

**LENGUAS SILENCIADAS, VOCES ASCENDIENDO
(SILENCED TONGUES, RISING VOICES): ELL POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND
EXPERIENCES IN WALLA WALLA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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“No es que no quiera sobresalir, pero mis opciones son limitadas”- Rodrigo

“It’s not that I don’t want to succeed, but my options are limited” - Rodrigo

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I. INTRODUCTION

In order to more fully appreciate the effects and outcomes of ELL policies and practices affecting the experiences of students and parents in Walla Walla Public Schools, we must situate our project within the broader pedagogical and political conversation regarding ELL instruction nationwide. Presently, English language learners are the fastest-growing student population in public schools across the United States, and continuing immigration statistics are projected to sustain this trend for years to come. According to the American Federation of Teachers, over 60 percent of all pre-kindergarten to 12th grade classrooms nationwide currently include at least one ELL student, constituting over 10 percent of total public school enrollment, or over 5 million students.¹ Within Washington State, the demographic situation reflects these national trends: in the 2009-2010 school year, ELL students represented 8.3 percent of total of public school enrollment, or 91,469 students.² As the population of Washington State continues to reflect national immigration trends and increasing diversity within local communities, ELL programs must continue to provide effective, equitable and accessible instruction to students from divergent backgrounds in classrooms statewide.

Recognizing the diversity and complexity of ELL education in Washington State, this report focuses on the effects of ELL instruction on the experiences of Latino students and their parents within Walla Walla Public Schools. According to the United States Census Bureau, the Latino population in Walla Walla County grew from 17.4% in 2000 to 19.7% in 2010, a 2.3% increase in ten years. This sum is also 8.5 percent higher than the total estimated Latino population of Washington State.³ Public education in Walla Walla reflects the changing population dynamics and increasing presence of Latino families in the community through demographic shifts within the school system. Between 2005 and 2010, the percentage of ELL students increased from 7.3% to 8.3%, now representing 777 students, or 12.4% out of a total student population of 6,271 students district-wide.⁴ Furthermore, as growing demands on existing ELL program offerings in Walla Walla Public Schools continue to increase, allocating adequate resources and qualified teachers and staff remains a priority for instructing and integrating both present and future students in ELL education. Thus, the effectiveness and accessibility of ELL programs for students and parents, as well as the training and development of teachers and administrators, remains a critical task. In light of these demographic changes, Walla Walla Public Schools must effectively build partnerships and expand programs that will work to ensure that every ELL student receives a quality education.

¹ American Federation of Teachers, *Where We Stand: English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Allied Printing, 2006.)

² Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educating English Language Learners in Washington State, 2009-10* (Olympia, WA: GPO, 2010.)

³ State and County QuickFacts: Walla Walla County, Washington. U.S. Census Bureau. Last modified October 27, 2011. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/53/53071.html>

⁴ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educating English Language Learners in Washington State, 2009-10* (Olympia, WA: GPO, 2010.)

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- a. How do the district's policies for teaching English align with student, parent and teacher experiences and expectations?
- b. How do different ELL instructional practices affect student, parent and teacher success?
- c. How can the District improve ELL policies, practices and experiences?

In order to answer these questions, we first conducted a review of the current literature regarding ELL education and the issues involved, such as school policy, student documentation status, and testing and assessment. Our literature review provided the basis for our primary research, which included one-on-one interviews and focus groups. In total, we spoke with 49 students, parents, teachers, and administrators from the Walla Walla Public Schools. Our study focused on Blue Ridge Elementary School, Garrison Middle School and Walla Walla High School (Wa-Hi). We interviewed students, parents, and staff at each school, as well as district administrators. We conducted 11 semi-structured personal interviews with teachers, school administrators and district administrators for the staff perspective. Additionally, we conducted 3 semi-structured personal interviews and 2 focus group with a total of 9 parents, and 6 focus groups with a total of 29 student participants.

Our community partners for this study were Diana and Bill Erickson. Diana Erickson is the Bilingual/Migrant Coordinator for the district and Bill Erickson is the advisor of the Wa-Hi Latino Club. Their guidance was invaluable to our research, as they were essential in the process of locating interview participants and identifying relevant scholarship on the subject.

Through our research, we discovered that the issues which English Language Learners face vary depending on the type of program in which they are enrolled. Overall, students, parents, and educators had an overwhelmingly positive view of the Dual Language program. Interviewees felt that this program, which is currently in the process of being introduced at Blue Ridge Elementary, and exists in a partial program at Garrison Middle School, would serve as a good model for other schools in the district with similar student populations.

ELL parents were supportive of their children's education and recognized the importance of their own involvement in the schools, yet they struggled with linguistic and socioeconomic barriers to full participation. Our findings challenged some of the commonly expressed assumptions about the disengagement or lack of interest among Latino parents regarding their children's education. Schools with strong parent-outreach models (which were highly correlated with the existence of a Dual Language program at the school), demonstrated a good level of parent involvement and knowledge of their children's academic achievement and personal successes both in and outside of the classroom.

ELL students identified the language barrier as their primary obstacle, which adversely affects their academic performance and their relationships with teachers and students. At each

school, students were enthusiastic about bilingual teachers or teachers who they felt that valued both their cultural and linguistic background. They were also grateful for the presence of bilingual para-professionals who assisted them in their classes.

Overview of Recommendations:

- **Expand the traditional Dual Language Immersion program at Blue Ridge to Garrison, Wa-Hi and all schools with appropriately diverse populations, such as Green Park Elementary.** This will benefit the academic achievement and sense of school community for all students, including ELLs and non-ELLs.
- **Adapt the model of Garrison Night School to similar ELL parent education programs at Blue Ridge and Wa-Hi to increase parent presence and interaction with their children's own school.** Garrison Night School is a popular and engaging program for many ELL parents, especially those who are currently enrolled at Garrison. Developing and implementing similar, smaller programs at each school would encourage ELL parents to familiarize themselves with their children's school environments, socialize with other parents, and contribute to a sense of partnership with school staff.
- **Develop academic and social opportunities for ELL students, including access to bilingual textbooks, and transportation from afterschool programs, and provide more opportunities for ELLs to practice conversation with native English- speakers.** ELL students want to advance and reach success, however the program does not necessarily accommodate their needs. ELL students should be given the same opportunity to succeed.
- **Policymakers should consider removing passage of the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) as a graduation requirement and offer standardized tests in other languages.** Standardized tests, such as the HSPE, have prevented ELL students from graduating. Many students have the notion that they will not pass, which leads them to think that there is no reason to attempt taking the test, and eventually students no longer attend school and drop out. Eliminating the exam from being a graduation requirement will remove an unfair barrier to ELL student success at the high school level.
- **ELL students need to be evaluated on a regular basis, and further involved in their academic progress.** Students should be aware and conscious that they should be making progress in their English acquisition. Student evaluations let students know where they are standing and what they need to improve, and it also allows teachers to be aware of what they need to work on individually with students.
- **ELL programs should be constantly evaluated in order to determine what is working and what is not.** This will determine what in the curriculum is effective and what needs to be changed. Every curriculum must be reformed that is not helping students sufficiently improve and succeed academically.

II. SCHOLARLY LITERATURE REVIEW

I. *Padres Unidos*: Latino Parents and the Early Historical Trajectory of ELL Education

Bilingual Jurisprudence: From “Language Deficient” to “English Language Learner”

In his book *Chicano Students and the Courts*, educator Richard Valencia (2008) distinguishes two prevailing methods of analyzing legal jurisprudence in relation to the Latino experience in education. The *plight dimension* is predicated upon the past history of how schools have disadvantaged and discriminated against Latino students, and thus how these young people have fared under such unequal treatment and substandard conditions. The second strategy, identified as the *struggle dimension*, critically examines how Latino communities have mobilized and realized successful campaigns for educational equality before, during and after *Brown v. Board* (Valencia 2008, xv). At the center of both approaches is the role of language in the education of Latino students, a cultural characteristic that was used historically utilized to segregate and exclude Latino families from educational opportunity. However, a critical examination of bilingual jurisprudence disrupts stereotypes of Latino parents as docile and passive regarding their children’s education. On the contrary, this dual legacy of parent mobilization and litigation demonstrates the organized and dedicated commitment of past, present and future generations of Latino parents to the struggle towards educational equality as a compelling aspect of Latino/a identity in the United States.

While English language learners were historically deemed to be “language deficient” and thus were segregated on the basis of language, Latino parents organized and litigated to provide access to education for their students. One of the earliest challenges against this form of linguistic segregation emerged from the border state of Arizona in *Romo v. Laird* (1925)⁵. This was an unprecedented initiative by Latino parents in support of Adolfo “Babe” Romo Jr. to challenge the mandate of Tempe Elementary School District No. 3 to require Latino children to attend the segregated Eighth Street School, where classes were exclusively taught by student teachers that did not hold certification comparable to other mostly white schools in the district. Consequently, parents sought a writ of mandamus to allow their children to enroll in other schools that actually employed qualified teachers, despite the repeated rejection of these requests by the school board due to “pedagogical reasons of language deficiency” In his ruling, Judge Joseph S. Jenckes ruled in favor of parents, citing precedent in *Dameron v. Bayless* (1912),⁶ by recognizing that the perceived “language deficiency” of Latino families was misused to segregate and exclude students and parents from accessing and benefiting from freedom to an equal education.[4] However promising the ruling of this case may seem, the outcome of this litigation changed very little for Latino/a education. While the school district voted to appoint certified teachers at the Eighth Street School to appease the courts, this case represents what Valencia defines as “racialized segregation,” a persistent animus that uses reductive reasoning under the guise of pedagogy and language to further isolate Latino families (Valencia 2008, 15.)

⁵ *Adolpho Romo v. William E. Laird, et al.*, No. 21617, Maricopa County Superior Court (1925).

⁶ *Dameron v. Bayless*, 14 Ariz. 180, 126 P 273 (1912): An African-American desegregation lawsuit ruled upon by the Supreme Court of Arizona, initiated in Maricopa County, District No. 1

Such an early decision only reaffirms how segregationist practices based upon language differences were widely accepted and often prevailed in early twentieth-century education for Latinos.

Valencia identifies several instances of Latino parents organizing against segregation and pursuing educational equality regardless of language. The watershed California case of *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) demonstrated the commitment of Latino/a parents to the success of their children. After his children were denied admittance to Westminster Elementary School due to their perceived deficiency in English, Gonzalo Méndez organized five other fathers of Latino schoolchildren to file their case with the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California. As Valencia suggests, this case represented a different approach towards achieving educational equality for Latino/a students, insofar as the central argument in *Mendez* directly challenged the legitimacy of segregated education beyond linguistic grounds (Valencia 2008, 25). On April 14, 1947, the Ninth Circuit Court ruled unanimously to uphold the decision of the lower District Court that found school-based segregation based on linguistic and ethnic criteria was unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Although it was not appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States, and thus did not set national precedent, it did represent an important moment of self-determination within the broader trajectory of Latino/a jurisprudence and the struggle for educational equality.⁷

The visible activism of Latino/a parents not only challenged the segregation of their children on linguistic grounds, but also rearticulated the common yet overlooked potential of Latino/a parent organizing on behalf of the educational opportunity of their children. José Luis Morin suggests in his work *Latino/a Rights and Justice in the United States*, that had the appellants in *Mendez* appealed and prevailed their case to the U.S. Supreme Court rather than the Ninth Circuit Court, it very well would have preceded *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) as the landmark case that ended the separate but equal doctrine and effectively ended segregated education.⁸ By striking down language-based separation as a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, *Mendez* constituted a significant challenge to segregation that would be judicially realized by the Supreme Court within a decade in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) by mandating the desegregation and integration of schools throughout the nation.

Current Parent Involvement in Schools

Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) recognize that many of the same historical obstacles still persist and complicate Latino parental involvement in their child's education. According to their research, *school-based communication barriers*, *school-parent perceptions* and *logistics* constituted three primary issues that ELL parents most often encounter when interacting with their child's school system. Traditionally, communication between schools and parents was often conceived as unidirectional, insofar as a lack of reciprocity is blamed on ELL parent's detachment and disinterest in their child's education. However, schools which adopt a more innovative approach towards communicating with ELL parents, including providing translation

⁷ See *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) in Valencia, 22.

⁸ José Luis Morin. *Latino/a Rights and Justice in the United States: Perspectives and Approaches* (2nd ed. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2009), 53.

services at parent-teacher conferences and home or community center visits by school teachers and staff, work to foster a sense of partnership rather than hostile misunderstanding (Arias and Morillo-Campbell 2008).

Additionally, school-parent perceptions must also be improved by promoting a more culturally competent relationship. Many Latino ELL parents consider their responsibilities to primarily be providing “nurturing, teaching values and instilling good behaviors,” whereas they often defer to teachers and administrators on issues of academic instruction and the intellectual assessment of their children (Arias and Morillo-Campbell 2008). Conversely, traditional models of ELL parent engagement may interpret this dynamic as Latino parents’ indifference towards the academic achievement and social integration of their children. However, developing a more innovative and inclusive method of ELL parent engagement that understand cultural aspects of Latino families, such as inviting extended family members to school events and incorporating the community into the education of their students, uniquely positions schools and teachers to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers that often divide parents, teachers and administrators.

Finally, logistical accommodations can also facilitate a more successful partnership between schools and parents. Parents of ELL students often encounter a myriad of practical challenges while attempting to integrate and assimilate to a new culture in a new country. As Morillo-Campbell (2008) suggest in their research, “ELL parents often have labor-intensive work schedules, which limit their ability to attend parent teacher conferences and open house events. Transportation needs may affect the ability of students to stay after school for tutoring or extra-curricular activities” (10). Although ELL parents must often contend with significant time constraints that may prevent more active engagement in their child’s schools, teachers and administrators can also adapt traditional modes of outreach to more effectively and comprehensively address the needs of ELL parents. These methods may include home visits that accommodate ELL parents’ demanding work schedules, providing sufficient translation services at school conferences and events, and arranging afterschool transportation for students to encourage participation in athletics and extracurricular activities. By pursuing a partnership based upon collaboration and reciprocity, schools promote a more effective and comprehensive method of involving ELL parents in the education of their child which often yields “improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates regardless of socioeconomic background or ethnicity” (1).

II. Sharing Languages, Building Families: Successful Methods

Reclaiming Language and Building Partnerships

Concha Delgado-Gaitan (2004) proposes important insights into greater parental involvement in modern classrooms. Her research establishes a strong correlation between parental involvement and student achievement, citing higher academic performance, increased school attendance and reduced dropout rates among Latino students who parents are more actively engaged in their education. Additionally, Delgado-Gaitan favors building early partnerships between parents and schools from the very first day of a student’s educational career until their high school graduation (viii). By emphasizing the importance of strong and lasting relationships between schools and parents, and demonstrating how this partnership positively

affects students, Delgado-Gaitan highlights how these critical dynamics strengthen communities and promote student success in the classroom.

Communication is another central theme throughout Delgado-Gaitan's work. By examining how schools often place the burden of communication on Latino parents, Delgado-Gaitan reconfigures communication as a partnership between schools and parents, emphasizing how both actors play vital roles in the development and achievement of their students. Delgado-Gaitan challenges schools to move beyond "merely translating into Spanish the information that the schools want parents to know. True communication occurs when parents and teachers strive for meaningful exchange around topics that affect children's learning...communication between educators and Latino parents must be ongoing and remain consistent to the mission of ensuring academic success of Latino students" (Delgado-Gaitan 2004, 23). Thus, good communication is a critical attribute of successful school-parent partnerships by fostering trust and facilitating engagement around student achievement in the classroom.

Delgado-Gaitan also posits three conditions that undergird successful school communication and parent involvement. The first proposal involves *connecting* schools with Latino parents. Connecting schools with Latino/a parents requires educators, whether as teachers, counselors or principals, to "reach out to parents in a language they understand" by understanding the language and culture of Latino/a parents and their children (Delgado-Gaitan 2004, xi). This initiative establishes a sense of trust and clarifies expectations between schools and Latino parents, working to ameliorate the common misconception that Latino parents are detached and uninvolved with their children's education.

By connecting with Latino parents, schools are enabled to *share information* regarding important academic and cultural opportunities for students. Indeed, sharing information constitutes one of the most important methods of knowledge transmission and community outreach between parents and schools. Delgado-Gaitan characterizes this as a "two-way process...improving learning opportunities for students through critical knowledge and sharing information between parents and educators about students" (xii). Finally, and most importantly, it is imperative that Latino parents *stay involved* throughout this process. Delgado-Gaitan offers this as the most urgent long-term goal for both schools and Latino parents, suggesting that as "educators and parents work together to keep an open-door policy with each other, children benefit from the strong, supportive foundation that the school and family build...the best results happen when parents are involved in knowing what to do, and when teachers and parents respect and understand each other's roles. This is the essence of parental involvement for Latino parents" (xii). As Delgado-Gaitan suggests, connecting, sharing information and staying involved constitute three important characteristics of parental engagement and student achievement for Latino families.

Gándara and Contreras (2010) also examine how communication barriers, socioeconomic factors and parent-school expectations can impede greater Latino parental involvement in ELL education. The authors base their analysis in their understanding that many Latino ELL students speak Spanish exclusively at home while learning English primarily within the classroom. Thus, Latino parents of ELL students often lack access to information to schooling and other forms of social capital due to "more limited social networks and language differences...are less likely to

have experienced in their own families the kinds of socialization practices that provide an academic edge for children from the mainstream culture; they haven't been exposed to academic "priming," storybooks, and cultural knowledge." (Gándara and Contreras 2010, 83). Additionally, socioeconomic factors related to immigration status also prevent parents from full participation in their child's education. As many Latino immigrant parents must contend with underemployment or unemployment as they adapt to life in a new culture, many parents also have "much less access to social and health services than a similarly low-income white family." Finally, Gándara and Contreras argue that many Latino parents are adversely affected by cultural misunderstanding and institutional racism that interfere in building a sense of partnership with their child's school. The authors recognize that many Latino parents of ELL students "have not learned the same language...racial and ethnic discrimination—not just by teachers in the classroom, but in the culture at large—still negatively influence the development of Latino youth and their perceptions of themselves and their abilities" (Gándara and Contreras 2010, 84).

Gándara and Contreras ultimately suggest that in order to implement a more successful partnership between parents and schools, the ESL curriculum itself must be improved and expanded. Their research suggests that all too often, standard ESL curriculum narrowly focuses on written and simplistic forms of English instruction while requiring a rapid acquisition of English skills at the cost of other forms of academic learning and social integration (Gándara and Contreras 2010). However, innovative approaches such as the Dual Language Immersion program, offer new insights into the academic achievement and social integration of ELL students. Dual Language programs integrate native English and non-English students with the aim to facilitate full bilingualism and biliteracy for everyone. While the strategy is not recommended for every school, diverse communities do stand to benefit from the implementation of such a program. As the dual language program is based on the clustering of proportionate numbers of both groups, it prevents the perpetuation of "social power imbalances" by promoting a mutual understanding of language and culture between students at a very basic level of education. Gándara and Contreras also recognize that critics of Dual Language programs contend that such programs "often ignore-or even reinforce—preexisting disparities in social status between those students and parents who speak the non-English language (and who are usually low-income) and those from the dominant language and economic group" (Gándara and Contreras 2010). Indeed, a comprehensive Dual Language program must address the concerns of both parents equally and proactively, while also keeping in the mind the particular importance of a challenging early curriculum and high-level cognitive development for the children of parents who are already disadvantaged on multiple axes.

III. The English Language Learner Student

It is important for administrators and teachers to be aware of and know who their students are. Such knowledge not only includes knowing students' names but also being aware of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity (Verdugo and Flores 2007, 169). English Language Learners are characterized by three main features: 1) *substantive participation* in a non-English-speaking environment; 2) *acquisition of the normal communicative abilities* of that social environment; 3) *exposure to a substantive English-speaking environment*, more than likely for the first time, during the formal schooling process (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez 2006, 28). Latinos

come from very diverse backgrounds, which make it difficult to target a specific language learning program to all students. An ELL's academic achievement, for instance, is impacted by many different variables, including aptitude with the primary language, the time they have lived in the United States, the time they have been in school, and their length of time in a particular language program. It is also important to take in consideration the student's age at migration, pre-migration experiences and the reason for migration. Overall, it is an arbitrary approach to have one specific way to teach ELL student, and even more tenuous and illogical to give ELL students a time frame to become English proficient (Hakuta & Beatty, 2000, Kurtz-Costez & Pungello, 2000).

Additionally according to Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, English language development consists of 3 main components: (a) language proficiency, which includes proficiency in academic task as well as in basic conversation, (b) cognitive academic language proficiency, which may take five to seven years to achieve and (c) skills learned in the first language, which may automatically transfer to the second language (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez 2006, 28).

Carrasquillo & Rodriguez address two very important factors that affect a student language attainment. Age seems to be a primary contributor to how well a student will learn a new language. According to a number of studies, adults and older children initially acquire second languages faster than younger children. However, their ultimate attainment of the language may not surpass that of a younger learner who essentially has more time to develop proficiency. As a result, children typically have a better communicative fluency due to their time of exposure (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez 2006, 30). It is also important to note students' prior literacy development in their first language, especially since language mastery and cognitive development in the primary language will transfer to the second language. "The better developed the conceptual foundation of second language learners' first language; the more likely the learners are to develop similarly high levels of conceptual abilities in their second language" (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez 2006, 30)

IV. English Language Learners and School Experience

A positive school environment leads to a positive school experience and additionally increases academic achievement of students (Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Schools should be prepared for long-term commitment in supporting the academic development of ELL students. School capacity, according to Verdugo & Flores, firstly refers to the school culture, or norms, values, and expectations placed on students in a school. The other component of school capacity is school management, which is the organization of teaching and learning. The quality and effectiveness of schools has a direct and positive effect on student achievement, including that of ELL students (Verdugo, Greenberg, Henderson, Uribe, & Schneider, 1997). Verdugo & Flores also examined the school settings of ELL programs, finding that ELL training does indeed lead to English-Language proficiency. However, Good, Masewicz, & Vogel state that numerous schools do not meet the ELL achievement goals, and are continuously leaving ELL students behind, only to widen the achievement gap (2010).

A "technical approach", as Trueba puts it, is usually taken when dealing with underachievement. The assumption under such approaches is that nothing is wrong with the

teachers and that blame for the problem lies on students for not being “regular,” “normal,” or being categorized as having “special” needs (Trueba, 1999). This type of approach does not take into account teaching credentials or the true effectiveness of programs. Research has demonstrated that schools have the capability to address academic achievement variables, such as the curriculum, best practices, professional development, class size and funding (Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2005). It is often suggested that lower achievement among Latinos and other minority groups is due to a lack of effort put forth by students themselves. (Valencia, 1986, 1993). However that is not necessarily true. According to Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, teachers need to build an understanding of ELL students and be sensitive to the cultural differences that students experience in their new surroundings (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez 2006, 17).

In order for there to be a positive school environment, it has been argued that schools should: 1) value the linguistic and cultural background of ELL students; 2) place high expectations on every student; and 3) involve students in the overall school operation. (Verdugo, 1997). These three components are vital in the education of ELL students. When they are not considered, school conditions for ELLs worsen. Studies show that ELL students drop out due to unfair treatment at school, perceived lack of understanding, and a feeling of marginalization (Verdugo & Flores, 2007). “Minority-language students develop a stronger sense of self and are more likely to apply themselves academically when teachers show them that their language and culture are welcomed in school!” (Peterson & Heywood, 2007; 528). It has also been argued that ELL students improve at a higher rate in a classroom setting where their first language and culture are both supported and appreciated (Fitzgerald, 1995).

Communication between teacher and student is crucial, and necessary for a student’s development. (Aruajo, 2009). Being able to communicate permits students to create a support network and feel more comfortable in their schools, thus allowing them to address problems or struggles they may face (Garcia, 1991). On many occasions, students use their native languages as mechanisms for conveying content and understanding (Verdugo & Flores, 2007, Carrasquillo & Rodriguez) “Teachers must convey in their daily work the moral conviction that they are committed to humanize the educational experience of students by eliminating hostility and replacing messages of distrust or disdain with respect and love for all” (Trueba, 1999, 58). Good, Masewicz, & Vogel argue that trust and having a supportive school culture are the main elements to improve a student academic achievement. (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010).

ELL students need to be evaluated on a regular basis so that teachers can determine what they should work on and what is still needed to improve. With regular evaluation, teachers are also able to determine if the curriculum is effective and or not. A constant modification of the curriculum is recommended (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez 2006). Verdugo states that the evaluation process should be seen as a continuum, with gradual, individual process as the goal. Having a timeline of progress is vital for the student’s evaluation, because it incorporates them into their own progress and allows them to eventually operate in the school without assistance. Lastly, Verdugo & Flores claim that students need to be given the opportunity to interact with English-speaking peers and practice dialogue in order to promote fluency.

V. English Language Learners and Identity

Rodriguez states, “Acquiring a new language is much more than an academic exercise, it is personal. The experience can be alienating, uncertain, confusing, and humiliating. Language is more than merely a depersonalized tool we use to navigate our surroundings. Our language is intimately intertwined with who we are” (Day 2002, 21). Latinos are persistently devalued and have their prospects and opportunities limited or neglected, which threatens their sense of identity. Hispanic students have been given many hurtful and negative labels, such as mentally retarded, linguistically handicapped, culturally and linguistically deprived, and at risk (Flores 1982, 1993). Minority group members will know that their group has long experienced discrimination; they may worry that negative stereotypes about their group will influence how they are treated and evaluated, which once again can lead them to feel alienated (Markus, Steele, Steele, 2000). Discrimination is not a one-time effect, but can have the potential of also negatively affecting future adjustment and mental health (Compas, Conner-Smith, Saltman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001).

According to Edwards & Romero (2008), people of Mexican descent are constantly finding a way to cope with the common experience of negative stereotypes and prejudice, such that their self-esteem is protected from the stressful impact of discrimination and prejudice. A study conducted by Edwards & Romero explored the relationship among discrimination stress, and self-esteem among young people of Mexican descent. Their research suggested that primary control engagement and disengagement coping strategies are positively associated with discrimination stress. Furthermore, self-esteem is predicted by an interaction of primary control engagement coping and discrimination stress, such that at higher levels of discrimination stress, youth who are engaged in more primary control engagement coping reported higher self-esteem.

On the other hand, Trueba (2002) brings into light a different, interesting point of view. He argues that oppression and abuse can also generate resiliency and cultural capital, which foster success. Latinos have the ability to cross-racial and ethnic boundaries, and the general resiliency associated with the ability to endure hardships and overcome obstacles will clearly be recognized as a new form of cultural capital, which will be crucial for success in a modern diversified society.

The sociocultural-psychological perspective presented by Trueba suggests that fair and equal treatment and legal respect require protection of individual identities from those pervasive systems of representations, expectations, and social interactions that may systematically limit and undermine individual potential and the opportunity for inclusion (Trueba, 2002). Markus, Steele & Steele propose the concept of “identity safety”, which acknowledges differences attached to group identity and creates a setting which is accepting of differences as non-limiting and as a basis for respect (Markus, Steele, & Steele 2000). Identity safety is necessary in order for individuals to enjoy full inclusion. All in all, an identity cannot be achieved or maintained by one’s self, for an identity is a social product and social process (Day, 2002). It is through engagement with the recognition by others that an individual becomes a person and indemnities are conferred, which can potentially affect how an individual sees herself as a student, and employee or as a citizen (Trueba 2002).

For non-dominant groups there is a sense of threat to group identity, much of which is tied to the long history of racial and group discrimination. The process of assimilation requires

accommodations from both the mainstream and minority cultures. An active and continuous effort is necessary to maintain a sense of belonging and trust among all members. Ogbu and Simon bring into account the cultural-ecological adaptations of minority communities. Their theory takes into account the dynamic of social and school effects that occur in minority communities (Ogbu and Simon 1998). Once again it is claimed that the historical context of immigrant minority groups shapes the general adaptation, however this time it depends on whether students were involuntary or voluntary immigrants. It has been determined that voluntary immigrants who come to the United States tend to have higher achievement. Meanwhile, involuntary immigrant groups tend to show low achievement. While involuntary immigrant minorities tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies of stereotypes or do not attempt to challenge such notions, voluntary immigrants strive to break away from mainstream culture generalizations in order to maintain their own identity. Ogbu and Simons believe that the historical treatment of minorities in the United States and the politics of inequality shape minority groups' perceptions of schools as a vehicle for social and economic advancement (Ogbu & Simons 1998).

VI. English Language Learners in the Classroom

Student Assessment and High Stakes Testing

Much of the current literature and discussion about English as a Second Language (ESL) discusses the role that high-stakes national testing plays in the academic success of ELLs. Specifically, the increased focus on accountability and state and national standards under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 led to the creation of yearly state exams that all students must take, including English language learners. Many researchers argue that these tests are disproportionately difficult for ELLs because all students are required to take the test in English, and because the test itself employs technical language (Solórzano 2008, 206). As Menken argues, it is impossible to assess ELLs solely on their content knowledge without also implicating their knowledge of English (Menken 2010, 123). Such high-stakes tests create a systematized barrier to ELLs closing the achievement gap and inhibit academic progress by holding students back in remedial classes.

Researchers report that teachers are strongly in favor of assessment and accountability measures, but take issue with the specific way in which tests are used to penalize English language learners. By definition, these students are not complete in their knowledge of English, and they consistently score lower on state tests that are exclusively in English. The fact that the tests are only written in English not only creates a bias against students who are still learning English, but also reinforces the notion upheld by Sheltered English Immersion and Transitional Bilingual models that English is the superior language. This does not reflect the ideology of Dual Language models, which intend to show equal value of both the target language and heritage language (in the case of Latinas/os, English and Spanish, respectively).

According to Menken, ELLs score an average of 20-50% lower on tests in English language arts and other content-area subjects than native-English speakers (Menken 2010, 125). As a result, there is an illusion that ELLs are failing to learn English and core-subject material,

when in fact they are showing progress according to schools' own methods of assessment. Even a test intended to assess content-area knowledge in a subject such as math or science is given in English, and these added language demands may prevent an ELL from accurately showing what they know (Wolf et al 2010, 5). In addition to causing English learners to feel discouraged by their inadequate test scores, students and their schools are also penalized for not succeeding on the standardized assessments. Because ELLs do not score as well on standardized English tests, schools with large populations of English learners are more likely to be labeled as failing under the current national education policies (Menken 2010, 126).

Many states with high Latino/a populations require high school exit exams in order to graduate, posing a final hurdle even for English learners who have earned passing grades in school. Sullivan projects that by 2012, 87% of ELL students will be required to take an exit exam (Sullivan 2005, 1). The increased pressure caused by exit exams is also correlated with rising dropout rates among ELLs. For example, dropout rates among English learners in New York City rose by 8% in less than a decade after NCLB was implemented, while dropout rates of non-ELLs have dropped during that time.

III. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH METHODS

I. Questions and Themes in Field Research

Parents

Our research methods reflect the questions raised by prior scholarship about the role of parents in children's educational experiences. As Valencia reminds us of the historical legacy of Latino/a parental involvement and strategic mobilization around issues impacting their children's education (2008), recent research by Arias and Morillo-Campbell suggests a lack of communication and inclusion between schools and parents negatively affects the educational experience of their students (2008). Keeping in mind that ELL parents often face additional linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic challenges, our research explored the unique experiences of ELL parents by both assessing their satisfaction with the ELL curriculum, as well as identifying innovative methods of outreach and communication that foster closer relationships between parents and schools in the community.

Conducting interviews and focus groups with Latino parents to gauge how they critically assess the quality of ELL education for their children was a prominent characteristic of our research methods. Our approach was grounded in Valencia's theoretical framework of the *plight* and *struggle* dimensions of parent involvement and community action. Accordingly, our interviews and focus groups asked parents of ELL students to identify both the challenges and conflicts they have encountered within the system as well as instances of success with school teachers, administrators and their own children. We also incorporated the trio of obstacles presented by Arias and Morillo-Campbell, into our interview questions, asking our participants to what extent *school-based communication barriers*, *school-parent perceptions* and *logistics* affected parent's roles in the ELL education of their children (2008). Furthermore, we sought to test Gándara and Contreras' argument that a comprehensive dual-immersion program is a viable solution for further integration and bilingualism for ELL parents and their students. Finally, we applied Delgado-Gaitan's criteria of *connecting*, *sharing information* and *staying involved* to evaluate the current state of parent-school partnerships and suggest new methods of initiating and continuing Latino parent involvement in ESL education (2004).

Interview questions for parents reflected our efforts to create a more personal and comprehensive portrait of each participating parent. As many of our parent participants are recent immigrants to the United States, our initial questions addressed their family origins and their decision to leave the country of their origin. These questions provided an important introductory context to the variety of backgrounds and experiences represented among our participants, as well as enabling us to determine the amount of time they had spent in the United States as well as their own sense of cultural integration. Keeping in mind Arias and Morillo-Campbell's findings regarding the primary obstacles of ELL parent involvement in their children's education, our interview questions further explored how familiar parents were with the particular ESL program at their child's school, why their child was enrolled in a certain specific program, and whether they had influenced this decision in any way as parents. Additional questions also addressed other obstacles addressed by Delgado-Gaitan, such as the effectiveness of communication between schools and parents and the degree to which parents felt a sense of

belonging at their children's school. Lastly, in light of Gándara and Contreras' research regarding the best approaches of conceptualizing educational goals and desirable outcomes for ELL students, our concluding questions asked ELL parents to reflect on why it was important that their student acquired English fluency at school and what their expectations and hopes were for their own children beyond graduation from high school.

Students

It is important to note that we are looking at two very distinct ELL groups of students. We looked specifically at the Dual Language program at both Blue Ridge Elementary and Garrison Middle School which involves K-8th grade students; and at the ESL program at Walla Walla High School, which consists of 9-12th grade students. English Language Learners encompass such a variety of children who have different reasons for why they are enrolled in such programs. Essentially, the idea of these programs is to aid students who do not speak English, and to give them the opportunity to efficiently learn English. In our study, the Dual Language students were mostly born and raised in the United States whereas mostly of the ESL students were born in different countries and are relatively new to the United States.

The primary research suggests that a lack of support from schools creates a negative impact on a student's education. If a student's needs, such as learning English, are not being accommodated, then the student is not likely to succeed. The school itself might provide ELL programs, but it is crucial for the schools to have cultural awareness of their students' backgrounds, and comprehend that there are differences that should not be neglected, such as familial and social factors. Considering this, it is important to remember that we are looking at a variety of students who demonstrate different levels of assimilation and/or integration.

Staff

Teachers and administrators provided their perspectives on the policies for teaching ELLs at each school, and the questions we asked these participants were also based on the themes that recurred in our scholarly research. We gave school personnel the opportunity to assess the level of support and training they receive, and to speak about the relative merits of varying programs for teaching ELLs (Dual Language Immersion, Transitional Bilingual, ESL, etc). We also asked about the issue of assessment and high-stakes testing, which was a dominant theme in the literature about ELL education. Teachers and administrators discussed what they saw as the biggest challenges for ELLs in the Walla Walla Public Schools, allowing us to compare their views with how parents and students characterized their own situation.

II. Interview Process

While we endeavored to include the broadest range of student, parent and staff participation in our project, we recognize certain limitations to our study. The time frame of our interview process was limited due to the length of time involved in getting approval from the district before we could begin our research in the schools. As a result of this time constraint, we decided to use focus groups in addition to interviews with student and parent participants, in order to access a broader perspective and larger pool of participants. Because teachers and

administrators were easier to locate and contact than students and their families, we were able to conduct personal interviews with all staff participants.

Additionally, while Blue Ridge has implemented Dual Immersion for first and second grade cohorts only, we were able to speak to several parents whose children had completed or were presently enrolled in this program. However, due to the fact that ELL students constitute only a small percentage of the school populations at both Garrison and Wa-Hi, our primary method of recruiting participants was through presentations to ESL classrooms, which was not possible until we had completed the district approval process. Consequently, parents at these two schools are not as represented due to this time constraint. Furthermore, many ELL parents at all three schools had significant work and family commitments and were more difficult to recruit at the school and community events we attended to present our project.

Students

The interview method is most appropriate for our study, however due to the lack of student availability, we had to conduct focus groups, which were also well-suited to our research. Focus groups allow an interactive group setting where participants are allowed to freely talk amongst each other. Our first attempt to acquire participants was to give presentations about our research to ELL classrooms. Before the focus group, participants were given consent forms in English or Spanish explaining in detail our research focus. They were informed that their identity would not be disclosed; due to the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms are used to protect their real identities.

We conducted a total of six focus groups that included 28 students. The average focus group ran from 35 minutes to 55 minutes, which yielded about 5 hours of material. The focus groups were conducted in either in English or Spanish, which was decided according to each group's preference. We began the focus groups with inquiries about personal background, such as place of birth and how long they have lived here; then we asked them about their school experience in terms of their academic success and of their sense of belonging. Lastly, we asked about their plans for after high school.

Parents

Through a combination of face-to-face personal interviews and collaborative focus groups, our interview methods were designed to assess the experiences of ELL parents at Blue Ridge, Garrison and Walla Walla High School. While we initially presented our research proposal to students at Latino Club meetings and ESL classrooms at Wa-Hi, we encountered logistical challenges primarily due to extended district approval process as well as the relatively small percentage of ELL students at both Garrison and Wa-Hi. Despite these challenges, parent interviews were facilitated through personal contacts made on school campuses as well as through the support of Diana Erickson and Kim Doepker, the principal of Blue Ridge Elementary School.

Prior to each interview, we provided parents with the same consent form we provided to students, which was available in English or Spanish. We conducted a combination of personal

interviews and focus groups which involved 9 parent participants and yielded over 5 hours of interview material. Keeping in the mind the language backgrounds and personal preferences of each ELL parents, interviews were all conducted in Spanish and translated to English for the purposes of this project. Additionally, due to the aforementioned logistical challenges of initial outreach and recruitment of ELL students and their parents, we were not always able to match parents to their children through our interviews, which also enabled us to connect with a more diverse group of parents by accommodating their work and family schedules.

School Personnel

In order to assess the perspective of school personnel about dual language and ESL in the Walla Walla Public Schools, we conducted semi-structured personal interviews with teachers and administrators at the school and district levels. We met some participants at special school events and Parent-Teacher conferences, and we contacted others after finding them in the school directory online. We also used the snowball method and interviewed some school personnel after they had been mentioned by other interviewees. We conducted 10 interviews with teachers and administrators, yielding over 11 hours of interview material.

III. Study Demographics

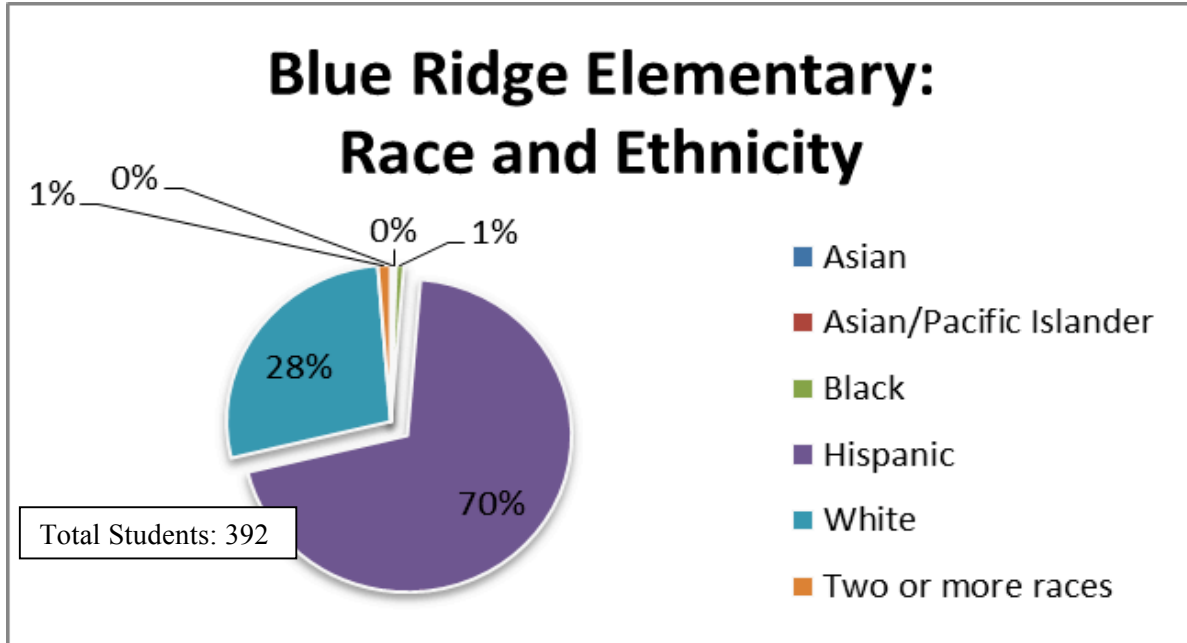


Figure 1: Blue Ridge Elementary has a total of 392 students currently, 294 of which are considered Hispanic.⁹

⁹ OSPI, Washington State Report Card, Blue Ridge Elementary, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=3004&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=3004&yrs=&year=2010-11>

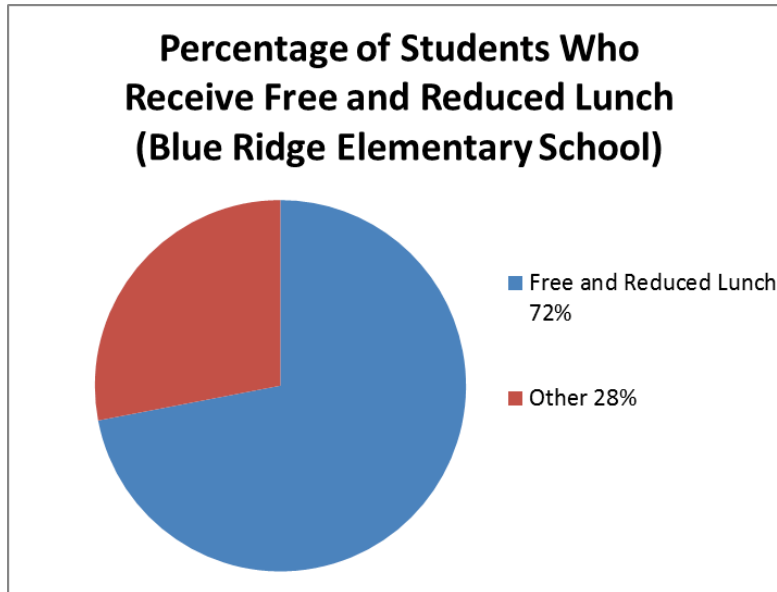


Figure 2: Blue Ridge Elementary has a large population of students who receive Free and Reduced lunch, which demonstrates that many of these students come from low-income families.¹⁰

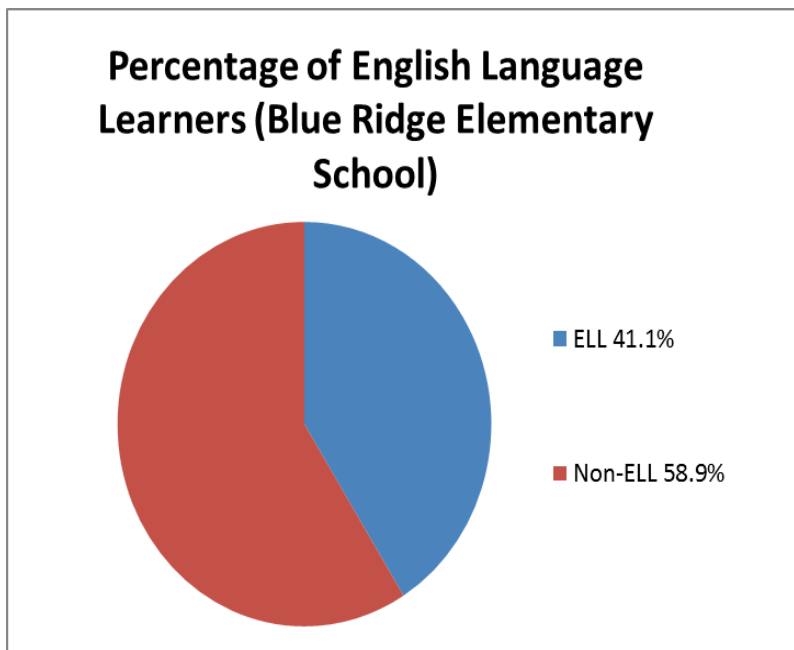


Figure 3: Blue Ridge Elementary currently has 171 English Language Learners (ELLs).¹¹

¹⁰ OSPI, Washington State Report Card, Blue Ridge Elementary, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=3004&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=3004&yrs=&year=2010-11>

¹¹ Ibid.

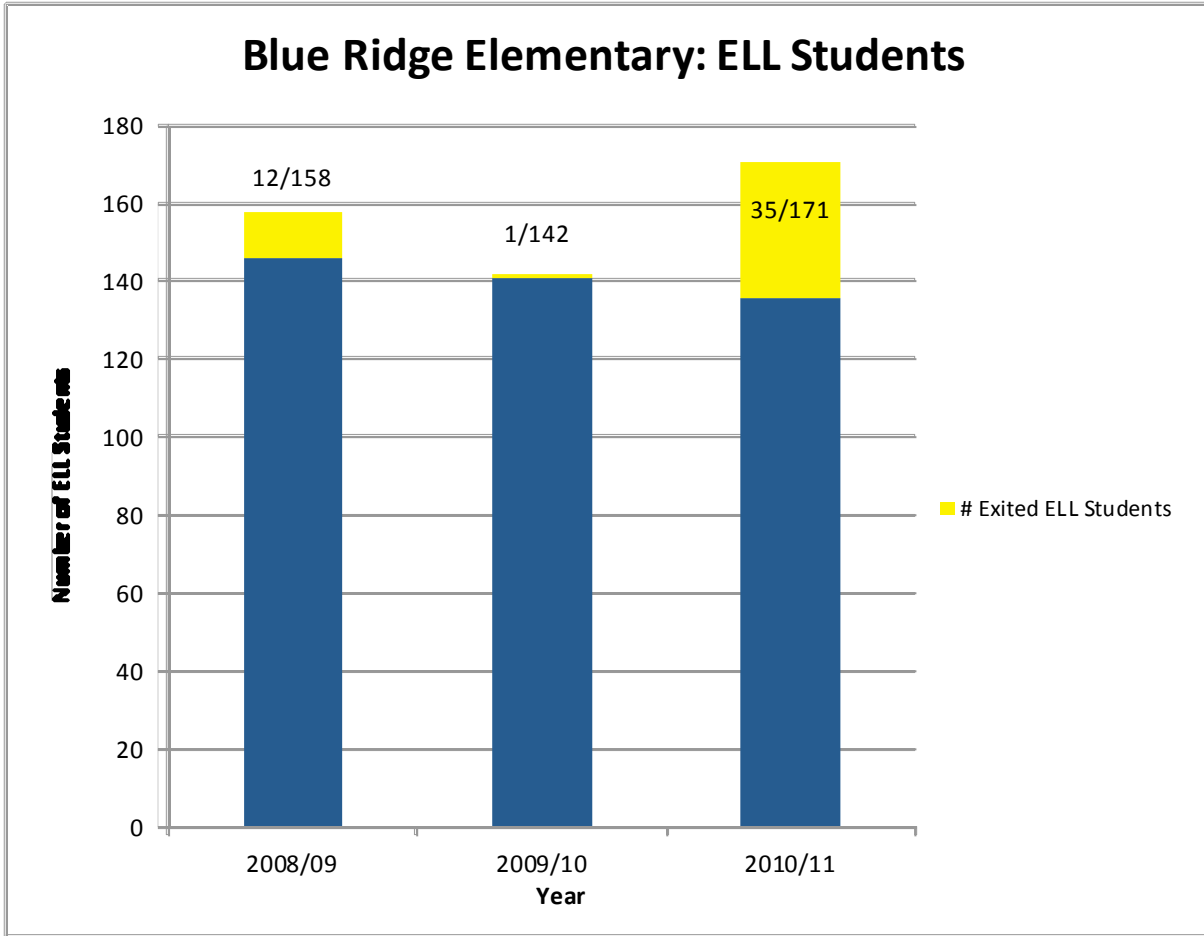


Figure 4: This bar graph demonstrate the total number of ELL student enrolled for the last three years. The yellow markings make evident the small number of student who exited out of the ELL program. In the last three years, on average only 9.6% of students exited out.¹²

¹² OSPI, Washington State Report Card, Blue Ridge Elementary, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=3004&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=3004&yrs=&year=2010-11>

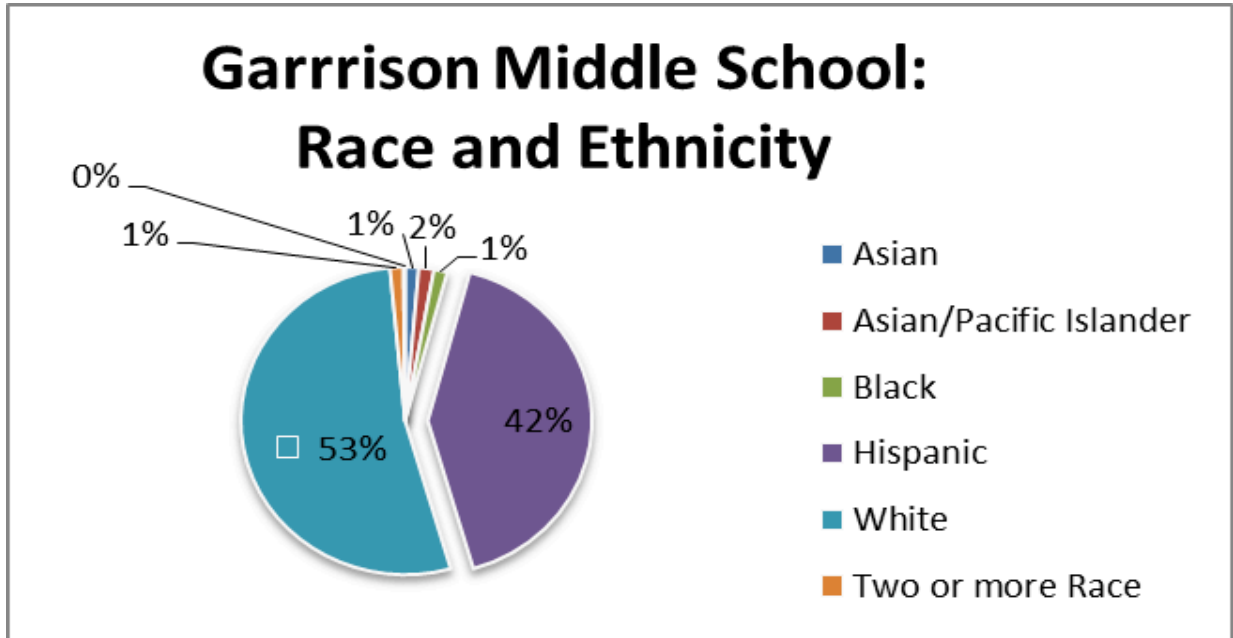


Figure 5: Garrison Middle School has a total of 595 students currently, 250 of which are considered Hispanics.¹³

¹³ OSPI, Washington State Report Card, Garrison Middle School, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=3001&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=3001&yrs=&year=2010-11>

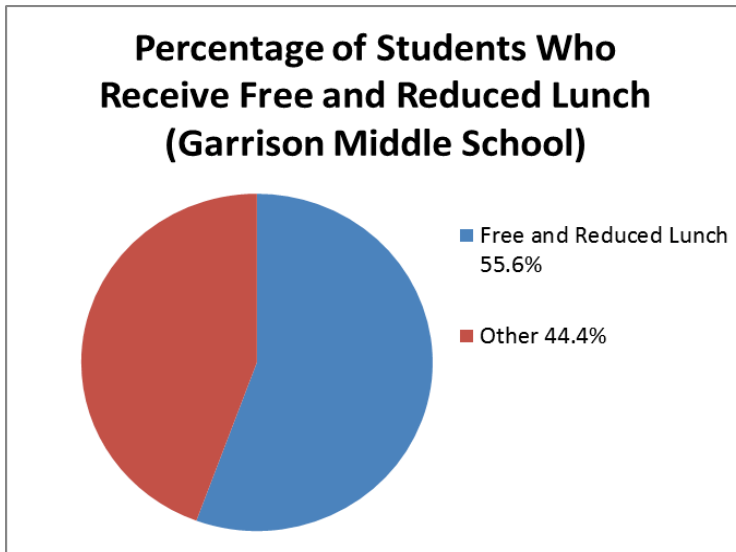


Figure 6: Garrison Middle School has a large population of students who receive Free and Reduced lunch, which demonstrates that many of these students come from low-income families.¹⁴

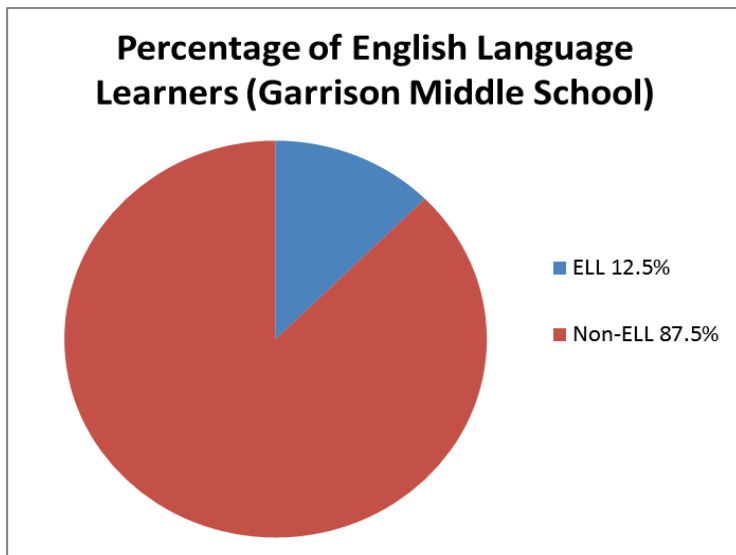


Figure 7: This pie graph shows the demographics of students who are currently enrolled in ELL programs and the amount of students who are not.¹⁵

¹⁴ OSPI, Washington State Report Card, Garrison Middle School, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=3001&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=3001&yrs=&year=2010-11>

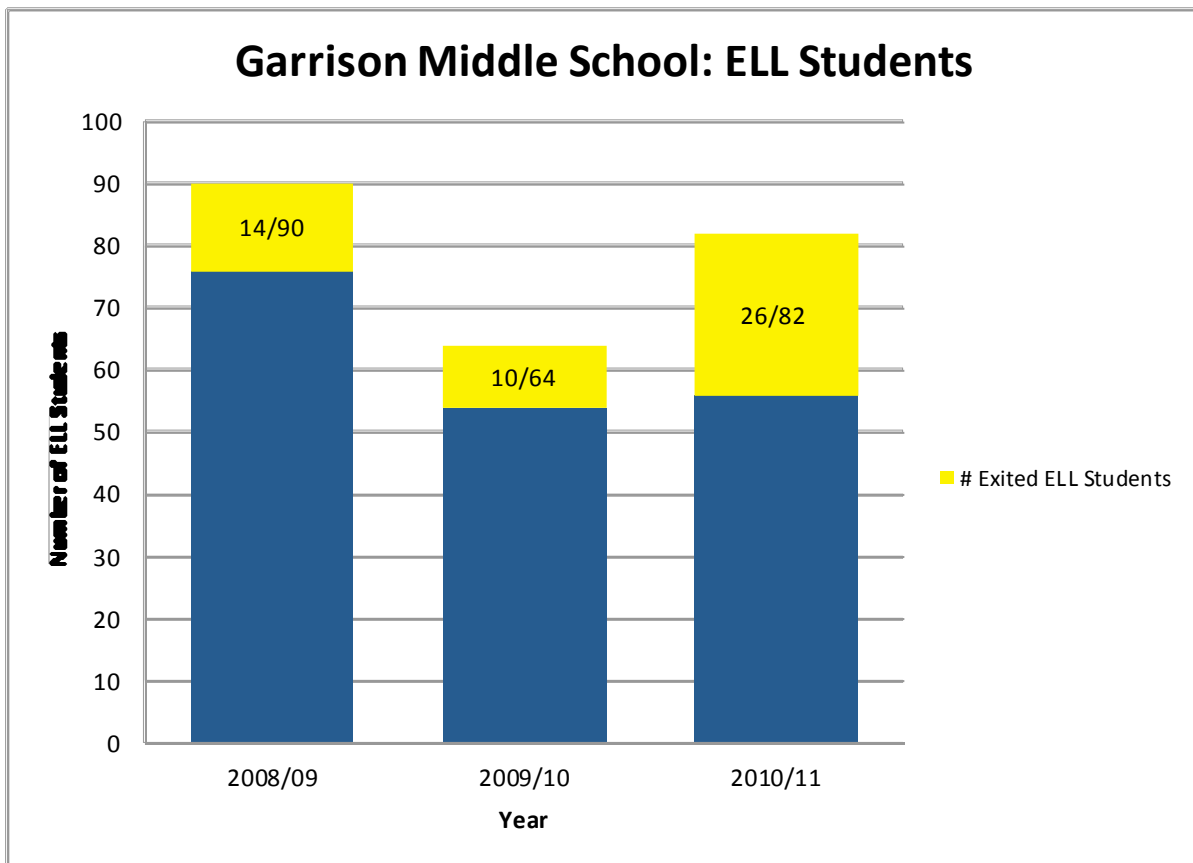


Figure 8:

This bar graph demonstrates the total number of ELL student enrolled for the last three years. The yellow markings make evident the small percentage of student who exited out of the ELL program. In the last three years on average only 21% of students exited out.¹⁶

¹⁵ OSPI, Washington State Report Card, Garrison Middle School, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=3001&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=3001&yrs=&year=2010-11>

¹⁶ Ibid.

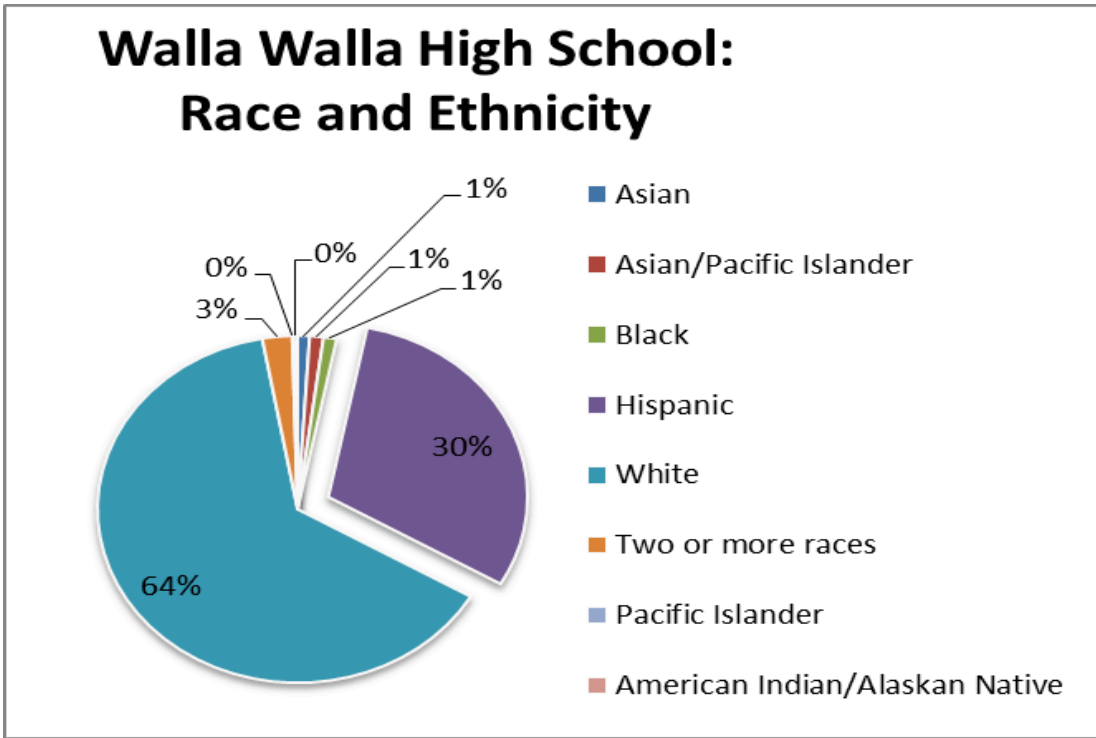


Figure 9: Walla Walla High School has a total of 1966 students currently enrolled, 590 of which are considered Hispanics.¹⁷

¹⁷ OSPI, Washington State Report Card, Walla Walla High School, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=3000&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=3000&yrs=&year=2010-11>

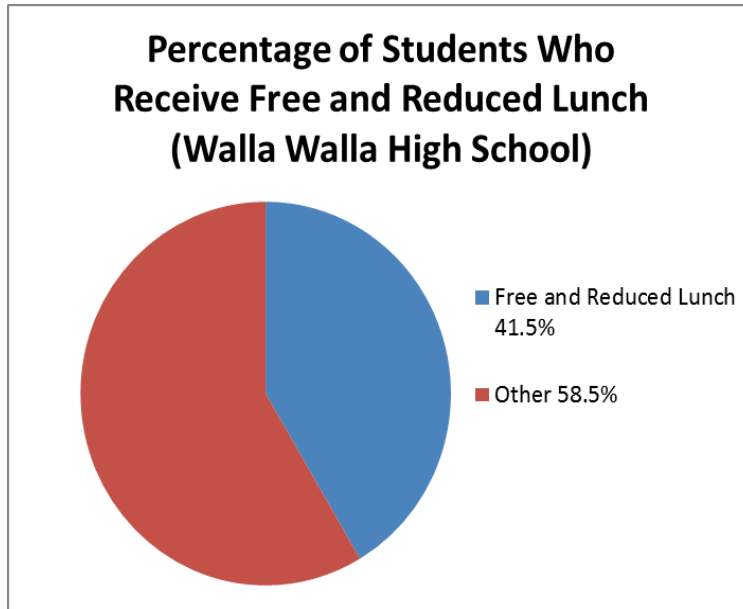


Figure 10: At Walla Walla High School over half of students student body receive Free and Reduced Lunch, which demonstrates that many of these students come from low-income families.¹⁸

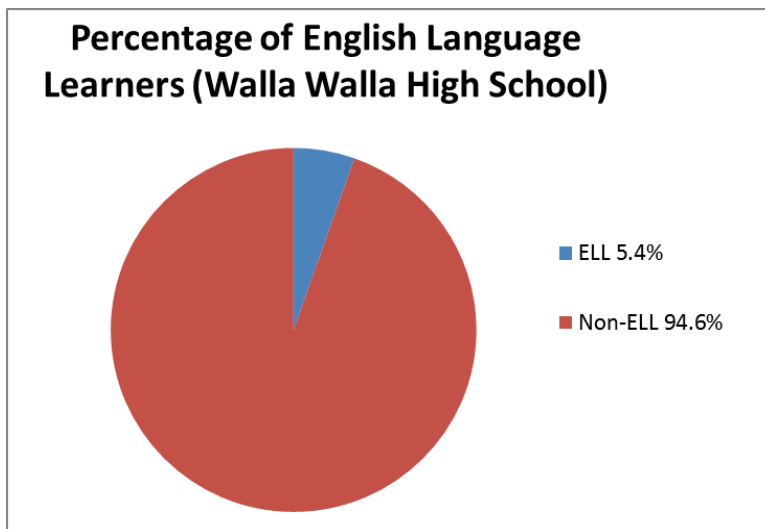


Figure 11: At Walla Walla High School the ELL student population consists of 5.4%, which is 108 students.¹⁹

¹⁸ OSPI, Washington State Report Card, Walla Walla High School, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=3000&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=3000&yrs=&year=2010-11>

¹⁹ Ibid.

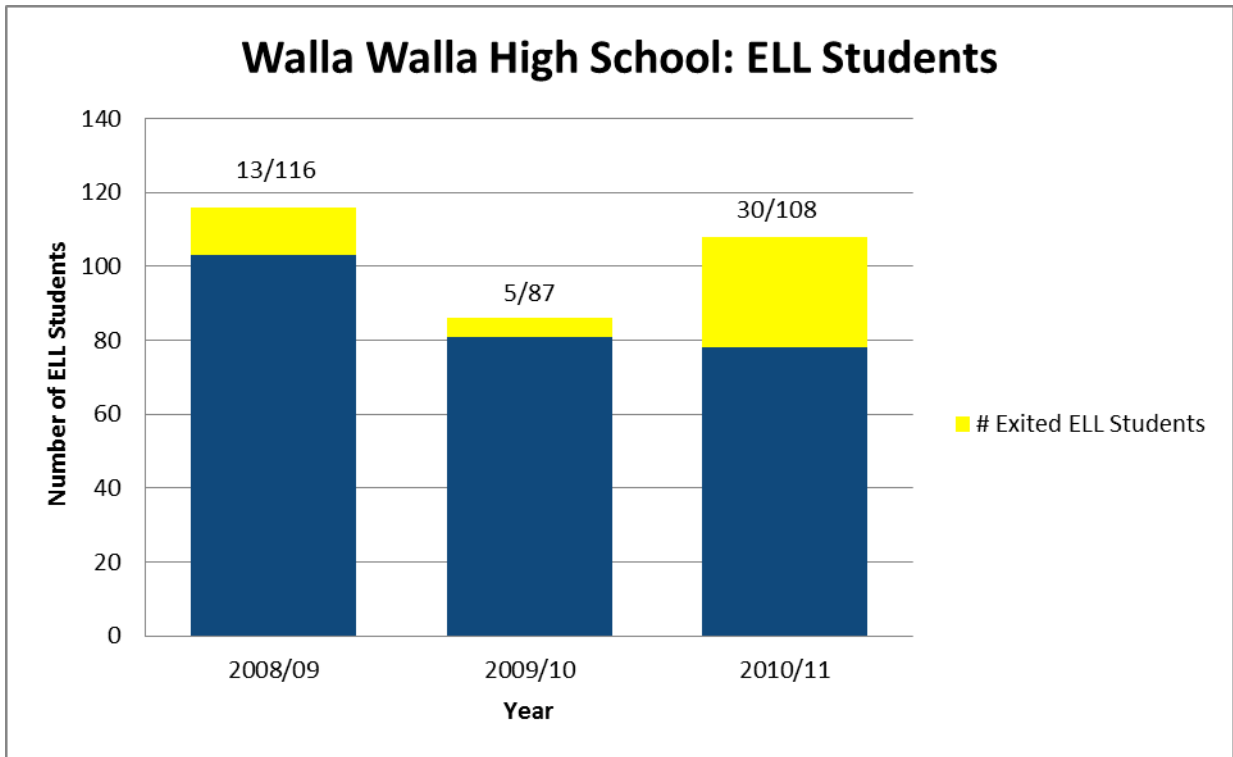


Figure 12:

This bar graph demonstrates the total number of ELL student enrolled for the last three years. The yellow markings make evident the small percentage of student who exited out of the ELL program. In the last three years on average only 15% of students exited out.²⁰

²⁰ OSPI, Washington State Report Card, Walla Walla High School, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=3000&reportLevel=School&orgLinkId=3000&yrs=&year=2010-11>

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY RESEARCH

Our analysis of primary research is separated into the following thematic sections:

- I. ESL Policies and Practices
- II. ELL Programs and the Challenges ELL Students Face
- III. Student Testing/Assessment
- IV. Student-Teacher Relationship
- V. Student Sense of Belonging in School Community (Student-Student Relationships)
- VI. Parent-School Relationship
- VII. Parent-Student Relationship
- VIII. Limitations for ELL Students

Note: In order to protect the identities of our participants and create a greater sense of trust, we have generated pseudonyms for all student and parents interview participants. None of the following names have any relation to any family member and are completely fictitious. Additionally, the majority of these interviews were personally translated from Spanish to English by our research team.

I. School Policies and Practices

A Note about Terms:

In our discussion of policies, we use a number of acronyms and program names. The most important terms to understand are as follows:

ELL - English Language Learner, a student who is currently in the process of learning English

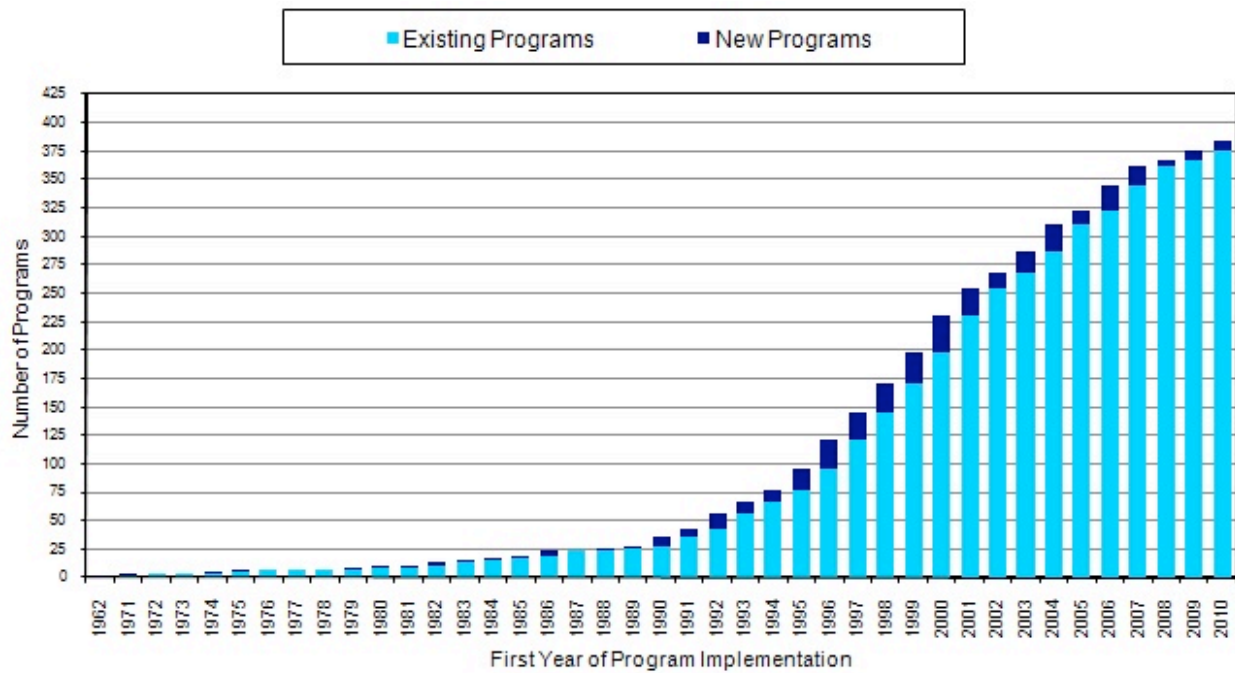
ESL - English as a Second Language, a type of program for teaching English to ELLs. This is not necessarily a bilingual program, and the major objective of the program is to teach English so that ELLs can exit out of the program.

Dual Language Immersion- Also known as simply Dual Language, this program teaches ELLs and non-ELLs in the same classroom, using a program in which all students spend half the day learning in Spanish and half of the day learning in English. This program is used at Blue Ridge Elementary, Sharpstein Elementary, Edison Elementary, and Garrison Middle School. Each school employs the policy to a different extent and in varying ways, with some schools (such as Blue Ridge) still in the process of introducing the program.

Blue Ridge

Each of the Walla Walla Public Schools has a slightly different approach to teaching English Language Learners (ELLs). At Blue Ridge, there is a Dual Language Immersion model, in which all of the students in the kindergarten and 1st grade spend 50% of the day learning in English and 50% of the day learning in Spanish. Science and Social Studies are taught in Spanish, while Math, Reading, and Art and Music classes are taught in English. Blue Ridge is currently in the process of introducing this Dual Language model to all grades. At the present

moment, grades 2-3 practice a Transitional Bilingual model, meaning that ELLs are taught part of the day in Spanish, with the amount of Spanish instruction decreasing until halfway through 3rd grade, by which time all instruction is in English. Grades 4-5 offer ESL services for students who still require special instruction for learning English. While the goal of the Transitional Bilingual model and the program currently in place in 2nd through 5th grade is for ELLs to “exit out” of the program, meaning that they learn enough English to be considered “former-ELLs,” the goal of Dual Language Immersion is for all students to achieve and maintain bilingualism and biliteracy. Dual Immersion programs have grown considerably across the United States in recent years (Fig.1).



Source: Directory of Two-Way Immersion Programs in the United States. Available at <http://www.cal.org/twi/directory>.

Figure 13

This graph displays the rapid growth of Dual Language Immersion programs across the United States in the past two decades.

Garrison

At Garrison Middle School, some ELLs and non-ELLs have the option of participating in a limited Dual Language program, in which students take a Bilingual Reading/Language Arts class that involves learning from different teachers in both Spanish and English.

Wa-Hi

At Wa-Hi, ELL students take two different classes that are specifically geared towards learning English: a Foundations of English class and an ESL Oral class. Non-ELL students are also in the Foundations of English class, and ELLs are paired with English native speakers, who are considered to be peer tutors and are sometimes referred to as “elbow buddies”. Meanwhile, the ESL Oral class is only for ELLs.

II. ELL Programs and the Challenges ELL Students Face

Blue Ridge

Cristina Calderón, a parent of a daughter at Blue Ridge Elementary School, considered the ESL curriculum to be a successful program that provides a rigorous and engaging education for her child. She specifically praised the positive effects of the Dual Immersion program at Blue Ridge as an effective means of language acquisition not only for her daughter, but for herself as well:

Español

Cristina: “Mi hija venía chiquilla a los EEUU antes de preschool, y quería que mi hija este en este programa bilingüe para que se aprende ambos idiomas iguales. Con tantos niños que tengo yo, no puedo dedicar más al aprendizaje de la mía y creo que si, esta muy bien la programa bilingüe porque mi hija ahora sabe como escribir y leer en español, pero también gracias a la ayuda de los maestros, porque estamos esforzando que ella puede salir adelante, por eso estoy de acuerdo que el programa esta muy bien para mi hija.”

English

Cristina: “My daughter came to the US as a small girl before preschool, and I wanted my daughter to be in this bilingual program so that she could learn both languages the same way. With as many children as I have, I cannot dedicate as much time to my daughter’s learning and I believe that yes, the program is strong because my daughter now knows how to write and read in Spanish, but also thanks to the teachers, we are ensuring that she achieves higher, which is why I agree that the program is very good for my daughter.”²¹

Indeed, Cristina’s narrative reflects a broader trend of high parental satisfaction in regards to the rigor and results of the dual immersion ESL programs presently in place at Blue Ridge. The majority of English Language Learner parents at Blue Ridge also shared Cristina’s experience of arriving in the United States as immigrants and seeking a program that would rapidly and effectively teach English to their young children. Additionally, bilingualism was uniformly valued by ELL parents at Blue Ridge, as a desirable form of social capital and an asset

²¹ Cristina Calderón, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, December 04, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

for their children. The overwhelming approval of the ESL program at Blue Ridge, both in terms of effective instruction and stimulating classroom environments for children, was a reoccurring theme among participants whose children were enrolled in the dual language program at the school. This trend is indicative of a school that has connected with parents by sharing information regarding their children's achievement, and engages them to stay involved in the learning process of the program (Delgado-Gaitan 2004).

First grade teacher Berta Herrera-Trujillo emphasized the challenge of low socioeconomic status or unstable home life that some Blue Ridge students face, rather than seeing students' status as ELLs as their biggest challenge. At Blue Ridge, where over 70% of students identify as Hispanic, 72% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch.²² Berta gave the example of a student who has changed foster parents three times and whose brother was recently adopted, and discussed the effect that this type of emotional challenge has on a student's classroom behavior and mental state.²³ Phyllis Garanzuay, a teacher in the bilingual 3rd grade classroom at Blue Ridge, also emphasized the issue of economics as a challenge for students, citing the research that argues:

*"All those kids that come from poverty, they don't have the resources that other kids do. So that's going to play a big part in what the students come with. Their language is going to be low, and it's not just the bilingual kids, it's kids that come from poverty. Their language is low, they don't have that much interaction at home, they don't have books, and they don't have the resources."*²⁴

Despite their belief that low socioeconomic status was the biggest challenge to students academically, Blue Ridge staff did not ultimately see this as an insurmountable obstacle. After explaining the above, Phyllis said, "So those are the disadvantages that they come with, but I think that all kids can learn, no matter what economic basis they come from."

Berta also addressed the challenge that young students in a Dual Language program often feel when they are learning in their non-native language. But she did not see this as a drawback, and instead expressed that it is a positive feature of the Dual Language program that all of the students are language learners, because they are all learning both English and Spanish. She explained that students sometimes want someone to translate for them, but she stressed the importance of pushing the students to participate actively in both languages and giving them the opportunity to use their skills to creatively work together and explain things to each other rather than translating. Teachers see this challenge for students in a positive light, and they argue that is helpful for students to collaborate and develop their language skills rather than requiring translation in order to understand the content. This is one of the many benefits of a Dual Language program over other methods of ESL in which the students are not all learning a new language together and working with other students who model the target language.

²² OSPI Washington State Report Card, Blue Ridge Elementary, 2010-11.

²³ Berta Herrera Trujillo, Blue Ridge teacher, Interview by E. Basham, November 11, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

²⁴ Phyllis Garanzuay, Interview by E. Basham, November 15, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

Garrison

Many Garrison students come from Latino immigrant and Spanish-speaking families. Most of their parents are not fluent in English, which lead many students to begin their education only knowing their native language. Despite their limited language abilities, the majority of the students stated that by end of their kindergarten year they had learned sufficient English. Almost all of the students we interviewed have been enrolled in the Dual Language program since they were in kindergarten. Additionally, all the students interviewed at Garrison were born the United States, and the majority of them were born and raised in Walla Walla. They have been through the Dual Language program since they started their education, with the exception of their 7th grade year when the Dual Language program was not offered.

Prior Dual Language Program:

Jennifer: "At Sharpstein we learned a lot. Before, we couldn't understand anything!"²⁵

The majority of students at Sharpstein Elementary, where most of Garrison interview participants completed elementary school, gave positive feedback on the Dual Language program at their school. A few students mentioned that it was initially strange to be in school speaking another language; largely due to the fact that they did not understand everything they were being told. Nevertheless, they gradually began to comprehend the lessons taught, such as learning colors, months, and days of the week. They also mentioned having a sense of belonging, but did not say the same about the program at Garrison Middle School. It should also be noted that these students commence their learning at a very young age. This is congruent to Carrasquillo & Rodriguez's claim that younger students perform well at learning a new language because they have more time to practice. However at a young age, ELL students do not always build the same language content. (Carraquillo & Rodriguez 2006).

Current Dual Language Program:

Samantha: "Well it's harder. It's more English over here [at Garrison Middle School]. Everything is in English, except for Spanish class. In Sharpstein, it was half and half, like science and reading were in Spanish. We now speak English pretty much all day."²⁶

Students who were enrolled in the Dual Language Program at Sharpstein Elementary conveyed that their transition from the dual language program at Sharpstein, which was half the day in Spanish and the other half in English, to their current Dual Language program, which consists of only one class in Spanish has been difficult. Furthermore, it was noted that quite a few students were having difficulties in their academic classes, which are all taught in English. They gave the impression that their struggle was due to change in program structure, however that is never clearly stated.

CR: "How do you like the Dual Language program?"

²⁵ Jennifer, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

²⁶ Samantha, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

Oswald: "We have two dual language classes. They're kind of boring. They're okay I guess."

Ana: "Sometimes they make you do little kid stuff!"

Oswald: "We have been doing the same thing since kindergarten!"

Ana: "The Spanish is really easy, and you sing songs and stuff!"²⁷

The students gave positive feedback about having been in the Dual Language program in elementary school, but when they were asked if they currently like the Dual Language program in middle school, they all immediately agreed that they did not like it. The majority of the students explained that it depended on the teacher and how he or she taught the class. They stated that they feel that are being treated like little kids at times. They specifically talked about one teacher being too easy. They often felt that everything they did was pointless and geared towards little kids. The students also felt that they have learned everything they need to know, and were tired of it. They also claimed that they are not being challenged in Spanish, which led them to become bored. Just as the National Research Council (1999) suggested, ELL students need to be constantly evaluated, and a continuous modification to the program should occur. It is also recommended that teachers use the students' evaluations as a means to evaluate what within a curriculum is working effectively and what is not (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez 2006). In the end, students should be gradually progressing in both their English and Spanish proficiency.

Miguel: "It is hard to transfer everything that you learn one year to another year. What we learn in English last year is kind of hard to transfer everything to this year in Spanish. We've been learning for like 5-6 years and you end up forgetting everything in a year. Like I've forgotten a lot of big words in Spanish."²⁸

As stated previously, numerous students claimed that they do not like the Dual Language program (at Garrison Middle School), and have stated that they do not want to continue with the program at Wa-Hi. Despite those remarks, students also claimed that they do want to forget Spanish. Miguel, as well as many other students, has found it difficult to learn both English and Spanish, especially in the way the Dual Language program has been integrated at Garrison. Consequently, the gap year that the students took impacted their development insofar as they have had trouble catching up in their Spanish vocabulary.

While parents expressed general satisfaction with the level of English language acquisition of the ESL program at Garrison Middle School, our interviews also indicated that parents were more likely to attribute the academic readiness and success of their children to their previous Dual Immersion preparation at Sharpstein Elementary or Blue Ridge rather than to the Garrison program specifically. As Sofía Ortega, a parent whose sons began their ESL education at Blue Ridge and continued on to Garrison, suggests:

Sofía: "Yo pienso que el programa bilingüe nos ayuda bastante. Vinieron mis hijos desde México como niños, y al principio cuando él llegó a Blue Ridge aquí era muy difícil para él, pero poco a poco sí, salieron muy bien. Tengo dos hijos, y el otro fue a Garrison desde Blue Ridge. Gracias a los maestros de Blue Ridge y el distrito que mandan esta

²⁷ Oswald and Ana, Student Focus Group C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

²⁸ Miguel, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

ayuda, porque ya se que en otros distritos no lo tienen. Por eso mis hijos ahora están saliendo bien en Garrison porque estaba bien preparados anteriormente.”

*Sofia: “I think that the bilingual program helps us quite a bit. My sons came from Mexico as small children, and although it was very difficult for one son here at first here at Blue Ridge, little by little, he did very well. I have two sons, and the other went to Garrison from Blue Ridge. Thanks to the teachers at Blue Ridge and the district that send this help, because I know that in some other districts they do not have these bilingual programs. Thus, I think my sons are doing well at Garrison because they were prepared well previously”.*²⁹

Sofia’s comments confirm our findings that a streamlined, comprehensive Dual Language ESL program at Blue Ridge, Garrison and Wa-Hi would provide a consistently challenging curriculum for ELL students and promote long-term confidence of ELL parents regarding the academic preparedness of their children. Sofia specifically attributes the success of her children at Garrison to their first years enrolled in the Dual Language program at Blue Ridge, and she enthusiastically identifies the strong preparation and high expectations as the primary factors for her son’s success at Garrison. Although parents were not as enthusiastic regarding their experiences with the ESL program at Garrison, teachers and staff at Garrison are encouraged to consider way to connect, share information and stay involved with ELL parents throughout their transition from Blue Ridge (Delgado-Gaitan 2004). Furthermore, expanded communication and collaboration between teachers and staff at both Garrison and Blue Ridge would produce useful strategies for outreach to parents during their children’s important transition from different elementary and middle school ESL programs.

Teachers at Garrison echoed Blue Ridge teachers in highlighting the issue of socioeconomic class as the biggest challenge for students. At both schools, teachers rejected the idea that ELLs are inherently different from any other students and expressed that both ELLs and non-ELLs from poor families struggle academically because of their relatively limited access to learning resources (like books) outside of the classroom. Marit Nierman, a teacher in the dual reading/ language arts program at Garrison said that the focus is on “taking care of all of our students at the same time.”³⁰

Principal Gina Yonts reiterated teachers’ views, saying that the philosophy of the school is: “Trying to get everybody to own all the kids and bust out of that philosophy of, ‘Well I don’t have to worry about kids that don’t read well, because if they don’t read well, they’re going to be with the special ed teacher. Or if there are kids that need second language support, well they’re in the ESL program and I don’t need to worry about them.’ No-- they are all our kids.”³¹

²⁹ Sofia Ortega, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, December 04, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

³⁰ Marit Nierman, Teacher at Garrison, Interview by E. Basham, November 29, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

³¹ Gina Yonts, Principal at Garrison, Interview by E. Basham, November 18, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

Wa-Hi

ELL students face various challenges in school, particularly when it comes to academic obstacles. The most critical factor that affects an ELL student's academic success is the language barrier. Walla Walla High School provides ELL students with an English Second Language (ESL) program. The majority of these students are also fairly new to the United States, and the time that they have lived in the United States ranges from four months to four years. The participants interviewed were between the ages of 13 to 18. The majority of these students also had limited English proficiency, yet they attend a school that does not necessarily accommodate all of their needs. Students are expected to learn English perfectly, but they are given a limited amount of time to do so. While individual circumstances vary (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez 2006), on average only 15 percent of ESL students exit on a yearly basis, when it typically takes a student about 5-7 years to be English proficient.

Alicia: "El año pasado, cuando recién llegue era muy difícil. Me sentaba sola en la hora de almuerzo. ¡Me ponía a llorar cada día al llegar a mi casa porque no entendía lo que me decía la gente y no sabía que responder! Pero en cuanto conocí a una muchacha, ella me presento a otros muchachos. No entendía lo que me decían, pero por lo menos ya no estaba sola. Este año mejoro mi inglés y tengo más amigos."

*Alicia "Last year, when I first got here, it was so hard. I was sitting by myself at lunch. I would cry every day when I got home, because I didn't understand what people would say, and I didn't know what to say! But I as soon as I met a girl, she introduced me to others. I didn't understand what they said, but at least I wasn't alone. This year I know better English and I have more friends"*³²

Almost all the students share a similar experience when it comes to their first year of attending Wa-Hi. Overall, students had a difficult time transitioning and integrating into a new school environment. Many students reported beginning school feeling alone, with no one to help them. Students spent many days, even weeks sitting alone in their classrooms, and at lunch many of them were terrified and clueless as to how they should approach someone or how to reply when someone approached them. Alicia, as well as other ELL students, did not understand what others would say to her, for she had never attended a school where English was spoken. Even today, some students continue to feel uneasy when approached by others in English, despite comprehending what is being said and also being able to respond.

Pedro: "Creo que el hecho de no saber inglés es mi único obstáculo. Es que con el tiempo pienso que lo voy a aprender a hablarlo mejor. Y no estar así como ahora, preguntando que es esto y que es eso."

*Pedro: "I think my only obstacle is not knowing English. It's that with time, I think I will learn to speak it better, and I will not be the way I am now, asking what this is and what that is."*³³

³² Alicia, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

³³ Pedro, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

The students who have been in Walla Walla for less than a year appear to have the most difficulty transitioning into a new, foreign school. Nevertheless, they are fully aware that it will take time and practice. For instance, Pedro believes that his only obstacle is English, and once he has mastered the language he will be capable of accomplishing and succeeding in any kind of task. On the other hand, students who have been here for more than two years seem to understand, write, and read English, although many are still not confident and believe they have many limitations when it comes to speaking.

ESL

CR: *“¿Piensan que han aprendido mucho ingles?”*

Raul: *“Bueno no mucho, pero si un poco. Poco a poco con el tiempo. Si no tomara esta clase no creo que aprendería, batallaría hasta más.”*

CR: *“¿Que tan bien hablan el Ingles?”*

Rodrigo: *“Mas o menos.”*

Raul: *“Un poco, lo entiendo, lo leo, y hablo un poco, y escribir también un poco.”*

Albert: *“Apenas estoy aprendiendo.”*

CR: *“Do you believe that you have learn a lot of english?”*

Raul: *“Well not a lot, I would say a little. Little by little, with time. If I didn’t take the class, I don’t think I would learn, I would battle even more.”*

CR: *“How well do you speak English?”*

Rodrigo: *“So and so.”*

Raul: *“A little, I understand it, I read it, and I speak it a little, and write it a little.”*

Albert: *“I’m barely learning.”³⁴*

There are a variety of answers when students were asked about how they felt about their progress learning English. Many students believed they had learned a minimal amount of English during the time they have been attending school. Indeed, even senior ELL students demonstrated have a limited English ability. Raul, who has lived in Walla Walla for four years, stated that his English has improved since he first arrived, but is not satisfied with his ability. He claimed to understand it, and capable of reading, but in terms of speaking and writing he feels inadequate. Yet he maintains a positive attitude that with time, he will learn. All of the student interviews also made it clear that without ESL classes, they would have much more of a difficult time learning English.

CR: *“¿Intentan hablar en ingles?”*

Julio: *“¡Si! En la escuela, y a veces en la casa, pues no mas en la escuela por que en la casa nadie sabe ingles, es dificil comunicarnos en ingles.”*

Diana: *“En mi casa hablamos español, porque mis papas no hablen ingles. Pero a veces me gusta practicar con ellos, y enseñarles ingles. Creo que aprendimos más con los amigos que con la familia porque ellos saben más ingles.”*

³⁴ Raul, Rodrigo and Albert, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

CR: *“Do you attempt to speak English?”*

Julio: *“Yes! At school, and sometimes at home, well at school much more because at home no one knows English. It is difficult to communicate in English.”*

Diana: *“At my house, we speak Spanish because my parents do not speak English. At times I like to practice with them, and teach them English. I think we learn more with friends than with family because [friends] know more English.”³⁵*

ELL students often befriend other ELL students. The students state that they frequently speak in Spanish because it is much more convenient when it comes to communicating with others. There are times that they will attempt to speak English to each other, but it becomes difficult and not very effective, especially when they want to get a point across. The students' parents, who usually know even less English, or even none at all, provide few opportunities to practice English at home. While parents want their children to excel and learn English, it is unfamiliar to them to promote speaking at English at home. A couple of students stated that when they learn new words at school they will share that knowledge with their parents, but that they do not practice conversation in English on a daily basis. From various student responses, it is apparent that students would much rather speak in Spanish. While most students do want to learn a new language, their native language is often the only way to communicate with their family and friends. Students claimed that in speaking English, they encounter a constant struggle of having to think about how to say every single sentence they attempt to convey.

Classroom Content:

CR: *“¿Me pueden contar de una vez que se han sentido incomodos?”*

Rodrigo: *“En unas clases, hay trabajos de grupo, y a veces tenemos que explicar enfrente de la clase.”*

CR: *“¿Que hacen en esa situación?”*

Rodrigo: *“No más se nos quedamos parados, mirando”*

Albert: *“Es mucho más difícil comunicarnos en comparación de los demás compañeros. Y luego cuando tenemos que hacer cosas en grupo, para participar es incomodo. No te sientes a gusto porque hay personas, hay gente que toma broma como cuando hay gente que no sabe inglés. Algunos que se burlan, pero a mi no me importa lo que digan, pero sin duda a veces si duele.”*

CR: *“Can you tell me of a time you have felt uncomfortable?”*

Rodrigo: *“In some classes, there are group projects where you have to give an explanation in front of the class.”*

CR: *“What do you do in those situations?”*

Rodrigo: *“We just stand up there, looking.”*

Albert: *“It is much more difficult to communicate compared to our classmates. Then we have to do things in groups, participating is uncomfortable. You do not feel well because*

³⁵ Julio and Diana, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

there are people that make fun of people who do not know English. Some think it is funny, but I don't care what others say. But without a doubt there are times it does hurt."³⁶

In the classroom, students face the challenge of having to understand the academic content and most importantly being able to participate in class. Students such as Alberto and Rodrigo feel that they have a much harder time in class due to the fact that they are not able to communicate effectively, especially to the extent that their classmates are able to interact. When it comes to participating in class, it is uncomfortable and unpleasant for them. Certain classes require students to give presentations, which is often a challenging project for ELL students. Several students emphasized that during presentation there are time when they simply stand in front of the class, feeling clueless.

*Cecilia: "¡En mi clase de historia, hay veces que no tomo buena notas, pero es porque el maestro habla bien rápido. A veces me siento mal porque siento que ya debería de saber lo que me dice, pero es difícil!"*³⁷

Cecilia: "In my history class there are times that I do not take good notes because the teacher speaks very fast. Sometimes I feel bad because I feel that I should understand what I'm told, but it is difficult!"

Students feel that they are learning English in their ESL class, but not quite enough to be fluent on their own. Several of the students stated that their academic classes are difficult, despite their progress learning English. Not only are students combating the language barrier, but are also struggling to gain knowledge and mastery of the academic material. The students share the common feeling of progress, yet they are not completely confident in their English ability. It is vital to note the difficulties students have when it comes to learning the academic material, especially in a language that is relatively new to them. Spanish is often the only way they can effectively communicate with others. Academic content is often difficult to grasp and comprehend for most students, and even more so when it is in a language that is not your native language. Some of the students confessed that there are times when they have absolutely no comprehension of what the teacher is saying. There are times they have no idea what is being said to them because it is spoken too fast and they are unable to grasp what they are being taught. Specifically, some students complain of not being able to understand history lectures, where they are expected to take notes. The textbooks students are given are also considered useless to them, due to the fact that they are only in English, a language that they are still attempting to grasp.

CR: "¿Que hacen cuando no hay alguien quien te ayude?"

Julio: "Pues, no podemos hacer nada por que no entendemos. No lo podemos leer muy bien. Hacemos lo que podemos. Me gustaría que pusieran más maestros que nos ayuden!"

Rodrigo: "Como yo una vez tenia la clase de fotografía, y tenia que ser una biografía de cinco fotógrafos. En esa clase no tenía nadie que me ayudara porque era electivo. Le pide ayuda a un compañero de clase pero no me ayudo. Al fin, lo ese todo yo, me salió bien."

³⁶ Rodrigo and Albert, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

³⁷ Cecilia, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

CR: "What do when there is no one to help you?"

Julio: "Well, we can't do anything because we do not understand. We don't read it well. We do what we can. I would like [the school] to provide more teachers that could help us."

Rodrigo: "Like one time, I had a photography class. I had to do a bibliography of five photographers. In that class I didn't have [a para-educator] that would help because it's an elective. I ask a classmate for help but he ended up not helping me. In the end I did it on my own. It turned out good."³⁸

The students claim to lack sufficient English to complete their assignments. At times, they experience feelings of distress and even helplessness in order to make the best of the situation. Without a doubt, they are aware of differences between their classmates and themselves. There are students who attempt to participate in class and speak English, indifferent to what others may say. At the same time, there are students who are discouraged and no longer feel comfortable enough to participate in the English learning process.

While parents of ELL students are also supportive of their children's ESL education, our findings also reflect a significant gap in terms of familiarity and confidence regarding the rigor of coursework. The Latino parents who shared their experiences in our interviews and focus groups all expressed their satisfaction with the ESL programs in place at Walla Walla High School. However, when asked about whether they felt their students were being adequately challenged, not only in terms of gaining English fluency within the ESL classroom but throughout the curriculum, participants often referenced homework assignments as the primary metric of their child's academic preparedness. Indeed, there are additional resource that parents should pursue and familiarize themselves with, including the availability of college-preparatory classes and results on standardized assessments that parents may often remain unaware of due to language barriers. As Walla Walla High School parent María Hernández said, her perspective on her daughter's academic preparedness was based upon homework assignments that either she was unfamiliar with or that learned simultaneously:

AD: "Señora Hernández, ¿puede decirme sobre la tarea y el rigor de las clases de su hija?"

María: "Pues si, esta saliendo bien porque también nosotros estamos aprendiendo. Yo le digo que no se la mayoría de sus tareas porque están escritas en ingles y no lo se, aunque a veces puedo ayudarla con las matemáticas. Es que las respuestas son casi iguales y yo puedo ayudarla, pero en ingles no tanto. Muchas veces estoy aprendiendo ingles con ella, porque ella sabe mas que yo y me ayuda y me enseña también. Que abren más el coco, como dice en México".

AD: "Ms. Hernandez, can you tell me about the homework assignments and how difficult they are for your daughter?"

³⁸ Julio and Rodrigo, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

María: “Well yes, it’s going well because we are also learning with her. I tell her I don’t know how to read most of her homework because it is written in English and I don’t know English very well, but sometimes I can help her with math. The answers are usually the same and I can help her, but in English not as much. Oftentimes I am learning English along with her, because she knows more English than I do and she even helps and teaches me as well. Que abren mas el coco, as they say Mexico.”³⁹

The image of María and her daughter working together on coursework at home demonstrates a positive effect of ESL coursework and its role in strengthening relationships between ELL parents and their students. At the same time, this example also highlights the language barrier that often prevents greater involvement of ELL parents in schools. María also informed us that she had not completed a high school education in Mexico, and her status as an ELL herself further limited her involvement in activities such as parent-teacher communication, classroom visits and participation in other school-related activities such as volunteering and attending meetings of Parent-Teacher Associations. Due to the fact that María often struggled with homework assignments alongside her daughter, she may have been at a disadvantage in terms of evaluating whether the coursework her daughter received as an ELL student was as rigorous as other classes for non-ELL students at Wa-Hi. Such obstacles also reflect the common difficulties ELL parents encounter due to communication and logistical barriers to greater involvement at their child’s school (Arias and Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Greater communication between parents and school personnel about opportunities for English language acquisition, such as Garrison Night School, would help parents bridge this language barrier and assume a more active role in the academic success of their students while also building a sense of partnership between parents and the school.

While parents identified their inability to work on homework with their children as one of the biggest academic challenges for students, school staff at Wa-Hi identified different issues, such as the lack of school materials in the native language. However, students, parents, and teachers all emphasized the issue of limited language ability in some way, and this was at the heart of the academic challenge to students in each group’s perspective. Although teachers did not discuss the difficulty for parents in providing help with homework, they reiterated what students said about the challenge of having all instruction in English at Wa-Hi. Overall, teachers seem to be more optimistic about ELL struggles in the English-only school environment than students themselves are.

Kim Kelsay, the coordinator and head teacher of the ESL program at Wa-Hi, acknowledged that ordinary high school classes are sometimes difficult for English Language Learners, especially the students with the lowest level of English ability. (These students are referred to as “Level 1s.”) The ESL classes are taught exclusively in English, as are the content classes, presenting an extra challenge to students who do not know much English yet. She emphasized the role of paraprofessionals and peer tutors in providing extra support and translation help to the students who might not have enough English to follow the class. She said “It is difficult, but I think we use enough strategies to help make the content accessible for them,

³⁹ María Hernández, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, November 12, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

like with pictures and charts and their peer tutors and talking with other students in their own language.”⁴⁰

Another challenge for ELLs that she called attention to was the lack of Spanish-language materials in other classes. She explained that in addition to helping students understand what’s going on in the classroom and with assignments, paraprofessionals will translate the textbook for students. Kim Kelsay said “It’s really sad that we don’t have textbooks in Spanish. But we don’t. And that is a big concern of mine, especially in History, because History has such dense reading that it’s *so* difficult. And I think that’s one of the areas that our Hispanic population really struggles with the most is History classes because of the textbooks. And trying to access that information.” She explained that there have been discussions at the school about getting classroom materials in Spanish, but they have not yet done so because of funding and access issues. She expressed hope that the next time the school adopts a new curriculum, they would choose one that included Spanish textbooks. The lack of accessible materials for ELLs creates unnecessary challenges in addition to those that are inherent in the process of teaching a new language, and materials in the heritage language would reduce student frustration and allow students to access more information.

III. Student Assessment and Testing

In Washington, all high school students are required to pass the annual High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), the state assessment of students that is required under No Child Left Behind. In order to graduate from high school with a diploma, students must not only pass their classes, but must also pass the HSPE. Our interviews corroborate what the research included in our Literature Review presented, and teachers overwhelmingly feel that the HSPE places ELLs at an unfair disadvantage. Although the exam is intended to assess students’ knowledge of content, teachers say that the fact that the test is only offered in English makes it extremely difficult to pass for students who have only had a brief opportunity to learn English. Kim Kelsay said, “It’s a real disservice to our kids, if they’ve only had two years here learning English, that they have to pass the HSPE to get a diploma for high school, because I think they should have an alternate way to test them on the skills that they know.” Many teachers cite the common wisdom that it takes 5-7 years to learn a language, asking how students can possibly be expected to pass an exam testing their English if they have not had the chance to spend that time learning the language. Teachers and administrators express a desire for a more nuanced assessment method that would allow students to demonstrate the skills they do have. Referring again to the HSPE, Kim Kelsay continued, “And so I have a real hard time with that, because I see these kids go through our classrooms and they are learning, they are producing. It might be in their own language, but they’re getting the ideas down. Yet they don’t get a diploma at the end of the four years because they haven’t passed the test yet, in English. So I think that needs to be rethought and reevaluated and made fair.”⁴¹

According to teachers, the high stakes of the exam not only create an unfair obstacle to ELLs graduating from high school, these stakes also discourage students ELLs from

⁴⁰ Kim Kelsay, Wa-Hi Teacher, Interview by E. Basham, November 3, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

⁴¹ Kim Kelsay, Wa-Hi Teacher, Interview by E. Basham, November 3, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

participating in their classes if they feel that passing the exam will be impossible for them. Kim Kelsay described the sense of hopelessness that one of her students felt about the HSPE:

"I had one student who said, "I'm not coming because I can't pass the HSPE." I said, "You've got to come to school, you can't just not come to school. I mean, get your education. It doesn't matter if you pass the HSPE or not." Because he's only been speaking English for 3 years, and so it's a struggle for him. And some kids pick it up a lot faster than others. But you know, he's not as quick as others. So yeah, it affects them. It's like, why spend a whole year in school if I'm not going to get my diploma?"

Teachers were not opposed to the idea of testing in general-- in fact; school personnel were overwhelmingly in favor of some form of student assessment and school accountability. The biggest problem that they see with testing is the harsh penalties for all parties involved, meaning students not being able to graduate if they do not perform well on the exam, and schools having their funds cut and being stigmatized by the government if student scores are not high enough.

CR: *"¿Cuándo tienen examen como le hacen?"*

Cecilia: *"La traductor nos lo traduce a español. A veces son "multiple choice" y no mas escoges una respuesta, pero cuando es de escribir muchas de la veces no sé que decir. Es difícil porque lo maestros dan la lección inglés. Yo trato de poner atención al maestro y tomo notas pero habla muy rápido y no alcanzo escribir todo, y muchas de las veces no entiendo muy bien lo que dicen. Nos dan un libro de historia para leer pero no le entiendo mucho, y me enfado con mi misma porque quiero aprender pero es muy duro! Y cuando es tiempo de examen no me va bien. Hacemos lo que podamos."*

CR: *"What do you do when you take a test?"*

Cecilia: *"The [Para-educator] translate in Spanish for us. Sometimes the questions are multiple choice questions, and you have to choose an answer, but when it's a response question many times I don't know what to say. It is difficult because the teachers give lectures in English. I try to pay attention to the teacher and take notes but sometimes they speak to fast and I don't write it all, and other times I don't understand what is being said. They give us a history book to read but I don't understand much, and I get frustrated with myself because I want to learn, but it's hard! Then when its exam time I don't do so well. We do what we can."*⁴²

For ELL students, taking tests, quizzes and exams becomes quite difficult. Several students find it very frustrating and discouraging to take tests because more often than not, they end up struggling through the class period. A few students admitted that there have been several occasions where they do not even try to answer the questions. Sometimes the students do not understand the question and sometime they simply do not know the answer. A couple of student's confessed that they prefer multiple choice tests because they can blindly circle an answer and hope they guessed the correct answer. A few students, such as Cecilia, have been struggling in history class. She has been having a difficult time studying for test because she does not understand her notes. Cecilia attempts to write what her teacher says but it's difficult because she is still not fluent in English and does not understand what is being said.

⁴² Cecilia, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

Throughout our interviews and focus groups with ELL parents at Blue Ridge, Garrison and Wa-Hi, parents frequently identified homework assignments and parent-teacher conferences as their primary sources of information regarding the performance of their students. However, many parents in our focus groups and personal interviews were unfamiliar with other measures used to assess their children's performance, such as which standardized assessments were administered at each school and how these results would affect their children's academic aspirations. This disconnect confirms the communication barriers that often prevent ELL parents from attaining a greater understanding of the systems and practices at each school (Arias and Morillo-Campbell, 2008). In order to emphasize the importance of placement tests and other standardized assessments, schools may consider clarifying why these evaluative tools are being applied to students and the impact of these results for the academic progress of their children. Disseminating bilingual materials that explain the significance of these exams and addressing these topics in forums such as parent-teacher conferences and regular parent forums are potential ways to emphasize the importance of every student meeting these standards.

IV. Student- Teacher Relationship

Garrison

Teresa: "Some teachers want to learn Spanish. They'll ask how to say some Spanish. Its pretty cool and I take it as a sign of respect!"

Esteban: "The teachers seem to understand where we come from. Like one time a teacher talked about Day of the Dead, which was really unexpected and really cool. We watched videos and actually learn a lot about our own culture!"⁴³

Monica: "Once a friend asked me for help, so I helped her. The teacher went by and said that this is America. The teacher probably thought she was saying something bad. Especially substitute teachers, they don't like it. Sometime I get offended, because its disrespectful to me and somewhat racist!"⁴⁴

The student-teacher relationship at Garrison middle school received both positive and negative commentary. Students felt that some teachers could at the times give the impression of being racist by certain comments that they say. A few students have had the experience of being told not to speak Spanish, because "this is America", which left students feeling uncomfortable. Anna expressed that a teacher explicitly told her that she did not want her to speak Spanish around her. Quite a few students claim to have been sent out of class for speaking Spanish in class. Several students gave the impression that they understood why teacher had such a rule, there reasoning was "They don't know what you're about, and they just want to make sure you are not saying anything bad". A particular student said he was told not to speak Spanish, which affected him to the extent that he no longer wanted to go to that class. On the other hand, there are teachers who convey a sense of understanding. Students expressed excitement about having teachers who want to learn more about their culture. Verdugo & Flores claim that in order for

⁴³ Teresa and Esteban, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁴⁴ Monica, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

there to be a positive ELL experience, there has to be a positive environment, which requires the participation of all teachers. As stated before, schools should value the linguistic and cultural background of ELL students and should make a bigger effort to accommodate their students needs.

CR: "Do you ask the teacher for help? If not, why?"

Sergio: "No! Because they get mad. And then they make us feel dumb."⁴⁵

A handful of students do not feel comfortable enough to ask their own teacher for help. Students claim that some teachers are rude and do not want to explain things to them, which consequently makes them feel dumb and incapable of doing work. Teachers should establish relationships with all their students, because without communication, students are not able to develop. Trueba states that teachers must commit to making their students' educational experience as positive as possible; there should be no hostility or distrust. Good, Masewicz & Vogel also argue that having a supportive school culture and trust enhances student academic achievement.

Wa-Hi

Alberto: "Pues unos saben que somos de otro lugar y no entiende de dónde venimos y algunos maestros sufren para comunicarse con nosotros"

Raul: "Cuando no tenemos a nadie que nos ayude y pues ellos se preocupan por que saben que no podemos hacer nada"

Alberto: "Well some know that we are from another place, and they don't know where we're coming from and some teachers struggle to communicate with us."

Raul: "When we don't have anyone to help us, they [teachers] worry about us because they know that we can't do anything."⁴⁶

Teacher and student relationships are very important when it comes to student success. For the most part, students feel that the teachers are pretty nice, but they do not have well-established relationships because of the communication gap. Students would like to ask teachers questions, but at times they feel ashamed that they cannot communicate their ideas clearly. They feel that only some teachers completely understand their cultural background and where they are coming from. Some students have had experiences where teachers are very supportive and want to help them out. When students make even the smallest attempt to participate, the teacher will tell them that they did a good job. However, although the students appreciate the teachers' efforts to draw them out, they feel that not much can be done, because the communication barrier continues to limit their interaction.

CR: "¿Se siente lo suficiente cómodos para preguntalas a los maestro por ayuda?"

Raul: "A veces si y a veces no porque hay ocasiones donde no se como decir unas cosas en ingles. Algunas veces siento que molesto, y que los maestros se van a enojar. Yo sé

⁴⁵ Sergio, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁴⁶ Albert and Raul, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

que los maestros saben que somos de otro lugar, pero aun hay unos que no nos entiende muy bien.”

CR: “Do you feel comfortable enough to ask teachers for help?”

Raul: “Sometimes yes and sometimes no because there are occasions where I don’t know how to say things in English. Others times I feel like a burden, and that teachers will get mad. I know that teachers know that we are from other place, but there are some that do not understand us well.”⁴⁷

The student-teacher relationship varies by teacher, and by each individual student. A number of students have struggled to establish a relationship with their teachers. Again the language barrier has created yet another obstacle for students. Several students find it difficult to effectively communicate with their teachers because they don’t know to ask for help. A few students, like Raul, feel like a burden for the teacher, which has prevented him from asking his teacher for assistance in class work or whenever he has a concern. Some students reach the point where they do not even want to ask their para-educators for help. Verdugo & Rodriguez (2006) assert that without solid communication between teachers and students, teachers are not able to help their students effectively.

CR: “¿Hay un maestro que te ha ayudado, que hizo?”

Diana: “Todos mis maestro me ayudan, mi maestro de historia, Mr. Blummel, siempre me ayuda y me explica y me pregunta si entiendo y me atención personal y me dice como escribir palabras.”

Moses: “Intenta hablar en español, y de relacionarse con nosotros. Siempre deci “chulupa” cuando no sabe una palabra. Es muy chistoso.”

CR: “Is there a teacher who has helped you, and how?”

Diana: “All my teachers help me, but my history teacher, Mr. Blummel, always helps me and explains and always asks if I understand, or he gives me personal attention and tells me how to write words.”

Moses: “He tries to speak Spanish and to relate with us. He always says, “chulupa” when he doesn’t know a word. He’s really funny!”⁴⁸

The students have a positive view of their teachers. The students mentioned a few teachers who they claimed to be very good and nice to the students. Students gave the impression that they really appreciated those teachers who attempted to reach out to them, such as Mr. Blummel, who attempts to use cultural references to build relationships with his students.

CR: “¿Que les dicen los maestros?”

Cecilia: “No más nos dicen que buen trabajo por la lucha. Los maestros sufren para comunicarse con nosotros pero no están seguros como ayudarnos, a veces nada mas se quedan mirándonos. Nos quieren ayudar pero no pueden o no saben como.”

CR: “What do teachers say to you?”

⁴⁷ Raul, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁴⁸ Diana and Moses, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

*Cecilia: "They'll just say good work for trying. The teachers suffer to communicate with us but are not sure how to help us, and sometimes they will just look at us. They want to help, but they can't or they don't know how to."*⁴⁹

Cecilia, as well as the majority of the ELL students, also understands that there are teachers who want to help, but they are simply unaware of how to do it. Teachers should be aware of who their students are, and what is the most effective way to help them succeed in school.

Raul: "Hay una clases donde no puedo hablar español porque se enoja la maestra, bueno no es que se enoja si no que ella se siente mal porque dice que no nos puede entender y quiere estar en la conversación, y prefiere que hablemos en inglés."

*Raul: "There is a class where you can't speak Spanish because the teacher gets mad. Well it's not that she gets mad, but she feels bad because she doesn't understand us and wants to be in the conversation, and prefers us to speak in English."*⁵⁰

Several students have come across other students who do not allow them to speak Spanish. A number of the students accepted their teacher's rules because they understand that their teachers want to be able to comprehend what they [students] are saying and would like to partake in their [student] conversations. On the other hand, other students felt that it was hard to do as the teacher said, because that's how they ask for help and communicate with their other classmates. The majority of the students believe they are not allowed to speak in Spanish because those who do not understand believe Spanish speaker are talking about them, presuming negative comments are being spoken about them.

The Role of Para-Educators

Diana: "Tenemos interpretes, a mi me ayuda Tania en mi clase de historia y nos ayuda cuando el maestro esta hablando. Ella habla español. Ella en realidad se ocupa de los estudiantes y nos explica la importancia del trabajo, es muy compasiva, ella es como mi mama."

*Diana: "We have translators, like I have Tania in my history class and she helps us when the teacher is talking, and she can speak Spanish to us. She really cares about the students and she explains why work is so important. She's very supportive. She's like my mom."*⁵¹

The ESL program provides two para-educators, who attend classes with the students who need the most help. Their presence is very much appreciated by the students. Para-educators are people whom students feel comfortable enough to approach with out any sort of hesitation. A few students stated that the para-educators are extremely helpful. In this case, Diana has Tania as a Para-educator and a motherly figure, someone that truly cares about her and is constantly motivating to her to excel.

⁴⁹ Cecilia, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁵⁰ Raul, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁵¹ Diana, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

Albert: “Nos ayudan a traducir las traductoras en algunas clases, como matemáticas e historia. Solo hay dos traductoras para todos. Yo solo tengo traductora en dos clases. Ellas te ayudan dependiendo en que tanto sabes inglés o solo cuando necesitas ayuda con algo, una palabra o algo solo le preguntas y ellas te dicen.”

Albert: “The translators that we have in some classes help [students] translate, like in math and history class. There are only two Para-educators for all [the ESL students]. I only have a Para-educator in two classes. They help you depending on how much English you know or when you need help with something like a word or something like that. You just ask and [Para-educators] will tell you.”⁵²

As stated before, there are only two para-educators for numerous ELL students. The limited number of para-educators affects ELL students greatly, because they can not accommodate every student’s individual needs. Several students are left on their own, many of the time in classes where there is not another ELL student.

Kim Kelsay, as well as many other interview participants at the other schools, thought it would be good for the school community if there were more bilingual teachers and a better racial representation of the student population among teachers and other school staff. She said that she thinks bilingual teachers are an important asset to students because “they have the experience of learning another language, so they have a lot more empathy for the student, they understand how that process works, and so they're more able to work with the student and meet their needs because they've been through it, they've worked through that.”⁵³ Bilingual staff would not only share this understanding with students, but would be able to facilitate better communication between the school, students, and parents. Regarding her desire for a more racially diverse staff in the future, Kim said “I think I'd like to see more role models, and positive role models, for our students. You know, we have a gang problem on our campus. And I don't think there's a real problem between... it's just, you know race topics and stuff like that, talking about them, you know, and if people share your own culture, it's a lot easier, I think, to relate to them and talk to them. But you know, you have to work through that if you're not part of their culture, and try to meet them and get to know them.”⁵⁴ She emphasized that at WWHS there are very good teachers who “work their hearts out for these kids,” but that she thinks it would be “a really positive thing for our kids and for our staff too” if there were a more racially and linguistically diverse staff. With the growing focus on both Dual Language and cultural competency policies in the district, such diversity is an important consideration in the process of hiring new staff throughout the district.

⁵² Albert, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁵³ Kim Kelsay, Wa-Hi Teacher, Interview by E. Basham, November 3, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

⁵⁴ Kim Kelsay, Wa-Hi Teacher, Interview by E. Basham, November 3, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

V. Student Sense of Belonging in the School Community (Student- Student Relationships)

Garrison

Leonardo: "Knowing English made us feel comfortable. The fact that we could communicate is really good. I felt more accepted."

Leonardo: "We are able to be comfortable with each other. It really helps because we can be ourselves."⁵⁵

Knowing English has given students a sense of inclusion, especially with their white-peers, and as a result, has lead them to feel at ease and comfortable in classroom settings. As Rodriguez claims, learning a new language is more than an academic exercise-- it is something personal. It is possible that students could feel marginalized, uncomfortable or even embarrassed. Numerous students claim to be happy to have had the opportunity to learn both English and Spanish. Almost all of the students are utterly confident in speaking both languages. Depending on their social setting they will either speak English or Spanish. Trueba (2002) states that in order for there to be a process of assimilation for minority students, there has to be accommodations from both the mainstream and minority culture. None the less an active effort is needed to maintain a sense of belonging. Trueba's assimilation process is seen as the students speak English at school and Spanish at home, and at times it's a mixture of both, again depending on the circumstances (2002). Knowing English has given students a better sense of themselves, and has become part of who they are. They are able to communicate with their teacher and parents.

CR: "Do you guys feel comfortable in your classes"?

David: "I don't know, it's kind of hard. They're kind of advanced in the English classes, and we don't know much; they make us feel stupid!"

Oswald: "There were times where I just sat there."

Nancy: "I don't like it and its hard, especially the writing part!"⁵⁶

All of the students said they would rather be in all English classes. They want to learn more English, specifically a much more advanced English. It is crucial to note that the current eighth graders had quite a different Dual Language experience than other middle school students, partially due to the fact that they took a gap year their seventh grade year. Instead of having a two way language enrichment program, they were integrated into a program that is mostly in English. The majority of the students felt uncomfortable, not only because they felt a difference in their level, but also because the majority of their classmates are Caucasians. The students came to the conclusion that the more English you know, the less left out you are, or feel. This seems to be a problem of identity that many ELL students go through. Ogbu & Simon would label these students as voluntary immigrants, which typically reach higher achievement. However, they are in the constant struggle of dissociation with mainstream culture so they can maintain their own identity. This could be because they feel there is a difference that others

⁵⁵ Leonardo, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁵⁶ David, Oswald and Nancy, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

perceive between their peers and themselves, when they would like to be seen as equal. The students no longer have the positive environment that they had in their elementary school with the full Dual Language program.

Miguel: "If I wasn't in this program, it would have probably taken me longer learn English. Then I would feel left out, and I would need someone to help me all the time."⁵⁷

Miguel conveyed that without the dual-language program he would have struggled much longer, and would have felt left out, and would constantly need the assistance of someone. Students do not want to become a burden. It was seen that these students do like to be associated with negative stereotypes.

Araceli: "We have to help the other [Caucasian] students."

CR: "Do you think that's fair?"

Araceli: "Not really, because we're not really paying attention."

David: "Then, they're like how do you spell this and that..."

Ana: "...and they kind of...it kind of bugs you that you have to do it."

Araceli: "You can't even do your own work."

Ana: "She [the teacher] expects you to help your partners and get your work done."

All: "Yeah!"

Araceli: "You can't do two things at the same time!"⁵⁸

Another issue that came up for the students has to do with helping their classmates in the Dual Language class. They did not like the responsibility of having to help their classmates and on top of that having to do their own work. Students help their classmates in translating words for them. The majority of them stated that it was too much to handle, and that they could not do both, especially if they wanted to get their own work done.

CR: "What do your other friends say about the program?"

Sergio: "Some of our friends think it's weird."

Vanessa: "Others say that we're retarded and dumb."

CR: "Why?"

Sergio: "Because they say that we already know Spanish, so why are you in there?"

I have a friend who has said; that I'm Mexican so why am I in that class?"

CR: "What do you say?"

Sergio: "I don't know, I just stay quiet."

Vanessa: "I say it's not my choice, I just have to take it!"⁵⁹

Students receive negative comments from their peers that are not in the Dual Language programs. The students claimed that others will always make fun of them, and ask why they're in Dual Language if they already know Spanish. Many of the students are not sure what say, and blame their parents for being enrolled in the programs. There is negative stigma associated the Dual Language program, which is what many ELL want to steer away from. They do not like to be

⁵⁷ Miguel, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁵⁸ Araceli, David, and Ana, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁵⁹ Sergio and Vanessa, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

called “retarded”. Students demonstrated an unclear feeling about the Dual Language program: they appreciate it for allowing them to learn both English and Spanish, but the fact that they receive belittling comments from other students discourages them.

Wa-Hi

Raúl: “Me siento diferente. Todos hablan inglés y se pueden comunicar entre ellos, pero yo sufro para comunicarme con mis compañeros americanos. Los estudiantes que ya saben inglés no platican con nosotros. A veces me siento mal porque me gustaría tener más amigos, como en México. ¡Allá me divertía más y era mucho más feliz con mi familia y mis amigos!”

Raul: “I feel different. Everyone speaks English and they can communicate, but I struggle to communicate with my American classmates. The students who already know English do not talk to us. Sometimes I feel bad because I would like to have more friends, like in Mexico. Over there I had more fun and was much happier with my family and friends.”⁶⁰

There are a handful of students who maintain an ongoing feeling of being an outcast. Students conveyed that they have not been able to reach the same sense of comfort or happiness they had in their home country. Several students stated they would like to have more friends but their limited English prohibits them from fully engaging with their peers. It saddens a large number of ESL students to know that they cannot converse as effectively with their classmates.

CR: “¿Sienten que son bienvenidos aquí?”

Moses: “Mas o menos porque no nos quieren. Hay gente buena, pero también a gente que es racista y, ¡no quieren a los mexicanos!”

CR: “Do you feel welcomed?”

Moses: “More or less, because they don’t like us. They’re good people but they’re also racist people, who do not like Mexicans!”⁶¹

Throughout the interviews it was noted that students were quite aware of racial tensions and issues that are currently occurring in the United States concerning immigration. Some students stated that they have witnessed racist events at school; however none of the students claimed to be a victim of any kind of racial discrimination. The majority of the participants believe their school is a safe place to be and generally feel safe. Latinos are persistently devalued, and have been given a handful of negative labels. Furthermore, there is a historical aspect that continues to affect minorities till this day.

Raúl: “Hay muchos latinos, pero a veces ellos no nos quieren hablar y nos ignoran. Con los americanos es mucho más difícil de hacerse amigos.”

⁶⁰ Raul, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁶¹ Moses, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

*Raul: "There's a lot of Latinos, but sometimes they don't want to talk to us and ignore us. With the Americans it's harder to have friends. Some people are racists, but I don't care."*⁶²

On the other hand there were a couple of students that had a sense of marginalization, and felt that the school itself was very racially segregated. They noted that Caucasians hang out with themselves, and Latinos with other Latinos. ESL students for the most part tend to hang out with themselves, essentially making them a marginalized group within the school. Raul, for example, has found it quite difficult to befriend Whites because they speak English, and even other Latino students, either because they don't want to befriend ELL students or because they don't speak Spanish.

Kim Kelsay explained that one benefit of the current program at Wa-Hi is that ELLs are integrated with non-ELLs in the classroom, rather than spending most of their day isolated in classes that are specifically for ELLs. "And so I think it's really healthy for them, because they're not just in one room all day and feeling like they're not part of the program. And you know, at least they make friends quickly with other students that are around the school... so it helps more with the acculturation part of it too, not just the English part."⁶³ Indeed, the integration of ELLs in the school community is an important goal, but based on student comments, such a process has not occurred to the degree that teachers and administrators hope. While it is positive that ELLs are not removed from the other students and placed in a classroom specifically for ELLs, merely putting students in the classroom together is not breaking down the barriers between students and destigmatizing the status of being an English Language Learner. Even the elbow-buddy system, which encourages students to work together and get to know each other, is not having the desired effect if students feel that their partners do not want to help them. Although teachers have students best interests in mind, the remarks from students demonstrate that the systems in place are not facilitating student learning and comfort in the classroom to the degree that teachers and administrators expect.

Pedro: "¡Me interesaba el club de drama pero no hablan español! Decide hacerlo el próximo años, cuando sepa mas inglés."

*Pedro: "I was interested in Drama Club but they didn't speak Spanish! I decided to do it next year when I know more English"*⁶⁴

Quite a few students want to integrate into the school and participate in the activities that their peers are also in, but nonetheless the language barrier prevents them from fully engaging. Pedro, for instance, wanted to join the Drama Club, but feels uncomfortable doing so because of his limited English. Other students stated that they started to go to Latino Club, but again felt out of place, because the meetings are run in English and very little Spanish is spoken among the student members. Other students would like to participate in sports but again, they claim they would have a hard time communicating with their teammates.

⁶² Raul, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁶³ Kim Kelsay, Wa-Hi Teacher, Interview by E. Basham, November 3, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

⁶⁴ Pedro, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

Pedro: “Es la mejor clase [ESL] que tengo porque me puede identificar con los que aun no hablen el ingles muy bien y puedo tener conversaciones con [mis compañeros] no como con otra gente. Me gustaría tener un tutor, o un compañero que este en cualquier ano y que estuviera en todas mis clases, alguien que hable lo que los demás hablan y me pueda ayudar. ¡Si tuviera eso, no tendría dudas!”

Pedro: “That is the best class [ESL] I have now because I can identify with those who still don’t speak English very well and I can have conversations with [my classmates] better than with other people. I would like to have a tutor, a companion who is in whatever grade and all of the classes, who speaks how everyone else does and can help me. If I had this, I wouldn’t have any doubts.”⁶⁵

These students’ only realistic opportunity to learn English is at school, in the ESL program. The students are enrolled into two ESL classes, which is equivalent to less than two hours per day. Meanwhile the rest of their classes are taught in English. This automatically limits their chance to practice their English in a safe place, which for the students is in their ESL class. For the majority of the kids, their favorite class is ESL because they can be themselves without having to worry or feeling like an outsider. The students are sometimes the only ELL student in their academic classes, which for some of the students is quite uncomfortable and intimidating. During the interviews almost all of the students stated that they had a very hard time transitioning into a new school environment. Many of them would go back home and cry because they did not want to go back to school.

Pedro: “Como no se a veces... (Empieza a llorar) ay no se. Te hacen sentir mal, y eso no es bueno porque luego te da miedo de hablar en la clase, el hecho de que según te deberían de ayudar lo hacen hasta peor. Por eso prefiero estar por mi mismo, en vez de estar pidiendo ayuda para que te hagan sentir mal”

Pedro: “Like I don’t know, sometimes... (Starts to cry) I don’t know. They make you feel bad, and that is not good because then you get scared to talk in class, the fact that they are supposed to help you makes it even worst. That is why I prefer to keep to myself instead of asking for help simply so they can make you feel bad.”⁶⁶

Discouragement is also a common feeling shared by almost all of the ESL students. Many have felt isolated and lonely at some point in their ELL experience, which creates emotional distress. Particularly, in the case of Pedro, who has had a very hard time, especially when it comes to asking his peers for help. He has felt rejected by his classmates a handful of times. He explains that they simply do not want to help him. Pedro clearly states that after those experiences he would much rather not ask anyone for help and do it on his own, than to have be rejected and feel bad about himself. Many other students also state that it is not only white people that they cannot talk to but even their Latino peers. As stated before, many students do not speak Spanish, however there are those who do know, but simply do not want to talk or help them out.

⁶⁵ Pedro, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁶⁶ Pedro, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

Student-Student Relationship

Cecilia: “Hay gente que se supone que nos tienen que ayudar, y decir que esto o lo otro. ¡La verdad que si no les digo yo, no hacen nada! ¡A veces les pregunto y me dicen, “¡NO SE!”, pero si saben, no más que no te quieren ayudar! ¡Se creen lo mejor porque hablen ingles entre ellos, y para bastar a veces se burlan!

Cecilia: “There are people that should supposedly help us, and tell us this or that. The truth is that if I don’t tell them they will not do anything! At times I will ask and they say, “I DON’T KNOW!”, but they do know, they just don’t want to help! They think they’re better because they speak English within their group, and to top it off sometimes they make fun [of us].”⁶⁷

When a Para-educator is not present in ELL students’ classroom, they are consequently paired up with a classmate, also known as an “elbow buddy”. The teachers will usually pair an ELL student with a classmate who speaks both English and Spanish who they believe will provide the ELL student with assistance. This is essentially a good idea, because the ELL students have someone to reference whenever they are in doubt. However, the ELL students do not believe it to be very effective. They are concerned that their peer tutors do not always want to help them, which eventually leads the ELL student not being able to understand the classroom content. Their classmates tend to ignore them whenever they can. The rejection and neglect from their peers make them feel unwanted and once again uncomfortable.

VI. Parent- School Relationships

Blue Ridge

Our findings reveal that ELL parents at Blue Ridges consistently provided the most enthusiastic and knowledgeable responses regarding their relationship with their school. This was a consistent trend among present Blue Ridge parents as well as former Blue Ridge parents whose children now attend other schools in the district. Many ELL parents of Blue Ridge students communicated their confidence and support of the Dual Language program and their sense of partnership with the school in promoting the academic success of their children. Lola Ortiz, a parent of a 6th grade student at Garrison, recalled the strong sense of community she appreciated when her daughter attended Blue Ridge:

Lola: “Tuve mi hijo aquí en Blue Ridge el año pasado. Mi hijo estaba saliendo muy bien en las clases bilingües. Además, cuando estaba trabajando, ellos le buscaban un horario para visitar unas casas cuando una pueda, y podía elegir una hora que sirve para nosotras que trabajamos. También ateniendo mucho a que los faltaban los niños, que tienen que comer, si maltrataban en la casa. o estaban faltando algo en la casa, o si esta aprendiendo la tarea. Siempre estaban disponible para apoyar el éxito de nuestros hijos.

Lola: I had my son here at Blue Ridge last year. My son was doing very well in his Dual Language classes. When I was working, they would look for a time when they could visit

⁶⁷ Cecilia, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

homes when we were available and choose an hour that was possible for those of us who worked. They also paid very much attention to what children were lacking, what they had to eat, if they were being treated poorly at home, if they lacked anything at all at home, and if they were learning their assignments. They were always available to support the success of our children.”⁶⁸

The participants offered specific instances in which teachers and administrators at Blue Ridge demonstrated an exceptional level of commitment that extended beyond the curriculum to the general welfare of their students. Parents of ELL students appreciated the understanding and accessibility of key resources at the school, including bilingual secretaries, culturally competent school-sponsored activities and events, and a general sense of support for the Dual Immersion program. This demonstrates a key asset in improving school-parent perceptions, as parents reiterated how their cultural values were acknowledged and their families welcomed at Blue Ridge (Arias and Morillo-Gaitan, 2008, 9). Indeed, Daniela Jiménez, a parent of a preschooler at Blue Ridge and a Wa-Hi alumna herself, agreed with these findings. As a single working mother, she commended the variety of opportunities available for parent involvement at Blue Ridge:

Daniela: “While I’m at my work a lot, it’s hard for me to attend every event, but I do my best. You can go in the classroom and help out, and all the family nights they I have I attend to them so I can meet other parents and teachers. I’ve always felt welcome and supported.”⁶⁹

Despite Daniela’s demanding work schedule that prevents her from attending every school-sponsored family event, her awareness of the efforts of the Blue Ridge administration and teachers to involve parents is significant, as parents of ELL students at Garrison and Wa-Hi most often identified parent-teacher conferences as the primary interface between parents and the school. Keeping in mind the logistical barrier that many ELL parents must contend with while desiring a more active role in their child’s education (Arias and Morillo-Campbell 2008, 11). Blue Ridge has distinguished itself in informing parents of school events and encouraging their involvement both within and outside of the classroom.

Garrison

While parents of ELL students at Garrison expressed more varied experiences interacting with the school, one of the most important assets for ELL parents was access to Garrison Night School. Lola commended Garrison for hosting and operating the program, as she considers the classes to be important opportunities not only to improve and accelerate her own English language acquisition, but also spend time familiarizing herself with the teachers, staff, administrators and facilities of the school where her child will be attending for two more years. Lola compared her experience as a Garrison Night School student to what she imagined her son must experience as an ELL student:

⁶⁸ Lola Ortiz, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, December 04, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

⁶⁹ Daniela Jiménez, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, November 02, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

Lola: “En las clases de Garrison Night School, ellos quieren que nadie que están en el grupo hablan en español, puro ingles. El maestro habla ingles y muchas veces no entendemos. El tampoco habla español. Me gusta porque es que mas que nada es que el trata de motivarnos y expresar lo que uno no puede. El punto importante que el dijo anoche fue que uno como, yo tengo mi hija y mis hijos, y pedir a practicar así que ellos pueden aprender mas. Esta bien, porque las clases se ayuda con otras habilidades. Por ejemplo nunca use la computadora, y es muy dificil, pero como ella me explique. Si, me gusto. Otra cosa es que uno no puedo llevar a sus hijos, porque ellos pueden ayudar a uno, y por eso si el ingles es muy dificil para nosotros pero es muy importante que aprendemos también.”

Lola: “The classes at Garrison ask that nobody who is in the group speak in Spanish, only in English. The teacher speaks English and many times he doesn’t understand us. He also doesn’t speak Spanish. I like this because at least he motivates us to express what we don’t know how to say. The important point he told us last night is that I have my daughter and sons, and I should ask to practice so that they will learn more. This is good, because the classes also help with other skills. For example, I had never used a computer and it was very difficult, but she explained it to me. Yes, I like it. Another thing is that one cannot bring their children to class, because they usually help us, and as English is difficult, it’s important we learn it ourselves as well.”⁷⁰

As Lola confirms, one key obstacle that ELL parents at Garrison all identified in our focus groups was awareness and broader access to the program. Many participants in our focus group were unaware that they qualified for tuition-waivers due to their child’s enrollment in the ESL program at Garrison. While the program fee is appropriate for the quality of the classes, many ELL parents who participated in our focus groups also identified themselves as underemployed or unemployed, and were very grateful for this assistance and planned to recommend enrolling in this free program to other ELL parents in the community. Not only does a program like Garrison Night School work to address the troika of communication, school-parental perception and logistical barriers that ELL parents encounter (Arias-Campbell 2008, 9), improving an already successful program would very well increase overall enrollment at Garrison Night School.

Wa-Hi

Rodrigo: “Mis padres se sienten bien porque quieren que vaya a la escuela, que aprenda inglés para poder comunicarme y conseguir un trabajo donde no me tenga que matar cada día. En cuanto aprenda bien el ingles voy a poder ayudarles a mis papas, como para traducir cuando tengan que ir al medico o donde sea. De hecho ya lo hago, pero cada vez que trato me siento nervioso porque no lo hablo bien y mucho menos lo puedo traducir, pero no tengo de otra.”

Rodrigo: “My parents feel good because they want me to go to school, that I learn English to be able to communicate and obtain a job that does not require that I kill

⁷⁰ Lola Ortiz, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, December 04, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

myself every day. Once I master English I will be able to help my parents, like translating for them when they go to the medic or wherever. As a matter as a fact I do that now, but every time I do, I become nervous because I do not speak it well and much less can I translate it, but I have no other choice but to do it.”⁷¹

ELL students commonly faced the stigma that they simply do not want to speak English, but our findings cast doubt on this assumption. All the students are conscious of the importance of learning and speaking English in the United States, as are their parents. They clearly understand that they need to graduate from high school and the vitality of being able to read, write and speak English. All of the students interviewed stated that in order to obtain a decent job they have to know English. Many believe that without English, they will not be able to communicate with others, which will prevent them in the long run from succeeding. In view of this, students yearn to master the English language so they can accordingly assist their parents in a wide range of social settings. The majority if not all of these ESL students are translating for their parents when they themselves are in the process of learning English. Cesar specifically states that he has no other choice but to do so because his parents depend on him. He, as with many other ELL students, desire to aid their parents and find obligatory to speak English.

Moses: “Mis papas son el motivo por la cual quiere seguir estudiando. ¡Quiero que ellos estén orgullosos de mí! Ellos están orgullosos porque estudio y estoy aprendiendo ingles. Ellos saben que no es fácil comenzar de nuevo en un país nuevo. No me obligan hacer las cosas, y entienden que en verdad trato de hacer bien. Con que ellos me apoyen, yo estoy contento.”

Moses: “My parents are the reason why I want to continue school. I want them to be proud of me! They are [already] proud of me because I’m learning English. They know it is not easy starting all over in a new country. They don’t force me to do things, and know that I truly try to do well. As long as they support me, I’m happy.”⁷²

María Hernandez, a parent of a 9th grade ELL student at Wa-Hi, also expressed her satisfaction with the methods through which the school conducted outreach among parents. Both she and her husband, Lucas, work en el campo as farm laborers and their income is contingent on harvests throughout the Walla Walla Valley. Both typically work six or seven days a week from the early morning until late evening, leaving few opportunities to interact with teacher and administrators at their daughter’s school. However, María and her husband emphasized the importance of attending parent-teacher conferences and appreciated the resources available at these events:

María: “Cuando nos llaman para ir a las conferencias siempre nos vamos. Siempre hay la intérprete, Mireya, que nos ayuda mucho. Creo que las noticias son malas solamente porque si uno no lo presentara al uno y compartimos confianza en cada uno. Todo el tiempo, nos dicen de que ella tiene muy buenas calificaciones y estudia muy bien. Todo el tiempo que hay conferencias nos vamos.”

⁷¹ Rodrigo, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁷² Moses, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

María: “When they call us to go to parent-teacher conferences, we always go. There is an interpreter, Mireya, is always there and help us quite a bit. I believe that the news is bad if we do not present ourselves and have trust in one another. Every time, they tell us that she has very good grades and studies well. Every time there is a conference, we go.”⁷³

Despite her challenging circumstances, María and Lucas demonstrate a commitment to being involved in their daughter’s education and appreciated the opportunity to interact with her teachers through the assistance of an interpreter at parent-teacher conferences. By providing translation services at these events, Wa-Hi actively works to both connect and share information with parents in their own language, which directly contributes towards a successful transition for ELL parents (Delgado-Gaitan 2004, xi.) The accessibility and availability of these trained specialists removes the burden often placed on students to translate on behalf of their parents, and improves a sense of partnership and trust between parents and teachers through these school-sponsored events at Wa-Hi.

VII. Parent-Student Relationship

Blue Ridge

ELL parents at Blue Ridge overwhelmingly supported educating their children in Dual Language classrooms. Keeping in mind the significant opportunities that await their children through navigating two languages and cultures, ELL parents emphasized attaining oral, written and reading fluency in both English and Spanish and often spoke how bilingualism will provide an advantage for their children in the future. Cristina expanded on the importance not only for her daughter to succeed in the Dual Immersion program, but also the benefits of her daughter’s bilingualism for their family:

Cristina: “Yo queria que mi hija aprendiera español como inglés porque he visto que quier mas el inglés que el español. Y le dije que no, ambos idiomas son importantes para ella, entonces el día que ella no esten conmigo, ¿como voy a comunicar yo con ella si yo no se como decir algo en ingles? Por eso, quiero que este mi hija este en este programa para que ella aprende los dos. Antes, ella no queria hablar conmigo en español, y fue muy dificil para mi, por eso a mi me mandaban para placticar conmigo pero si no puedo enforzar a la chica. Me alegre que la niña habla mas en español a traves del programa bilingüe asi que pudiera quedarse bilingüe.”

Cristina: “I wanted my daughter to learn Spanish as well as English because I had seen that she oftentimes favored English over Spanish. I would tell her no, both languages are important for her, so when the day comes that she isn’t with me, how will I communicate with her when I don’t know how to say something in English? To that end, I want my daughter to be in the Dual Immersion program so that she learns both. Before, she didn’t

⁷³ María Hernández, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, November 12, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

want to speak to me in Spanish, and it was very difficult for me, so the school recommended I speak with her in Spanish but I can't force her alone. I'm pleased that my child speaks more in Spanish through the Dual Immersion program so that she could remain bilingual.”⁷⁴

Garrison

CR: “Would you say that parents feel comfortable when they come to the school?”

Teresa: Yeah I think so, but they always have us translate everything the speaker is saying. Especially like at the store, or at the doctor. Sometimes they ask me how to write something when they are filling things out. It's actually pretty cool that I can do that. My white friends think it's pretty cool.”⁷⁵

The majority of the parents were born in other countries. Most of the parents, according to the students, know enough English to get by on a daily basis. Some parents understand but do not speak it well; others can read it and write it but are not confident in speaking it. There is variation in how proficient parents are, whether it is in their reading, writing or speaking. Student are then required to translate for their parents, which a few of them do not mind doing, and find it to be ‘cool’.

Gloria Vásquez is the mother of both a Garrison student and Wa-Hi student. Both of her children were previously enrolled in the Dual Language program at Blue Ridge, and she was proud of her children’s English language acquisition. Gloria echoed a sentiment common among several parents as she described how she relates the expectations she sets for herself as an ELL parent to support the success of her children:

Gloria: “Pues, preguntarles más que nada que como les fue a sus día en clase, que es lo que aprendieron, como deben portarse y ser responsables. Porque de que sirve el maestro explicando un lección si ellos no pongan atención, yo pienso que no aprenden también. Como padres, tenemos la responsabilidad para que los niños pueden escuchar al maestro y mejorar su aprendizaje.”

Gloria: “Well, we ask them how their days at school were, what they learned, and how they should carry themselves and be responsible. This is because if the teacher is explaining a lesson and they don't pay attention, they aren't learning. As parents, we have the responsibility to our children that they learn to listen to the teacher and improve their learning.”⁷⁶

While Gloria emphasizes the common theme of emphasizing teacher-student dynamics in the classroom, Gloria also assumes responsibility for preparing her children to succeed in the classroom by reinforcing social behaviors. At the same time, Gloria also establishes strong expectations for herself, as well as for other parents, as she advocates for greater ELL parent participation in school events:

⁷⁴ Cristina Calderón, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, December 04, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

⁷⁵ Teresa, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

⁷⁶ Gloria Vásquez, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, December 04, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

Gloria: “Debemos tener mas interés porque es para nuestros hijos, para que nos podemos motivar y apoyar su éxito . La verdad es lo que pasa también a veces hay junta, nos mandan a traer, pero si es una tristeza mirar que los maestros allí esperándonos en las juntas y a veces los padres no llegan. ¿Así que como queremos que nuestros hijos tienen éxito si nosotros no apoyamos a los maestros en esas juntas? Que todo los padres nos diéramos los opiniones que esta bien que no esta bien o que esta bien para sus hijos, pero a veces hay juntas a mi me ha tocado venir, y no hay mas de tres padres con los maestros. Es una tristeza porque y los demás, ¿adonde están? No venimos.”

Gloría: “We should have more interest because it is for our children, so that we can motivate and support their success. The truth is that at times there are parent-teacher meetings, they request that we come, but it is sad to see the teachers waiting there for us and sometimes parents do not even come. How can we want our children to be successful if we do not support the teachers at these meetings? It should be that parents communicate their opinions on what is good and what is not for their children, but at times I go to meetings and there no more than three parents meeting with teachers. It is sad because I ask, ‘where are the rest?’ We are not coming.”⁷⁷

Gloría reflects a bold parental statement that places the student at the center of an ESL education, and considers her relationship with teachers to be a partnership in support of her children’s success. Her drive to collaborate with teachers and her school is based upon her commitment to her children are progressing in their ESL program. Her comments also echo research presented by Delgado-Gaitan (2008), as Gloria recognizes how staying involved in her child’s education necessitates a strong sense of partnership between parents and teachers to ensure their children’s success in the classroom.

VIII. Limitations for ELL Students:

CR: “¿Como comparas el año pasado con este? Cual ha estado mejor? ¿Por que?”

Alberto: “Para mí ha sido mejor [este año] pero mas difícil porque... leo mas ingles y lo entiendo mas pero las clases son mas difíciles.”

Raul: “creo que mejor porque es mi últimos ano, y siento que voy aprendiendo mas.”

CR: “¿Que vas hacer cuando salgas? Sientes que haz aprendido el ingles suficiente para vivir en la vida real?”

Raul: “¡No!”

CR: “¿Por qué?”

Raul: “Siento que necesito más tiempo, pero si siento como voy avanzando, siento la diferencia.”

⁷⁷ Gloria Vásquez, Parent Interview by A. Delgado, December 04, 2011, Walla Walla, WA.

CR: *“How do you compare last year with this year? Which one has been better? Why?”*

Albert: *“For me, this year but it has been harder...I read more English and I understand it more but the classes are harder.”*

Raul: *“I think it has been better because it’s my last year, and I feel that I’m learning more.”*

CR: *“What are you going to do after you graduate? Do you feel that you have learned enough English to live in the real world?”*

Raul: *“No!”*

CR: *“Why not?”*

Raul: *“I feel that I need more time, but I do feel that I’m advancing, I feel the difference.”⁷⁸*

Many of the students only know a bare minimum of English, just enough to get by, which as stated earlier consequently limits their participation in school, specifically in classroom settings. Raul, an ELL senior, is currently on the path to graduate, however he does not feel prepared to actually be in the real world. Not only does their low proficiency in English affect them academically but also outside of school, especially when it comes to their plans after high school. In such cases, a student becomes limited in career options. Raul has fulfilled all of the requirements to graduate, but does not feel well-prepared for a decent job or even capable of attaining a higher education.

Undocumented Students:

As stated before, the ELL students were born in another country, and have migrated to the United States with their families not so long ago. Each student has an individual story of their journey to the United States. Some of them had the pleasant yet scary comfort of an airplane while others had to go through the hardship and dangerous journey of crossing the U.S.- Mexico border. The majority of students did not give details of their travel due to security and safety considerations. A number of students are currently here on with legal documents. Some of them initially arrived to the United States as undocumented children but have been able to change their status. Nevertheless, there are still many ELL students who are undocumented.

Rodrigo: “Como los que tienen papeles tienen más oportunidades, y como uno que no tiene papeles, tiene menos oportunidades. Cuando quiere hacer una cosa que le gusta no lo puede hacer porque requiere documentos. Como yo...yo me quiero graduar e ir a los marines pero como no tengo papeles... no puedo. No es que no quiera sobresalir, pero mis opciones son limitadas, y además no se el inglés muy bien. Los otros pueden conseguir trabajo, pueden ir a escuela. Lo más probable es que me vaya a trabajar con mi hermano y mamá en el ‘field’.”

Rodrigo: “Those who have [legal] documents have more opportunities, and one who doesn’t have documents, has less opportunities. When [undocumented people] want to do something that they like, they cannot do it because it requires [legal] documents. For instance, I want to graduate and go to the MARINES, but I don’t have “papers” ...so I can’t. It’s not that I don’t want to succeed, but my options are limited, and on top of that

⁷⁸ Albert and Raul, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

*my English is not that good. The others can obtain a job, go to school. I will most likely go work with my brother and mother at the fields”.*⁷⁹

Undocumented students’ plan for after high school is very limited in what they can possible do. Firstly, their status diminishes their chances of attaining a higher education. Most other students were aware that undocumented students could attend college; however there were a few students who did not. Some students gave the impression that they were not going to be able to go to college, although some students had hopes of going to college in order to get a good job and succeed in life. Not only is their status an obstacle, but their English proficiency limits their possibilities as well. A handful of undocumented students want to achieve their goals,-- they want to become doctors, lawyers, and teachers, but are not positive that they can achieve such dreams, especially with their limited English. However, there were quite a few students who did not have a higher education in mind, and stated that they will start working as soon as they graduate. For instance, Rodrigo, who is close to graduating, does not feel that he has learned enough English, and knows that he has not been prepared for the real world. He clearly states that he will most likely work with his brother and mother in the “fields”.

⁷⁹ Rodrigo, Student Focus Group by C. Ramos, November 17, 2011, Walla Walla, WA

VII. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Dual Language Program is seen by the majority of ELL students, parents, and school staff as the ideal ELL instruction program for the district.
- ELL parents were supportive of their children’s ESL education and recognized the importance of being involved at school, yet struggled with linguistic and socioeconomic barriers to full participation.
- ELL students identified the language barrier as their primary obstacle, which adversely affects their academic performance and their relationship with teachers and students.
- Teachers support some form of student assessment and school accountability of ELL students, but were opposed to harsh penalties imposed on students and schools with low achievement on state assessments.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the relationship between the experiences of English Language Learner (ELL) students and parents and the policies and practices of teachers and administrators. We attempted to answer the following questions:

- a. How do the district’s policies for teaching English align with student, parent and teacher experiences and expectations?
- b. How do different ELL instructional practices affect student, parent and teacher success?
- c. How can the district improve its ELL policies and practices?

We examined ELL programs at Blue Ridge Elementary, Garrison Middle School and Walla Walla High School. Despite the fact that there is not a K-5 dual program at Blue Ridge Elementary, students at Garrison Middle School had very positive feedback from the Dual Language program at Sharpstein Elementary. Students not only speak both English and Spanish but have come to really appreciate the program because it has helped them integrate and feel welcome in at the school. However, the same can not yet be said about the partial Dual Language program at Garrison Middle School. Both students and teachers see room for improvement in the program at Garrison. Dual Language teachers say that the school should take fuller advantage to what the Dual Language model really has to offer. Students, on the other hand, do not believe the current program is efficient and find it to be quite useless. Regardless of their experiences, students want to continue to be bilingual. We found that students at Walla Walla High School, who are enrolled in the English as a Second Language program, struggle much more to integrate both socially and academically. The language barrier for these students is their biggest obstacle. It prevents them from fully engaging or establishing relationships with their teachers and peers, which consequently affects their academic achievement and social integration in the school.

The academic success of all students should be constantly addressed, to prevent educational gaps from growing more severe. English Language Learners are not to be disregarded, but rather should be constantly evaluated to make modifications. ELL programs are comprised of very diverse students, and all have different educational needs. Thus, choosing a single program to suit every school is difficult and illogical. However, programs should be modified to best fit school demographics. We found that the Dual Language program has been effective with English Language Learners as well as non-ELL students. Not only does it allow students to integrate at a

faster rate, but it also allows students to be comfortable enough with their peers and teachers, which allows ELL student to establish strong relationships which are essential for student academic success.

Additionally, throughout the student focus groups participants conveyed serious issues about their ELL student experience. The majority of students, both Dual Language and ESL students do not feel comfortable in their regular classes, students claimed feeling like an outsider and at times even ashamed of being an ELL student. In addition numerous students do not feel that they or their culture are being respected. A few students broke into tears when telling their ELL student experience and it has reached the extent where they no longer want to attend school due to social and academic hardships.

Overall, teachers and administrators at all schools were enthusiastic about the possibility of an expansion of Dual Language Immersion programs in the district. They acknowledged the benefits that a Dual Program fosters through its incorporation of heritage language and the integration of all students in the classroom together. However, school personnel were less inclined to comment on the challenges that ELLs face, which students and parents discussed in greater depth. While teachers recognized that ELLs do face specific challenges, most teachers and administrators did not address the difficulties that documentation status, limited English ability, and cultural difference present in the classroom to the same degree that students and parents did. This comes in part from a positive belief expressed by most teachers and administrators that all children can learn, no matter what their background is.

Latino parents of ELL student mostly approved of the progress their students demonstrated in ELL programs at Blue Ridge, Garrison at Wa-Hi. As our research confirms, parents of ELL students at Blue Ridge were unanimously supportive of the continuation and expansion of the Dual Immersion program. Regardless of their socioeconomic background or English language ability, which often prevent Latino parents from more active involvement in their children's schools, (Gándara and Contreras 2010), ELL parents of Blue Ridge students consistently felt connected to a school that shared information and encouraged them to stay involved in their child's education (Delgado-Gaitan 2004). In order to ensure Latino parents maintain a sense of partnership and remain committed to their child's success, Walla Walla Public Schools are encouraged to implement innovative strategies and expand effective instructional methods to support ELL parents and their children throughout their educational experiences.

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Questions for Further Research

- How effective are the programs for ELL students at the other Walla Walla Public Schools?
- How involved are ELL parents at the other Walla Walla Public Schools?
- How successful is the new Dual Language Immersion program at Wa-Hi (once it has been implemented)?

- What are the long-term academic and career prospects for ELL students, both those who are not involved in a Dual program, and those who go through a K-12 Dual program (once it has been implemented)?
- What are the experiences of non-ELL students enrolled in the district’s Dual Language programs?

The Washington State Legislature

- Support the expansion of Dual Language programs in appropriate populations in Washington State, specifically by protecting and promoting funding for such programs
- Pass the Washington State DREAM Act
- Reconsider the legislative action to mandate English as the official language of Washington State.
- Remove the requirement of passing the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) in order for students to graduate, as it unfairly disadvantages ELL students

Walla Walla Public School District

How are they successful

- They are in the process of expanding the Dual Language Immersion programs in the district, which are positively affecting students and families
- They offer Garrison Night School for adult English education
- They are starting a Diversity Committee, which is intended in part to address issues facing ELL students

How they can move forward

- Expand the Dual Immersion program into all schools in the district which have a population to support the program—specifically; this would involve establishing a program at Green Park Elementary and Wa-Hi and expanding the program at Garrison.
- District should continue to provide adequate funds for programs that benefit ELL students and families.

Blue Ridge Elementary School

How they are successful

- They are in the process of establishing a successful, full Dual Language Immersion program
- They have excellent parent outreach programs and culturally competent family events
- They have a relatively high number of Latino and bilingual teachers
- They demonstrate a clear commitment to the needs of all students, including ELLs
- They provide bilingual para-educators to assist ELL students in the classroom

How they can move forward

- Continue to grow the already effective Dual Language program throughout grades K-5, as is currently the plan
- Continue to prioritize the hiring of more racially and linguistically diverse staff members

Garrison Middle School

How they are successful

- They host Garrison Night School for adult English education

- They have a 6-8 partial Dual Language program, which is a good foundation for a larger Dual program that could accommodate more students
- They have multilingual para-educators to help ELL students
- They have some bilingual teachers

How they can move forward

- Expand the Dual Language program in order to make it more effective and available to more students
- Prioritize the hiring of more racially and linguistically diverse staff members
- Continue involvement and promoting outreach among ELL parents whose children have progressed through the Dual Language program
- Embrace student's cultural and linguistic background by incorporating cultural teachings into the curriculum
- Teachers should show interest in their student's cultural and linguistic background

Walla Walla High School

How they are successful

- They have multilingual para-educators available for ELL students who need extra help
- They provide translators at events such as Parent-Teacher conferences
- There are Latino, Spanish-speaking intervention specialists who work with families
- There is an ESL program established at the school to help students learn English
- They are planning to implement some form of a Dual Language Immersion program next year

How they can move forward

- Find ways to further involve ELL students more, both academically and socially
- Provide activity buses for students involved in after-school programs at Wa-Hi
- The next time that new textbooks are adopted, choose a system that includes books translated into Spanish
- Host bilingual information sessions where parents can learn more about the ELL programs at the school
- Prioritize the hiring of more racially and linguistically diverse staff members
- Embrace student's cultural and linguistic background by incorporating cultural teachings into the curriculum
- Teachers should show interest in their student's cultural and linguistic background
- Give extra aid to students who are new to the country and/or school to ease their transition

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY & APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A: Parent Interview Questions

- I. How have ELL programs impacted the experiences and outcomes of Latino parents in Walla Walla Public Schools?
 - i. How have ELL programs affected the expectations and participation of parents in selected local elementary, middle and high schools with large Latino populations?

- ii. How do parents judge whether enrollment in ELL programs has affected the attitudes and achievement of their children?
- iii. What problems in ELL programs pose the greatest obstacles for partnership between parental and schools? How can the District improve these programs for students both now and in the future?

Personal Background

- Please tell me about where you were born, the place you lived while growing up, and what you remember most about your childhood and young adulthood. Where were you born? How many siblings do you have?
 - How would you rate your own English skills? How did you learn English initially?
 - Do you have any extended family living here?
 - If not, where do they live now? Do you see them often?
 - Where do you work, if you are currently employed?
 - Do you speak English or Spanish at home? Why is learning English important?
 - What obstacles have you encountered while you have learned English?
- Can you please tell me about why your family decided to move to the United States, and how you ended up in Walla Walla?
 - What do you like about your neighborhood?
 - Do many other children from the neighborhood go to same school as your children?
 - What do you enjoy most about living here? Do you miss anything about the place (country, city, town, etc.) where you lived before?
 - Do you have any other family nearby who you see often?

Parental Involvement

- What sort of program has your child been enrolled in, and for how long? How much do you know about what your child learns in his/her ELL classroom? What is your sense of what they do there?
 - In what ways have your child's teachers and principals supported your involvement as a parent?
 - Did you know what your child is learning in school? How did you help them?
- Can you please tell me about your decision to enroll your students in ELL?
 - Can you tell me about your decision to enroll your child in ELL? Was the school supportive when your child began this program?
 - Please tell me about your friendships with other parents whose kids already know English and are not in ELL.
 - What kinds of support, if any, do you get from them for the efforts your kids are making? Have you ever felt distanced from those parents?
 - How do you feel about your children learning in English and Spanish in school?

- Do you wish your child would be taught only in English, or in both Spanish and English? Why, or why not?
- How important is it that your child speak, read, and write in Spanish? Why?
- How important is it that your child speak, read, and write in English fluently?
- Have you ever felt different or not welcome at your child's school? How did it affect you? If you didn't feel welcome, how did it make you feel?
 - How well do your children speak Spanish? How do you and the school help them to retain their abilities? Why is this important to you?
 - Do you wish your children were enrolled classes in English only? Why/why not?
 - Have you or your friends experienced any problems from people who don't understand your culture and language background?
 - What specifically do you think your child's school can do to make it more welcoming to students learning English?
- How has learning in an ELL program benefited your child at school?
 - How do you feel about sending your child to school in an ELL environment?
 - How does your child's teacher and/or school recognize your heritage in the classroom?
 - Do you feel comfortable speaking Spanish with friends or family outside of the classroom?
 - If you started enrolled your child in school over again, would you choose to enroll him/her in a school taught in ELL or English-only?
 - How has ELL experience helped you participate in your child's classroom and school?
- Can you please tell me about your future plans, and what role will learning English play in these goals?
 - What do you envision for your child after high school?
 - Do you feel more confident knowing that your child can speak in Spanish and English equally well?
 - How has the school provided opportunities for your child to utilize your bilingual skills at school and in the community?
 - How do your hope to help your child members through their college or career?

APPENDIX B: Teacher Interview Questions

- **How long have you been working at _____ (School name)? What makes you passionate about ELL education in particular?**
 - How long have you been teaching? What made you want to go into teaching back when you started?

- How has the ELL policy changed during the time that you've been working at the school?
 - How has it changed, and do you see this change as an improvement? Why, or why not?
 - How much experience do you have working at other schools with different ELL policies and practices? How would you compare the policy at this school to other policies you have worked with?
 - What do you think of the ELL policies and practices at other schools in the district? How much interaction do you have with ELL teachers at other schools?
 - About what proportion of the time in the classroom do you speak Spanish? How about the children/students? What effect do you think speaking Spanish/not speaking Spanish has on the ELL and non-ELL students' experiences in the classroom?
- **What kinds of specialized support do you get as an ELL teacher?**
 - What is the greatest challenge for you in working in an ELL classroom?
 - Do you feel that you receive sufficient support from the school administration as well as the district?
 - What kinds of specific support and training does your job require? Do you feel that these are available to you?
 - Who do you see as the major leaders who shape and improve the ELL policies and practices in the Walla Walla schools? Do you feel there is strong leadership? What does strong leadership in this regard involve?
 - How high a priority do you think ELL education is for the school? For the district? What other priorities would you say are treated as more important? Why do you think that is?
- **What do you think changed this year to account for the higher test scores which led the district to get out of the "Program Development" phase?**
 - What are some specific things that you and the other ELL teachers have done differently in the last year that might account for this improvement?
 - Has this improvement in test scores been mirrored by student performance in the classroom? What specific changes have you noticed?
 - What steps towards improving the ELL programs will the schools continue to take now that program development is no longer required?
 - What changes would you make to the ELL policy or practices at your school? Why?
- **How does the school assess the progress of its ELL students?**
 - What is the national assessment like?
 - Do you feel that both the school assessment of ELL students is effective? What about the national assessment? How would you compare these two methods of assessment?
 - Do you think that the assessment methods for your ELL students are fair and accurately reflect their progress in the classroom?

- **Do you feel pressured to “teach to the test”?**
 - How does this affect your practices in the ELL classroom?
 - What effects do you see that high-stakes testing has on the students?
 - Do you think that there should be a required national, standardized assessment of students, specifically ELL students?
 - If so, how do you envision a better assessment method?

- **What do you see as the greatest academic challenge that your ELL students face?**
 - How comfortable do ELL students seem like they feel in the classroom? How important a factor is a student’s comfort level, in terms of how it affects the individual’s ability to learn or participate in class?
 - Given the various backgrounds and experiences of your students, what steps do you take to make students feel more comfortable in class? Do you see this as something that factors into how you teach? Is this a priority for you? How is your process of encouraging ELL students to feel comfortable different from how you encourage non-ELL students in the classroom?

- **What do you consider to be the relative benefits and disadvantages of Sheltered English Immersion vs. Bilingual ELL education?**
 - What is your impression of the general debate about the merits of each style of ELL education?
 - What do you consider to be the best practice for teaching ELL among these varied methods? Why?
 - How important do you think it is for ELL students to receive instruction in Spanish as well as English? Why?

- **What is the role of paraprofessionals in the ELL classroom? How do they help you as the teacher, and how do they improve the classroom experience of ELL students?**
 - What other non-teacher resources are there in the classroom for ELL students?
 - Please describe the role of elbow partners (at Wa-Hi, and possibly at Garrison and Blue Ridge). What effect do you think the presence of student partners has on the collaborative feel of the classroom?
 - What further resources do you think there should be for ELL students in the classroom?

- **What do you feel you do to effectively teach your ELL students? What practices do you think you’ve developed that really help you connect with them and make it easier for you to teach them English/other subjects?**

- **Who is someone who you consider to be a master ELL teacher, and what do they do well? What do you think is the difference between a good ELL teacher and a great one?**

APPENDIX C: Student Interview Questions

- **Please tell me about where you were born, the place you lived while growing up, and what you remember most about your childhood.**
 - Where were your parents born? How many siblings do you have?

- Do your parents and siblings live with you now? Do you have any extended family living here? If not, where do they live now?
- How often do you get to see the people in your family who don't live with you? Can you tell me about the times you get to see your family that you enjoy most?
- Where do your parents work, if they work now?
- How much of the time would you say you and your family members speak English at home? How about Spanish?
- **When did you first come to United States, or settle in Walla Walla?**
 - What, if anything, do you remember about the trip when your family came from Mexico?
 - Could you please tell me about any places you lived in the US before coming to Walla Walla?
 - What do you like about your neighborhood now, and about Walla Walla? How about some things you don't like so much?
 - What do you miss about the places (country, city, town, etc.) where you lived before, if you can remember them?
 - Do you have any other family nearby who you see often?
- **Can you please tell me how do you identify yourself racially and/or ethnicity wise?**
 - Would you say that you feel welcome and comfortable in the United States? Why or why not?
 - Can you give me an example of a time when you have felt like an outsider?
 - Can you explain how your background could lead to disadvantages or advantages? Could you give me any examples?
 - Do you feel like a member of your community? Why or why not?
 - Are there any other factors that you believe affect you positively or negatively?
- **Can you please tell me of any programs you have been enrolled in, and for how long?**
 - How many years have you been in ELL instruction?
 - How do you like learning in both English and Spanish?
 - Do you feel confident in utilizing your Spanish and English language abilities? Why or why not?
 - How would you describe the balance between English and Spanish in your classroom this year?
 - How does that compare to last year or the year before?
 - How well has that been working for you? Do you feel more comfortable in your ELL classes speaking Spanish or English?
 - Have you ever felt different from your other friends who are *not* in ELL? If so, in what ways?
 - How do your parents feel about you learning in English and Spanish in school?

- **Have you ever felt different or not welcome at your school? How has it affected you, both academically and personally?**
 - Why do you think this situation happened?
 - Do you wish you had classes in English only? Why/why not?
 - Have you or your friends experienced any problems from people who don't understand your culture?
 - What do you think your school can do to make it more welcoming to students learning English?

- **How has learning in an ELL program helped you at school?**
 - What do you enjoy most about going to school in an ELL environment?
 - How does your teacher and/or school recognize your heritage?
 - How often do you speak Spanish outside the ELL classroom? Why?
 - If you speak Spanish outside the ELL classroom, how do other teachers respond? Did a teacher or staff member ever tell you not to speak Spanish at school? If so, can you please tell me about how that happened, and why you think it happened?
 - How comfortable do you feel speaking Spanish with friends outside of the classroom? How often would you say you speak Spanish with them?
 - If you started school over again, would you choose to go to school taught in ELL or English-only?[PA8]
 - How has ELL experience helped you, overall, as a student?

- **Can you describe how safe or unsafe you feel at school?**
 - How accepted or unaccepted do you feel by your student peers? Can you give me an example of when you felt this way?
 - Has there ever been a time where you have struggled in school? What did you do to seek help?
 - Would you say that it's a common problem? Can you please explain?
 - Why do think so many students have such a hard time? Please explain.

- **How do you think being an ELL student affects your educational experience?**
 - How do you think a student English proficiency can affect their education? Could you share a personal experience?
 - How do you view other ELL students?
 - How do you think teachers and staff members view ELL students?
 - How do you as an ELL student view other Latinos or students in general?
 - How does the school specifically motivate ELL students to be successful and help them reach a higher education?

- **How would you describe your relationship with the school and/or staff members?**
 - Tell me of a time that you have felt a teacher or staff member has really cared about your education? Please explain.
 - Tell me of time that you have felt that a teacher or staff member has NOT cared about you? Explain.

- Can you tell me of someone who has specifically made a positive impact on your life?
- How do you think your school motivates you to succeed academically?
- How adequate is your school when it comes to providing higher education resources.

- **Can you explain how much influence your parents have on your success?**
 - What are their expectations?
 - How can your parents help you attain your goals or how would you like them to participate?
 - Can you tell me of resources the school offers specifically to Spanish speaking parents?
 - What can the school do to help your parents become more involve?

- **What do you consider a successful student?**
 - Would you consider yourself a successful student?
 - Explain why or why not? What has caused you to feel that way?
 - Are you taking any honor classes?
 - Can you tell me of any extracurricular activities or programs you are in and why you join and how you believe they have helped you?
 - What's your GPA?
 - Have you ever been held back, or are you behind on credits? Why do you think this happened?

- **Does academic success rely more on your own responsibility or on your schools?**
 - Why do you see it that way?
 - How and what do you do to reach your goals and ambitions?
 - Overall how would you rate your ELL teachers? Or about your other teachers?
 - What could teachers do to improve and gain student's trust?
 - What can you do to improve?
 - What kind of resources would you like to see in your school?
 - What can the school do to make it a better place to learn?

- **Do you feel prepared to start middle school/high school/college within the next few years?**
 - What are your plans after high school or ambitions?
 - What do you want to be?
 - How do you plan on doing so?
 - Are you aware of college resources, if so which ones?
 - Do you know what the Dream Act is and how it works?

APPENDIX D: Participant Consent Form in English



WHITMAN COLLEGE

November 3, 2011

Dear Parents:

We are a group of four undergraduate students at Whitman College who are participating in the ongoing research project “The State of the State for Washington Latinos” (www.walatinos.org). This year, we are working in partnership with Walla Walla Public Schools to research the experiences of Latino students, and parents in regards to English Language Learner (ELL) and Cultural Competency programs. This research is critical in determining the needs of Latino students and parents and communicating those needs to the district and community, as well as legislators and elected officials across Washington State.

Our research focuses on the ELL and cultural experiences of Latino students and families at Blue Ridge Elementary, Garrison Middle School, and Walla Walla High School. Our project is one of four being conducted this fall by Whitman students partnered with Diana Erickson, Bilingual Coordinator of the Walla Walla Public Schools, and Bill Erickson, Advisor to Latino Club at Walla Walla High School.

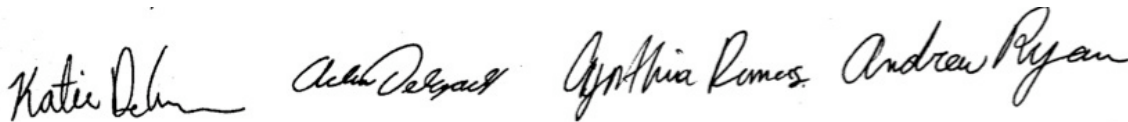
Our study will consist of conducting separate interviews with Latino parents and students. During the student interviews, students will be asked to share their experiences and observations regarding their experience with ELL programs. These interviews will be approximately forty-five minutes long and conducted within the vicinity of a school faculty member. For the parent component, Latino parents will be asked to talk about their experience with ELL programs as they relate to their student’s education. These interviews will be conducted outside of school grounds in a setting selected by the participant.

There is no foreseeable risk if you, your son or daughter participates in these interviews, nor should they experience any discomfort. Your identity, and your child’s identity, in this study will remain confidential. You and your child’s participation in these interviews is voluntary in that you and your child may choose to answer or not answer a question you are asked, and that you and your child may end the conversation at any time. The Internal Review Board of Whitman College has approved this research project, certifying that it will not cause any harm to any participant. We encourage you to have a discussion with your child concerning this study. If you or your child agrees to be part of the interviews, participation will help us meet the needs of Latino students.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study or the interviews, please feel free to contact us at (612) 816-2141 or at decramcb@whitman.edu. You may also contact Paul Apostolidis, a politics professor at Whitman College who oversees this project at (509) 522-4426 or at apostopc@whitman.edu.

We thank you for your time and hope that you and your child participate in this critical project.

Sincerely,



Katie DeCramer, Adam Delgado, Cynthia Ramos and Andrew Ryan

Note: It is not necessary that both parents and students participate, but it is suggested.

*If you are willing to participate and/or willing to allow your child to participate in this project, please sign the permission slip below and give it to your son or daughter. After I receive this completed permission slip, I will then speak to your child about the dates for student interviews. If you, the parent, decides to participate, I will then contact you to set up interview appointments at the place of your choosing.

Consent Form for Participation in “State of the State for Washington Latinos” Study

Note: It is not required for both the parent and the student to participate, but it is encouraged.

Student Participation

I _____ give permission to _____, my son or daughter to participate in the research described above, focused on the ELL experiences of Latino students at Blue Ridge Elementary, Garrison Middle School, and Walla Walla High School.

Parent’s Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Participation

I _____ (Printed Name) _____ (X) agree to participate
or _____ choose not to participate
in the research described above, focused on the ELL experience of Latino students and families at Blue Ridge Elementary, Garrison Middle School, and Walla Walla High School.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Phone Number: _____

Student's Name Printed: _____

APPENDIX E: Participant Consent Form in Spanish



WHITMAN COLLEGE

3 de noviembre, 2011

Estimados padres de estudiantes:

Somos un grupo de cuatro estudiantes de *Whitman College*. Este año, como parte del proyecto de investigación de esta universidad, conocido como “La Situación Actual de los Latinos en el estado de Washington” (www.walatinos.org), estamos trabajando con Diana y Bill Erickson, así como con el sistema escolar público de Walla Walla. Estamos realizando un estudio enfocado en como los programas de ingles, mas conocidos como English Language Learner (ELL), y como la cultura se influye la educación de estudiantes Latinos y sus padres en las escuelas de *Walla Walla High School*, *Garrison Middle School* y *Blue Ridge Elementary*. Este estudio es crítico para determinar las necesidades de los estudiantes y familias Latinos en las escuelas, y también para comunicar esas necesidades con las escuelas de Walla Walla y los legisladores de Washington.

Nuestro proyecto de investigación está enfocada en la experiencia del estudiante Latino y del modo en que la familia influye las experiencias educativas del estudiante. Es importante que comprendamos que hay ambas dificultades y oportunidades dentro el sistema de educación para estudiantes Latinos. Por esta razón, el objetivo de esta investigación es analizar y sugerir maneras de cómo mejorar el sistema para los estudiantes Latinos y sus familias. Este estudio es uno de cuatro en progreso este año por estudiantes de *Whitman College*. Somos socios con Diana Erickson, Coordinador Bilingüe para las escuelas públicas de Walla Walla, y Bill Erickson, Asesor a Club Latino de *Walla Walla High School*.

Este estudio consistirá de entrevistas separadas con padres, estudiantes y empleados. Durante las entrevistas con los estudiantes, se les harán preguntas sobre sus experiencias con los programas de ELL en las escuelas. Las entrevistas durarán aproximadamente cuarenta y cinco minutos y serán conducidas en la proximidad de un miembro de la facultad de la escuela. En las entrevistas con los padres se les preguntara sobre su experiencia con los programas de ELL en cuanto se relaciona a la educación de su hijo(a). Las entrevistas con los padres serán hechas afuera del territorio escolar donde el participante elija.

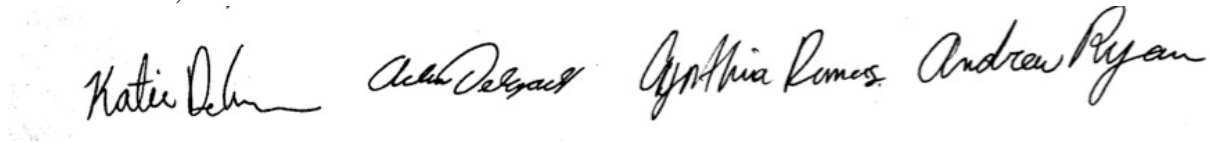
No hay ningún riesgo previsible si usted, su hijo o hija participan en estas entrevistas, ni tampoco le creará ninguna incomodidad. Las identidades de todos los participantes permanecerán anónimas al menos que el participante otorgue permiso para citarlos por su nombre. Participación en las entrevistas es voluntaria y el participante no necesita contestar ninguna pregunta y puede concluir la entrevista en cualquier momento. También debe saber que el Consejo Interno de Revisión (IRB) de la universidad *Whitman College*, ha aprobado este proyecto de investigación, certificando que no le causará ningún perjuicio a ninguno de los participantes. Le animo que hable con su hijo o hija sobre este estudio. Si usted o su hijo(a) está de acuerdo en participar en las entrevistas, nos ayudará estudiar y apoyar a los estudiantes y familias Latinos en las escuelas de Walla Walla.

Si está dispuesto a participar o a permitir que su hijo o hija participe, por favor firme el permiso que está a continuación y déselo a su hijo(a) para que se lo entreguen a Refugio Reyes. Después de recibir el permiso, hablaré con su hijo(a) sobre fechas para las entrevistas. Si usted también decide participar, le contactaré para hacer una cita para la entrevista.

Si ustedes tienen alguna pregunta o preocupación sobre este estudio o las entrevistas, por favor comuníquense con nosotros llamando al teléfono (253) 228-2981 o pueden enviarme un mensaje electrónico a ramosc@whitman.edu. También pueden comunicarse con el profesor Paul Apostolidis quien supervisa estos proyectos. Su número es (509) 522-4426 y su dirección electrónica apostopc@whitman.edu.

Les agradezco por su tiempo y espero que usted y su hijo o hija participen en este proyecto crítico.

Atentamente,



Katie DeCramer, Adam Delgado, Cynthia Ramos and Andrew Ryan

Nota: No es necesario que ambos padres y estudiantes participen pero si sugerido.

Permiso para Participación en

“La Situación Actual de los Latinos en el estado de Washington”

*Por favor firme abajo y devuelva este papel con su hijo(a), si usted va a participar y está dispuesto a que su hijo(a) participe en este proyecto. Después de recibir este papel firmado, hablaré a su hijo(a) para determinar las fechas para la entrevista. Si usted, el padre o la madre, quiere participar, luego le contactaré para coordinar una entrevista en la hora y lugar de su elección.

Parte 1 – Participación Estudiantil

Yo _____ doy permiso para que _____,

(Nombre del padre)

(Nombre del estudiante)

participe en la investigación descrita anteriormente que está enfocada en las experiencias del estudiante con respecto a los programas de ELL en *Walla Walla High School, Garrison Middle School* o *Blue Ridge Elementary*.

Firma del Padre: _____

Fecha: _____

Parte 2 – Participación de Padre

Yo _____ (X) estoy de acuerdo en participar
(Nombre del Padre/Madre)

o _____ (X) no estoy de acuerdo en participar

en la investigación descrita anteriormente que está enfocada en las experiencias del estudiante y la familia con respecto a los programas de ELL en *Walla Walla High School, Garrison Middle School* y *Blue Ridge Elementary*.

Firma del Padre: _____

Número de Teléfono: _____ Fecha: _____

APPENDIX F: Student Interviews and Focus Groups:

Focus Group	Pseudonym	Duration (min)	Language	School	Date	Faciliator
1	Pedro	53:00	Spanish	Wa-Hi	11/17/2011	C. Ramos
	Cecilia	53:00	Spanish			C. Ramos
	Moses	53:00	Spanish			C. Ramos
2	Diana	52:00	Spanish			C. Ramos
	Julio	52:00	Spanish			C. Ramos
	Lucia	52:00	Spanish			C. Ramos
3	Raul	47:00	Spanish	Garrison		C. Ramos
	Albert	47:00	Spanish			C. Ramos
	Rodrigo	47:00	Spanish			C. Ramos
3	Jennifer	37:00	English			C. Ramos
	Oswald	37:00	English			C. Ramos
	Araceli	37:00	English			C. Ramos
	Ana	37:00	English		C. Ramos	
	Nancy	37:00	English		C. Ramos	
	David	37:00	English		C. Ramos	
	Sofia	37:00	English		C. Ramos	
4	Vanessa	35:00	English		C. Ramos	
	Monica	35:00	English		C. Ramos	
	Sergio	35:00	English		C. Ramos	
	Leonardo	35:00	English		C. Ramos	
	Yolanda	35:00	English		C. Ramos	
	Miguel	35:00	English		C. Ramos	
6	Esteban	39:00	English		C. Ramos	
	Teresa	39:00	English		C. Ramos	
	Samantha	39:00	English	C. Ramos		
	Patricia	39:00	English	C. Ramos		
	Alejandro	39:00	English	C. Ramos		
	Diana	39:00	English	C. Ramos		

APPENDIX G: Parent Interviews and Focus Groups:

School	Pseudonym	Duration (min)	Language	Date	Facilitator
Wa-Hi	María Hernandez	140:00	Spanish	11/05/2011	A. Delgado
	Lucas Hernandez	140:00	Spanish	11/05/2011	A. Delgado
Garrison	Lola Ortiz	60:00	Spanish	12/02/2011	A. Delgado
	Sofia Ortega	60:00	Spanish	12/02/2011	A. Delgado
Blue Ridge	Cristina Calderón	45:00	Spanish	12/01/2011	A. Delgado
	Daniela Jiménez	45:00	Spanish	12/01/2011	A. Delgado
	Sofia Ortega	60:00	Spanish	12/02/2011	A. Delgado
	Lola Ortiz	60:00	Spanish	12/02/2011	A. Delgado
	Gloria Vásquez	23:00	Spanish	11/05/2011	A. Delgado

APPENDIX H: Teacher and Administrator Interviews:

Name	Duration (min)	Language	Location	Date	Facilitator
Kim Kelsay	80	English	Wa-Hi	11/03/2011	E. Basham
Berta Herrera Trujo	128	English	Blue Ridge	11/11/2011	E. Basham
Diana Erickson	120	English	Garrison	11/15/2011	E. Basham
Sara Van Donge	67	English	Garrison	11/17/2011	E. Basham
Marit Nierman	70	English	Garrison	11/29/2011	E. Basham
Phyllis Garanzuay	50	English	Blue Ridge	11/15/2011	E. Basham
Marie Spalding	35	English	Garrison	11/17/2011	E. Basham
Gina Yonts	37	English	Garrison	11/18/2011	E. Basham
Kim Doepker	66	English	Blue Ridge	11/28/2011	E. Basham
Grace Ogoshi	50	English	Garrison	11/17/2011	E. Basham
Linda Boggs	73	English	District Office	12/14/2011	E. Basham