these women. As has been established earlier, culturally appropriate early childhood education will ideally prepare and enable a Latino child to maintain his/her dual language skills and receive bilingual education once they reach kindergarten. Andrea Valencia is a bilingual kindergarten teacher and thus has a significant amount of insight into this issue. She explained to me that there are four elementary schools in Walla Walla that offer bilingual education. Three of these schools – Prospect Point, Blue Ridge, and Green Park – use transitional models. Sharpstein School is the only one that uses the official dual-language model, which she believes to be ideal. "[The transitional models] are not maintenance models (where the goal is to maintain the child's native language, usually Spanish), meaning they are set up to transition the kids into English as quickly as possible. In reality, they are subtractive models, which means that we are subtracting the native language in order to add the second language. It's supposed to focus on assimilation versus acculturation, however, I think that the teachers in the program work really, really hard even though its not a maintenance model, we work really hard to encourage the kids to maintain as much of their language as we can."[95] Andrea explained that at Sharpstein, where dual-language education is used, there are an equal number of Spanish-speaking children in the classroom as English-speaking students. The children have a "buddy" who speaks the other language and the two children help one another to understand the teacher. The teacher, then, alternates between speaking in English and Spanish. "I mean, they'll show you that [dual-language] are the types of programs that will help to close that achievement gap," said Andrea.[96]

---

[94] Appendix C.
[95] Appendix B.
[96] Appendix B.

An additional benefit to bilingual education in general is that they help to curb behavioral problems. "A lot of the time we do get kids that, um, as we're transitioning at the end of the school year, where they're coming in, and [adults] are saying, you know, this is a behavior child or, you know, they're been brought forward for oppositional, defiant behavior… Once we get them into our [bilingual] classroom, they're a different kid. But it's that language issue, you know?"[97]

Shifting gears from bilingual education, Andrea, Melinda, and I discussed the Building Bridges curriculum and training. One question that I had been stuck on throughout this research was whether or not (and how) a non-Spanish speaking teacher could support an early childhood learning environment in which Latino children could continue speaking Spanish. Ideally, there would be a bilingual teacher in the center, but is it possible to offer a quality learning experience that incorporates native language use when there is not? Andrea answered this question: "I mean, we've had some real 'ah-ha's!' as far as like, wow, I didn't realize that and the fact that, you know, because, I mean, it'd be really unrealistic for us to expect that everybody is going to learn all the different languages that are represented in the different communities, but if they just have some strategies on how to go about handling, you know – say, if the child starts to speak to them in French or something, instead of saying, 'you know what, I don't speak that language, so, you know, let's do something else,' they can instead say, 'hey! Can you teach me how to say that?' You know, that was one of the big 'ah-ha's!' of one of our caregivers that has a center here. She's English-speaking. She said 'wow, you know I hadn't thought about before.' So, you know, just being aware of your own biases."[98] Thus, learning to operate in diverse environments which support native languages other than English is, indeed, possible even without bilingual or multilingual skills. Good teacher training can prepare teachers to gracefully deal with these barriers.

Melinda agreed with Andrea on the importance of teacher training programs that provide early educators with skills to respond to diverse classrooms: "That takes extra time, that takes extra energy on part of the teacher, but a true professional educator that will embrace those kinds of principles is the one that's going to make the difference in the life of that child and that family. And so, it's knocking not only the barriers for them to take the [culturally sensitive teacher training class] but for the English-speaking, in particular I would say, to introduce those anti-bias, respectful concepts, um, you know, the tolerance, embracing someone that's different than you. That's really important."[99]

Conclusion

Meaningful, relevant, culturally appropriate early childhood education is immensely important in the life of a child, particularly when that child has grown up in a low-income household with parents who have a low level of formal education and the child's sense of belonging in society is compromised due to different cultural experiences. This is the case with many Latino children. A quality early learning

[97] Appendix B.
[98] Appendix B.
[99] Appendix B.

experience will help to remove these educational barriers, leading to increased academic success, improved self-esteem, increased understanding of and sensitivity to peoples' differences, and ultimately success later in life.

As shown throughout my research, bilingual education that supports dual language use is an indispensable component of quality education for minority students. However, in order to ensure the maintenance of dual language abilities, early childhood education environments must foster native language use and the celebration of all native cultures by way of culturally appropriate, sensitive, and responsive approaches. These attitudes and skills can be taught to caregivers and early education teachers by way of high quality, innovative teacher training programs. There are several models being used across the nation that serve to prepare early childhood educators to operate successfully in diverse classrooms. Teacher training programs like Building Bridges and others should be proliferated in Washington State order to ensure the success of Latinos. Programs like Building Bridges have the potential to spark changes in society, which will allow for minority groups to speak and act in culture-affirming ways so that their voices can be heard in a society that they have helped to build.

Recommendations

1) Bilingual models that support the maintenance of dual language skills should be proliferated in communities, such as Walla Walla, where more than one language is significantly represented. Rather than following English-only assimilation practices, which are being used in several states across the nation and serve to homogenize diverse populations, Washington State Department of Education should support improved bilingual programs. These programs will provide minority students with cognitive and emotional tools so that they can succeed in life. This will have a significant and positive impact on Latinos, as well as the general population in Washington. It will also promote cultural understanding and continuity in the education system and in society as a whole.

2) A greater number of well-trained bilingual early childhood education teachers should be sought. Incentives for these teachers should be provided so that culturally appropriate early learning environments can exist. These early educators with bilingual abilities (in Spanish and English) are particularly important in communities like Walla Walla, which have significant Latino populations.

3) Ensuring the existence of high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education programs should be a top priority for the Washington State Department of Education. Learning environments where young children are adequately prepared for kindergarten and for life by way of sensitive and responsive teaching approaches which foster a child's native language use and native culture identification are immensely important. These can be achieved in several ways:

a) By increasing the requirements for becoming a childcare provider/preschool teacher in Washington State. Currently, these requirements are minimal and teachers report feeling unprepared to operate successfully and comfortably in diverse classrooms. One option would be to eliminate the possibility for a childcare provider to be certified with only "prior childcare experience" in their background. Making STARS hours a requirement with no exceptions would help prepare early childcare providers. Also, Washington should increase the number of STARS hours required and specify certain components of the required training so as to include culturally sensitivity training.
b) By encouraging parent and family involvement in the childcare program. This can be achieved by holding meetings or organizing family events that include parent-care giver cooperation and resources provided in the parents' native language. In the preschool class that I observed at the Walla Walla Community College's Parent-Child Center, which is taught by Andrea Unck, parents are required to come to the class a certain number of times. She says that it helps them learn how to communicate with children, as well as provides connections between the caregiver and the children's families.
c) By increasing the wages of early childhood educators. According to scholarly research, as well as the interviews I conducted, low wages in the field of childcare and preschool teaching deter qualified individuals from becoming early childhood educators.
d) By providing subsidized adult Spanish classes in communities with large Latino populations, so that more teachers are able to communicate with Latino students in the classroom.
e) By continuing to provide funding for teacher training programs like Building Bridges, which innovatively provide early childhood educators with the skills needs to succeed in diverse classrooms.
f) By proliferating teacher training ideas, models, and curricula (like the ones used in Building Bridges) so that private and public organizations can improve or create high quality teacher trainings programs.
g) By requiring that a "5-star" preschool (as assessed by the new Quality and Improvement Rating System) must indicate that all staff members in the center have been well-trained in cultural sensitivity and that there is at least one Spanish-speaking teacher in communities where language barriers and demographics indicate that linguistic diversity exists. This would increase peoples' perception of the importance government puts upon recognizing diversity, in addition to giving Latino families a way to gauge whether or not their family's cultural values would be supported at a given childcare center/preschool.

Appendix A

From the New Jersey Department of Education's Office of Early Childhood Education: The Abbott Preschool Program's "Implementation Guidelines" – Original Draft: February 2003; Last update: July 2005:

Optimal Teacher Qualifications

Effectively delivering instruction to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse children takes skill and knowledge. To optimize the delivery of services to English language learners, ideally, both the teacher and the teacher assistant will speak the languages of the children in their classroom. Both English and the children's native language need to be supported in order to provide an optimal learning environment. If teachers speak both languages, they can facilitate language learning of both the native language and English.

Suggested Program Characteristics

The support of children's emerging skills in all areas is equally important in the preschool curriculum (physical, social, cognitive, etc.). However, the language development and acquisition of English language learners require special attention and are maximized in language-rich settings. The following classroom characteristics will help to ensure an effective program:

- *Teachers are aware of and sensitive to the languages and cultures of their students; Though every aspect of the child is considered in decisions about daily activities, the teacher modifies his/her teaching style by always keeping language in the forefront; Teachers immerse children in meaningful language experiences. They use on-the-spot labeling strategies with familiar, culturally sensitive themes and materials. Teachers avoid teaching words without meaningful contexts. For example, teachers sing songs and read books in both languages, use props when reading stories and use multiple media to connect language with objects and actions; The setting offers numerous opportunities for informal language exposure and practice. For example, songs and rhymes that naturally repeat and teach sentence patterns are part of the daily routine; Functional print in the classrooms, such as birthday charts, materials and areas is labeled with pictures and words in English and in the children's native languages, providing regular, informal exposure. Use of one color for English and a separate color for each other language on labels throughout the room helps children differentiate between English and the other languages; Fiction, poetry and nonfiction books as well as other print, audio and visual materials are available in all languages of the students; Children have numerous opportunities to create and share their own pictures, books and stories. These child-generated texts make literacy a more meaningful activity that reflects the child's individual culture and experience; Teachers facilitate social interaction between English-speaking and English language learners, encouraging them to speak each other's languages, giving them motivation to experiment with their*

growing language skills and providing translation when appropriate; Numerous opportunities for language practice are available via fun games and activities (e.g. games such as "Simon Dice" [Simon Says] are used to review parts of the body). Open-ended language opportunities are created that encourage child-initiated conversation; The teacher's approach to language learning is always non-threatening and is designed to build confidence. As children learn both first and second languages, errors are a normal part of the developmental process. Rather than having children repeat the "correct" way to say something, teachers gently rephrase or model, when appropriate. All language is learned best through natural conversation and communication. It is important for teachers to focus on the meaning in what children are saying as opposed to a focus on correcting sentence structures; Teachers encourage, rather than discourage, children's use of their home languages. Supporting the home language enables every child to continue to develop his or her basic foundation in how language works. This foundation makes it possible for children to learn English (or any other language) for social interactions as well as for school success. Parents are continuously encouraged to use the home language with their child in conversation, reading aloud, singing and playing; Daily activities are carried out consistently, using a range of cues so that everyone understands the routines and options (e.g. pictures, hand signals, body language, simple words);The setting has numerous pretend play materials like puppets, dolls, animals and telephones that encourage language and conversation. Authentic literacy materials from each child's culture best serve this purpose, including menus, magazines, empty food containers and toy packages; and

- *The parents' primary language is used to communicate during parent-teacher meetings and in other communications with children's families. Bilingual staff provides assistance with written, phone and face-to-face interactions.*

A model for assisting English language learners is provided. The basis for these recommendations is that at all times, English language learners, and indeed, all preschool-age children, receive systematic support for language acquisition in their natural preschool environment. Pull-out and push-in programs do not offer the continuous and comprehensive support children need and are not funded by Early Childhood Program Aid. Teachers in the program must understand the process of language acquisition and be able to create a preschool environment that enhances oral language. To support these essential skills, assistance to the teaching staff is provided through bilingual master teacher specialists and professional development opportunities.

Appendix B

Interview questions for professionals in the field of early childhood education and bilingual education:

1) What are the details of the DEL grant that has provided for the Building Bridges teacher training program?

2) What are the elementary school bilingual education opportunities in the Walla Walla area?

3) What are dual language skills so valuable and what kind of early childhood experience best prepares a Latino child for bilingual education?

4) Do the Building Bridges students seem to value the education that they're getting in the class?

5) Why are teacher training classes like Building Bridges so important?

6) Should Washington State increase the requirements for becoming an early childhood educator?

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix C

Interview questions for Spanish-speaking student in the Building Bridges teacher training class:

1) Do you feel as though Andrea's Building Bridges course is effective and adding to your knowledge of early childhood education?

2) What kind of assignments have you gotten in the class? Do you find them valuable?

3) Do you think young children should be encouraged to speak their native language?

4) How valuable is cultural sensitivity and respecting differences in a preschool classroom?

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix D

Results of First Module Assessment Form:

Could choose "strongly disagree" – "strongly agree" as answers to the following questions:

1) This class increased my knowledge or understanding of how to identify attachment behavior [in children]:
16 primarily English-speaking (attended the sessions taught in English):
2/16 **strongly agree**
12/16 **agree**
1/16 is **unsure**
1/16 did not answer the question.

29 primarily Spanish-speaking (attended the sessions taught in Spanish):
26/29 **strongly agree**
3/29 **agree**

2) This class increased my knowledge of how to discriminate between secure and insecure attachment behaviors [in children]:
Course taught in English:
1/16 **strongly agree**
13/16 **agree**
1/16 is **unsure**
1/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
24/29 **strongly agree**
5/29 **agree**

3) This class increased my knowledge of how to apply emotionally responsive care to facilitate infant-toddler attachment [in children]:
Course taught in English:
4/16 **strongly agree**
10/16 **agree**
1/16 is **unsure**
1/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
27/29 **strongly agree**
2/29 **agree**

4) This class increased my knowledge of how to describe social and emotional health for children birth to three years:
Course taught in English:

2/16 **strongly agree**
10/16 **agree**
2/16 is **unsure**
2/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
25/29 **strongly agree**
4/29 **agree**

5) This class increased my knowledge of how to identify infant/toddler states and cues:
Course taught in English:
2/16 **strongly agree**
13/16 **agree**
1/16 **disagree**

Course taught in Spanish:
22/29 **strongly agree**
7/29 **agree**

6) This class increased my knowledge of how to explain routine caregiving practices support healthy social and emotional development:
Course taught in English:
3/16 **strongly agree**
10/16 **agree**
1/16 is **unsure**
2/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
26/29 **strongly agree**
3/29 **agree**

7) This class increased my knowledge of how to identify responsive social environments:
Course taught in English:
2/16 **strongly agree**
12/16 **agree**
1/16 is **unsure**
1/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
20/29 **strongly agree**
6/29 **agree**
3/29 did not answer the question

8) This class increased my knowledge of how to describe characteristics of culturally responsive care:
Course taught in English:

4/16 **strongly agree**
8/16 **agree**
2/16 is **unsure**
1/16 **disagree**
1/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
24/29 **strongly agree**
4/29 **agree**
1/29 is **unsure**

9) This class increased my knowledge of how to discuss how cultural continuity supports infant-toddler mental health:
Course taught in English:
3/16 **strongly agree**
10/16 **agree**
1/16 **disagree**
2/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
24/29 **strongly agree**
5/29 **agree**

10) This class increased my knowledge of how to recognize milestones of social and emotional development including developmental red flags:
Course taught in English:
4/16 **strongly agree**
9/16 **agree**
1/16 is **unsure**
1/16 **strongly disagree**
1/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
24/29 **strongly agree**
5/29 **agree**

11) This class increased my knowledge of how to build partnerships between caregivers and parents and families:
Course taught in English:
4/16 **strongly agree**
9/16 **agree**
2/16 is **unsure**
1/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
28/29 **strongly disagree**

1/29 **agree**

12) This class increased my knowledge of how to foster skills for children birth to three using responsive child guidance techniques:
Course taught in English:
2/16 **strongly agree**
11/16 **agree**
2/16 is **unsure**
1/16 did not answer the question

Course taught in Spanish:
24/29 **strongly agree**
4/29 **agree**
1/29 did not answer the question

Results of S.T.A.R.S. Ongoing Training/Workshop Evaluation (created by Walla Walla Community College) – this evaluation form was only given to the 29 Spanish-speaking women and men in the First Module of Building Bridges, however the evaluation form was in English:

1) The training materials and activities were: (students could choose any of the following that apply: culturally relevant, interesting, hands-on, too basic, easy to understand, and/or difficult to understand):
11 found them to be "culturally relevant"
25 found them to be "interesting"
9 found them to be "hands-on"
1 found them to be "too basic"
22 found them to be "easy to understand"
1 found them to be "difficult to understand" (however this person also marked "easy to understand")

2) 23 students would recommend that the instructor use the same activities for future courses/trainings; 6 did not answer the question

3) The instructor was: (of the following, students were asked to check all that apply: organized, clear, knowledgeable, respectful of cultural differences, and/or respectful of my questions):
29 found her "organized"
19 found her "clear"
20 found her "knowledgeable"
11 found her "respectful of cultural differences"
11 found her "respectful of my questions"

4) During this training I increased my (students could check all that apply of the following options: knowledge, skills, resources, interest in additional information on this topic):

21 thought this training increased their “knowledge”
17 thought this training increased their “skills”
14 thought this training increased their “resources”
12 thought this training increased their “interest in additional information on this topic”

5) Would you recommend this instructor to other providers?
24 said “yes”
1 said “no”
4 did not answer the question

6) Overall I give this training/instructor a rating of (between 1 and 10, 1 being low and 10 being high):
23 gave it a “10”
5 gave it a “9”
1 gave it an “8”

8) Did you learn new information that you can apply to your [early childhood] setting?
24 said “yes”
5 did not answer the question

9) Rate the effectiveness of the [Building Bridges] training in meeting your needs as a learner (again, between 1 (low) and 10 (high)):
15 said “10”
5 said “9”
1 said “8”
4 did not answer the question

Feedback related to the class’ setting:

2) The learning environment (Green Park Elementary School library) was (students were, again, asked to check all of the following that apply: comfortable, uncomfortable, too noisy, relaxed, too small, met my needs):
22 thought the learning environment was “comfortable”
20 thought the learning environment was “relaxed”
18 thought the learning environment “met [their] needs”
0 students checked the remaining options

Sources

2005 Child Care in the State of Washington. NACCRRA and Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network. 2005. 2 Nov. 2006 <http://www.naccrra.net/docs/data/national_data_set_WA.pdf>.

Bach, Deborah. "State Has Few Regulations on Starting Up a Preschool." Seattle Post-Intelligencer 22 Apr. 2006. 29 Oct. 2006 <http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/267703_prekside22.html>.

Bowman, Barbara T., M. S. Donovan, and M. S. Burns, eds. Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers. Washington D.C.: National Academy P, 2000.

Brisk, M. E. Quality Bilingual Education: Defining Success. The Education Alliance at Brown University. 1999. 26 Oct. 2006 <http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/Defining_Success.pdf>.

"Building Bridges With Higher Education: Infant-Toddler Care Giving," 2006. Curriculum.

Cafferty, Pastora San Juan, and David W. Engstrom, eds. Hispanics in the United States: an Agenda for the 21st Century. 3rd ed. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2002.

Daniel, J., and S. Friedman. "Taking the Next Step: Preparing Teachers to Work with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children." Beyond the Journal (2005). 27 Oct. 2006 <http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200511/DanielFriedmanBTJ1105.pdf>.

Fishman, Joshua A. Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages. England: Multilingual Matters Limited, 2001.

Fleras, Augie. Redefining the Politics Over Aboriginal Language Renewal: Maori Language Preschools as Agents of Social Change. Otago, New Zealand: University of Otago P, 1989. 31 Oct. 2006 <http://www.brandonu/ca/Library/CJNS/7.1/fleras.pdf>.

"FPG Project Summary: Crosswalks: Outreach to Infuse Diversity in Preservice Education." FPG Child Development Institute. 4 Nov. 2006 <http://www.fpg.unc.edu//projects/project_detail.cfm?projectID=371>.

Fry, Rick. The Changing Landscape of American Public Education: New Students, New Schools. Pew Hispanic Center. 2006. 10 Nov. 2006 <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=72>.

Gregoire, Christine. Speech. Washington Learns Summit. 14 Nov. 2006.

Krashen, S., and G. McField. "What Works? Reviewing the Latest Evidence on Bilingual Education." Language Learner (2005). 1 Nov. 2006 <http://users.rcn.com/langpol/Krashen-McField.pdf>.

Montie, J., Z. Xiang, M. Nores, L. J. Schweinhart, W. S. Barnett, and C. R. Belfield. Lifetime Effects: the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40. Greenwich, CT: Information Age, 2005.

New Jersey. Office of Early Childhood Education. Department of Education. New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Early Childhood Education: Office Activities, End of Year Report: 2002-2003. 29 Oct. 2006 <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/eoy.htm>.

Occupational Outlook Handbook: Teachers – Preschool, Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary. U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2006. 21 Oct. 2006 <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos069.htm>.

Oller, D. K., and R. E. Eilers, eds. Language and Literacy in Bilingual Children: Child Language and Child Development. Tonawanda, NY: University of Toronto P, 2002.

Portes, Alejandro, and Richard Shauffler. "Language and the Second Generation." Second Generation. Ed. Alejandro Portes. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996.

Ramirez, J. D., S. Yuen, D. Ramey, and D. Pasta. Longitudinal Study of Structured English Immersion Strategy, Early-Exit and Late-Exit Bilingual Education Programs for Language-Minority Children. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International. 31 Oct. 2006 <http://www.nabe.org/education/index.html>.

Rubin, Stephanie. New Poll of Kindergarten Teachers Shows Kids Without Preschool Unprepared for School; Well-Prepared Students Suffering. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. 2004. 1 Nov. 2006 <http://www.fightcrime.org/releases.php?id=107>.

State Fact Sheet: Washington. National Council of La Raza. 2003. 25 Oct. 2006 <http://www.ncl.org/content/publications/download/33185>.

State Public Policy Developments Update. National Association for the Education of Young Children. 2006. 2 Nov. 2006 <http://www.naeyc.org/policy/state/pdf/StatePublicPolicyDevelopmentsfall06.pdf>.

Thomas, W. P., and V. P. Collier. "The Astounding Effectiveness of Dual Language Education for All." National Association for Bilingual Education: Journal of

Research and Practice. 25 Oct. 2006 <http://njrp.tamu.edu/2004/PDFs/Collier.pdf>.

Tully, James. Strange Multiplicities: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity. New York: Cambridge UP, 1995.

United States. U.S. Census Bureau. Nearly 1-in-5 Speak a Foreign Language At Home; Most Also Speak English 'Very Well,' Census Bureau Reports. Oct. 2003. 31 Oct. 2006 <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/census_2000/001406.html>.

United States. U.S. Census Bureau. Press Release: Nation'S Population One-Third Minority. May 2006. 31 Oct. 2006 <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/006808.html>.

Washington State. Department of Education. Washington Learns: Draft Report for Public Comment. 2 Nov. 2006 <http://www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov/report/DraftReport.pdf>.

Washington State. Department of Social and Health Services. Requirements for Child Care: DCCEL Methods and Practice. 1 Nov. 2006 <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/wccc/>.

Washington State. Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs. Strategic Plan: 2007-2012. 30 Oct. 2006 <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/budget/manage/strategic/118strategicplan.pdf>.

What is Bilingual Education? National Association for Bilingual Education. 30 Oct. 2006 <http://www.nabe.org/education/index.html>.

Wheelock College. 2 Nov. 2006 <http://www.wheelock.edu/fld/fldhome.asp>.