The Critical Role of Leadership in Programs Designed for DLLs, PreK—3

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There are currently more than 4.7 million English Learners (ELs) in the US (NCES, 2014). Of the approximately one in five students who speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), over 70% speak Spanish as their native language (García & Frede, 2010). Although more than 60% of all Latino ELs are concentrated in only six states (Arizona, California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois) (Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, & Herwantoro, 2005), several states have witnessed exponential growth in their Latino EL populations over the past several decades (García & Frede, 2010). Meeting the needs of ELs varies widely due to policies (López, McEneaney, & Nieswandt, in press) and teacher preparation requirements (e.g., López, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2013); however, dual language programs have gained traction in part because of their ability to foster bilingualism among native English speaking students.

Dual language programs, also called two-way immersion, two-way bilingual or two-way bilingual immersion, are designed to promote bilingualism by bringing together a group of children who speak English as their native language and a group of children who share a non-English native language. Ideally, dual language classrooms comprise equal numbers of students within these two groups. Dual language programs tend follow one of two models. In the first, referred to as 90:10, 90% of instruction is in the non-English language during the early elementary grades and English is incrementally introduced until a balance in the two languages is reached by the middle elementary grades. In the second, referred to as a 50:50 model, instruction is delivered in the two languages, equally (e.g., half day, alternating days, or alternating weeks). In dual language programs, language learning is integrated with content instruction with goals to

promote bilingualism, biliteracy, academic achievement, and cross-cultural understanding among all students.

In 2000, there were approximately 260 dual language programs in the United States (Wilson, 2011). At the time, the U.S. Secretary of Education announced grants of \$15 million to expand dual language programs to 1,000 over five years (Steinberg, Faas, & Hartocollis, 2000). Riley stated

If we see to it that immigrants and their children can speak only English and nothing more, then we will have missed one of the greatest opportunities of this new century. It is high time we begin to treat language skills as the asset they are. (McQueen, 2000)

Today, there many more dual language programs in the US¹, with the number of programs consistently increasing. Utah, as one of the more recent examples, passed Senate Bill 41 in 2008 that created funding for dual language programs.

The scholarship that has accumulated on dual language programs is robust (see Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010), detailing not only the benefits of achievement for language minority youth, but also benefits for children with diagnosed language impairments (Simon-Cerejido & Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2014) and executive function (Esposito & Baker-Ward, 2013). Implementing dual language programs, however, is not without difficulties. State officials in Massachusetts, for example, have proposed to abandon dual language in a Boston school pointing to low test scores as evidence that the program was not as effective as instruction carried out entirely in English would be (Vaznis, 2014). Scholars have also warned about the

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¹ Although the number of programs has been cited as close to 2,000 (Wilson, 2011), the Center for Applied Linguistics identified 431 in 2009, but also found over 500 self-identifying programs. The list is currently under construction because the programs are in the process of being verified (B. Arias, personal communication, September 22, 2014).

potentially deleterious effects of dual language settings on Latino ELs (Valdés, 1997), as well as on students who are excluded from the programs (Palmer, 2010). Despite the issues, there is evidence "that dual language programs can be an excellent model for academic achievement for both language-minority and majority children" (García & García, 2012, p. 59). What is lacking, however, is evidence on how educational leaders can successfully implement dual language programs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014), which could address the concerns raised by some scholars.

Educational Leadership and Dual Language Programs

Although the accumulating scholarship is consistent with the growing number of dual language programs, the lack of attention to the role of school leaders in the implementation of dual language programs is striking (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). A comprehensive search of scholarship in two of the primary journals dedicated to school leaders resulted in the articles listed in Table 1. Out of only 12 initial articles that included "dual language" as a topic without constraining the year in which the article was published, 9 presented information aimed at fostering school leaders' knowledge and implementation of these programs.

The paucity of information on dual language programs aimed specifically at school leaders is problematic for various reasons. Evidence accumulated through educational leadership research suggests that school leaders are *the* primary agents for school improvement. In part, successful school leaders foster organizational growth by having a clear mission, setting directions, providing professional development, and restructuring and managing the instructional program (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach 1999; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Yet, most leaders find themselves unprepared to meet the needs of the growing sector of ELs (Boscardin, 2005; Capper & Fratura, 2009; Gay, 2010; Ylimaki, 2014). Despite the recommendation by the Center for Applied Linguistics that

schools should "have knowledgeable leadership that promotes equity among groups and supports the goals of additive bilingualism, biliteracy, and cross-cultural competence" (García & Jensen, 2007, p. 37), the lack of attention to the demographic shift in the curriculum that prepares school leaders continues to be identified as one of the reasons leaders face challenges in providing equitable and high quality education for ELs (Dantley and Tillman, 2006; Theoharis, 2007, 2009; Ylimaki, 2011).

The absence of "contextualized understanding (macro or micro) of curriculum leadership" (Ylimaki, 2011, p. 4) contributes to the challenges faced by educational leaders in dual language schools. Nevertheless, school leaders are charged with cultivating language proficiency for all students. As such, identifying the knowledge school leaders must have to successfully implement dual language programs is salient. Given that educational leadership is instrumental in the successful implementation and maintenance of dual language programs (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008), the knowledge about *why* dual language programs are effective must be incorporated into the educational leadership curriculum. In addition to this knowledge, school leaders must also know *how* to successfully implement these programs—particularly in Pre-K through grade 3, which serve as foundational years for the cultivation of bilingualism and biliteracy.

Successful Leadership for Dual Language: Four Critical Aspects

Although there are few studies that point to the role of school leaders in the success of dual language programs, Alanis and Rodriguez (2008) identified four critical aspects that led to the success and sustainability of a dual language program: *knowledgeable leadership*, *commitment to dual language*, *identifying and allocating resources*, and *building capacity*. First among the features was a depth of information about *what* dual language programs are. In their

study, Alanis and Rodriguez highlighted a successful school leader's initiative to attend conferences and read research on dual language programs highlighted not only the absence of this kind of knowledge in the school leader's training, but also the school leader's commitment to the programs—another salient feature of successful leadership. Indeed, it was the school leader who was instrumental in the implementation of the program: "She attended numerous trainings and visited other dual language programs across the state. She also enlisted the help of local university faculty for questions and staff development" (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008, p. 315).

With the knowledge the school leader acquired, she was able to *identify* and *allocate* the necessary resources to support teachers in the implementation of the dual language program—the third salient features of successfully implementing dual language programs. It In addition to the school leader's initiative to acquire knowledge and allocate resources among teachers to implement the dual language program, the school leader also identified ways to build capacity among teachers "by allowing them to implement creative strategies in the classroom and encouraging them to take on leadership roles" (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008p. 316).

In the sections that follow, I expand on the four critical aspects of successful school leadership, and provide examples from the extant research and case studies that involve schools transitioning to dual language programs.

Commitment to and Knowledge about Dual Language Programs. Although there is a paucity of research focused on assessing school leaders' effectiveness in implementing and supporting dual language programs, researchers focused on student outcomes have both defined dual language programs and disseminated the evidence regarding their potential to improve student outcomes (e.g., Lindholm-Leary, 2004/2005), as well as made recommendations on ways to transition to dual language programs and collect data to assess progress (Thomas & Collier,

1997). In addition to this research, Scanlan and López (2012) identified three knowledge areas school leaders need: cultivating language proficiency, ensuring access to high quality teaching and learning, and promoting sociocultural integration. Below is a summary of the knowledge Scanlan and López (2012) assert should be incorporated into the leadership curriculum to meet the needs of ELs.

Cultivating language proficiency. School leaders play the central role in the implementation and perseverance of dual language programs, and at times, are also the very reason for their implementation. As such, school leaders must have an understanding of the different factors that must be considered in these programs such as the demographic profile of the student population, students' backgrounds, and the vision and mission of the school community. Decisions regarding dual language models may also be constrained by localized political, social, and economic forces (Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller, & Frisco, 2009), and this, too, is knowledge school leaders must consider. Despite these constraints, however, Scanlan and López (2012) assert that school leaders must also be clear about the most educationally sound model and make decisions based on research showing the "strength of connecting theory with decisions about program design and the implementation and importance of linking these practices with actual academic outcomes" (p. 80). As such, school leaders optimally approach language proficiency broadly by promoting bilingualism.

Ensuring access to high quality teaching and learning. The educational leadership curriculum is not alone in its insufficient attention to the needs of ELs. A vast majority of teachers—over 70%—also lack the training to be effective with ELs (Ballantyne et al., 2008). In a recent study, López, Scanlan, and Gundrum (2013) examined the relationship between discrete requirements in each state's teacher education programs with 4th grade Latino ELs' reading

outcomes on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. They found that training in English as a Second Language and English Language Development had a marked effect on ELs' achievement (approximately a .40 SD gain for students in states with stringent requirements compared to peers in states with the least stringent requirements). López and colleagues assert that all teachers must have an understanding of the developmental trajectory of language, "as well as how to nurture and support it" (p. 20). Also associated with reading outcomes was the requirement that teachers demonstrate knowledge regarding native language and English content assessment, which has been supported by the extant literature (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Stiggins, 1988, 2002). This knowledge involves understanding the degree to which students' language proficiency influences scores that would otherwise reflect students' understanding of content. To gauge students' understanding, it is important to know how to use accommodations that mitigate the degree to which proficiency is reflected in scores, which includes linguistic modifications that are the most promising in reducing bias (Abedi, Hofstetter, Baker, & Lord, 2001; Abedi, 2002).

Formative Assessment. Despite the importance of understanding of assessment, very few programs require teachers to have this training, and the focus that does exist relies on summative rather than formative assessment (López, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2013). This limits the extent to which teachers can identify students' knowledge, which can inform the instruction that needs to take place. To be effective in supporting teachers in dual language settings, school leaders must possess knowledge about language development and formative assessment. Although school leaders observe teachers' practice to gauge the extent to which they are supporting students' academic growth, teachers need tools to gauge students' needs in classroom contexts and make instructional decisions in response to these needs. Despite the importance of knowing where

students' weaknesses are, there is a paucity of training provided to preservice teachers on formative assessments (Black & Wiliam, 1998), which can have a particularly negative impact for ELs. Indeed, López et al. (2011) assert

...all teachers should know how to assess their students' formatively. With an accurate understanding of students' content knowledge, teachers can adjust instruction and attend to gaps in learning. Certainly, this recommendation is not limited to teachers who work with ELs (Stiggins, 1988) but for teachers of ELs, formative assessment is essential if they are implementing strategies resulting from their knowledge of ESL/ELD.

Formative assessment can be described as "activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged" (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This knowledge is not only absent from most teacher preparation programs, but also those focused on the development of school leaders. Given school leaders' role in identifying needed resources for teachers, knowledge of formative assessment—particularly in Pre-K through grade 3—is salient.

Promoting sociocultural integration. Research on ELs' success often emphasizes that a sense of belonging is an important factor (Scanlan & López, 2012). Notably, another reason dual language programs are considered the solution to traditional methods of providing equitable learning opportunities to ELs is because they are viewed as assets to their peers and nurture a sense of belonging (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Thompson, 2013). As Thompson (2013) explains

Dual-language programs hold appeal for another important reason, as well. Some critics of attempts to equalize opportunities within education via compensatory programs, such as temporary English as a Second Language pull-out programs,

charge that these programs are inadequate because they do not capitalize on or develop the unique abilities of marginalized students. In the case of linguistic minority students, such compensatory programs leave the status quo, in this case the monolingual English norm, unchallenged, while ignoring the valuable bilingual skills that linguistic minority students bring to school. (p. 1267)

School leaders who are aware of the academic and social benefits of dual language, as well as the knowledge teachers must possess to be successful in these programs, are able to commit to these programs. To ensure their continued success, however, school leaders understand how to allocate the necessary resources and build capacity.

Allocating Resources and Building Capacity

School leaders are instrumental in promoting a shared vision, modifying organizational structures to support the school vision, and building capacity in a school by fostering professional growth (Drago-Severson, 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2008). School leaders are most efficacious in setting the direction of the school when they distribute the roles among individuals (Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore, & Hodgins, 2007). These shared roles must focus on the curriculum, instruction, and assessment of students and promoting teachers' professional growth (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).

López, Scanlan, and Proctor (in press) describe a theory of action for a group of twelve schools across the United States that are making the transition to dual language. They summarize the theory of action as:

- Settings are organized to promote bilingualism and biliteracy;
- Formative evaluation on early biliteracy provides teachers valuable information to monitor student progress in early biliteracy skills and then to adjust

instructional practices that will lead to improvements in students' biliteracy outcomes; and

 Teachers and school leaders are supported in their endeavor to learn how to use formative assessment within communities of practice (COP).

COP are groups of individuals who share a common purpose and learn how to pursue this purpose from one another. The concept of COP is grounded in sociocultural learning theory, holding that we learn through interactions with others in enterprises that are of value, as well as through experiences in the world (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). COP have three constituent characteristics: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Through mutual engagement, teachers and school leaders pursue dual language collectively while building capacity within the school and community.

School leaders and Pre-K and kindergarten teachers from the group of schools described by López, Scanlan, and Proctor (in press) participated in training during the spring and early summer of 2013, when schools engaged in several steps to become members of a network to support the transition to dual language (highlighting their commitment to dual language). To gain the prerequisite knowledge, participating teachers and school leaders took part in: (a) book discussions on linguistically responsive teaching (Howard & Sugarman, 2007; Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 2011); (b) webinars on these texts; (c) and two face-to-face professional development sessions: an initial ½ day workshop in April and an extensive 3 ½ day academy in June of 2013. The spring workshop provided a basic overview of dual language programs. The summer academy served as an intensive retreat during which teams from each school participated in workshops on curriculum and instruction, assessment (both formative and summative), and organizational development. During the 2013 – 2014 academic year,

professional development activities continued within a series of webinars on the use of formative assessments in the area of early biliteracy.

Within each school an "Implementation Team" COP formed. At a minimum, this team included several teachers, 1-2 administrators, and an outside-mentor with expertise in dual language schools. Schools were encouraged to also include parent representatives from the various cultural and linguistic backgrounds on the Implementation Team. These individuals are mutually engaged in relationships transforming their school to include a dual language model. Individuals have different roles in this transformation and rely on one another for support and guidance. For most of the teachers and administrators, the dual language program itself presents a new way to think about teaching and learning. For others, such as the mentor, the model is familiar, but the particular school context is novel. Thus, each of these communities of practice looks a little different.

These Implementation Teams developed a *shared repertoire* to accomplish the goal of transforming their school to dual language. This repertoire included the foundational books on dual language that they read, information from the summer academy, and information from the professional development webinars that were ongoing. Thus, information about using formative assessment is part of this shared repertoire, and one that was monitored by school leaders to determine areas that needed support. Moreover, mentors played a coaching role to teachers as they learn incorporate formative assessments in their practice. School leaders play a different role, identifying areas that need support, championing and resourcing the work to support teachers, while not usually bringing direct expertise.

Conclusion

The paucity of evidence focused on the role of educational leaders in the successful implementation of dual language programs, particularly in grades Pre-K through 3, is in part attributable to the absence of this focus in the educational leadership curriculum. As such, it is clear that the research evidence favoring dual language programs that is available must be disseminated among educational leaders through their training and professional development. Specifically, the curriculum for educational leaders must incorporate knowledge about cultivating language proficiency, ensuring access to high quality teaching and learning, and promoting sociocultural integration for ELs (Scanlan & López, 2012).

Research on the kind of knowledge teachers must have to be successful, particularly with ELs, must also be disseminated among school leaders because of the role they play in identifying areas in need of professional development. Whereas a large body of research that can be incorporated into the educational leadership curriculum exists in terms of *what* dual language programs are and their effectiveness in fostering bilingualism and biliteracy, other aspects of research are sparse. The focus of leaders in implementing dual language, particularly in foundational early grades, is missing. Accordingly, future research focused on the ways educational leaders can successfully implement dual language programs, considering the particular needs of Pre-K to grade 3, is needed to inform the field.

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Table 1

Articles in Educational Administration Quarterly and Educational Leadership focused on dual language learners

Authors	Year	Title	Journal, volume,	Focus
Elfers, A. M. & Stritikus, T.	2014	How School and District Leaders Support Classroom Teachers' Work With English Language Learners	issue, pages Educational Administration Quarterly, 50(2), 305-344	Leadership knowledge; organization; distribution of resources for dual language success
Scanlan, M., & López, F.	2012	¡Vamos! How School Leaders Promote Equity and Excellence for Bilingual Students	Educational Administration Quarterly, 48(4), 583-625	Theories and evidence undergirding dual language, as well as other additive, language programs
Ishimaru, A.	2013	From Heroes to Organizers: Principals and Education Organizing in Urban School Reform	Educational Administration Quarterly, 49(1), 3-51	The critical role of shared leadership
Estrada, V. L. Gómez, L, & Ruiz- Escalante, J. A.	2009	Let's Make Dual Language the Norm	Educational Leadership, 66(7), 54-58	Viewing ELs' language as an asset
García, E. E., & Jensen, B.	2007	Helping Young Hispanic Learners	Educational Leadership, 64(6), 34-39.	Strengths and challenges of Latino ELs; rich language environments and dual language programs
Wu, J.	2005	A View from the Classroom.	Educational Leadership, 62(4), 40-44.	Inconsistencies across programs
Hadi- Tabassum, S.	2004/ 2005	The Balancing Act of Bilingual Immersion.	Educational Leadership,	Language separation in

			<i>62</i> (4), 50-55	dual language classrooms
Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P.	2003	The Multiple Benefits of Dual Language	Educational Leadership, 61(2), 61-64	Meeting the needs of ELs; recommendation s for leaders
Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P.	1997	Two languages are better than one.	Educational Leadership, 55(4), 23-26	Meeting the needs of ELs