



Spring 2016

Soleado

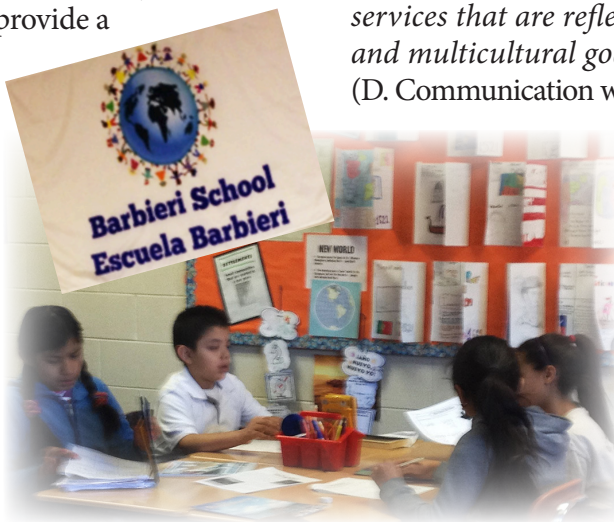
Promising Practices from the Field

Maintaining Equal Status for the Partner Language— Working from the Guiding Principles

by Susan McGilvray-Rivet, Principal—Framingham Public Schools, Massachusetts

A decade ago, the staff of Barbieri Elementary in Framingham, Massachusetts, was dissatisfied with the results of our dual language program model in the lower grades. The first edition of the *Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education* (Center for Applied Linguistics) was just out, and we thought it would provide a framework to guide us in a self-evaluation of our program. We quickly realized that one area for improvement was elevating the status of Spanish in what is now a modified 90:10 two-way dual language program.

Our K-5 elementary is part of the Framingham Public Schools. Our community and school are diverse, but they are located in a state where English is clearly the dominant societal language. We recognized that to achieve full implementation in the area of language equity, we had some work to do—and we're still working.



daily routines (e.g., announcements) reflect bilingualism and multiculturalism).

The *Family and Community* strand also includes language equity in *Principle 2: The program has parent education and support services that are reflective of the bilingual and multicultural goals of the program* (D. Communication with parents and the community is in the appropriate language).

The *Support and Resources* strand focuses on this equity in *Principle 5: Resources are distributed equitably within the program, school and district* (B. Equal resources

exist in both languages within the dual language classroom and in schoolwide facilities (e.g., library, computer lab, parent center, science lab).

We knew that the Guiding Principles were important, but we also knew that in reality, the primary reason to focus on the status of Spanish was the message it sent. The language of power in our society is English. The messages that our Spanish speakers get every day are rarely supportive of who they are. Our job, our mission, is to be sure our students—70% Latino from many different Spanish-speaking countries—hear a different message. They need to hear, see, and feel that their language, their culture, and their identity are as important and as valuable as anyone else's. They need to know they have a gift, a gift they will share with their English-speaking friends. Seeing the elevated status

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First, we looked closely at the areas where language equity is addressed in the Guiding Principles: *Strand 5:—Program Structure*, *Strand 6—Family and Community*, and *Strand 7—Support and Resources*. In the *Program Structure* strand, language equity is addressed in *Principle 2: The program ensures equity for all groups* (B. The program promotes linguistic equity, and E. Whether the dual language program is a whole-school program or a strand within a school, signs and

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of Spanish at school, our students internalize the message of their value. Our English-speaking students must see the acquisition of Spanish as a necessity, not a luxury. And for all students, we must be committed to high levels of proficiency in Spanish.

Here are some of the ways we have turned this goal into a reality in our school environment, in our hiring practices, and through testing and assessment.

School Environment

In our school environment, students see and hear both languages everywhere. All signage in our school is written either in Spanish only or bilingually. Our school's mission statement is always presented bilingually and is posted in the main office.

La misión de la escuela Barbieri es preparar a nuestros estudiantes para que se conviertan en ciudadanos globales exitosos. Los desafiamos para que logren su potencial y les enseñamos el valor de las diferencias culturales, económicas y de aprendizaje con énfasis en el bilingüismo y la alfabetización de dos idiomas.

The mission of Barbieri School is to prepare our students to become successful global citizens. We challenge them to reach their academic potential and teach them the value of cultural, economic and learning differences with an emphasis on bilingualism and biliteracy.

We have a schoolwide positive behavior program, and each morning, the *estudiantes de la semana* from the previous week say the pledges over the loud speaker, with a different grade level assigned to each day. The languages in which we say the Pledge of Allegiance and the Barbieri School pledge alternate daily. Our school song (*Vamos a Barbieri*), was written by one of our staff members, also a parent, and carries a message of pride in bilingualism.

Absolutely everything that goes home from the school must be in both languages and must go out at the same time. As principal, I send home a brief weekly newsletter informing parents of what's happening in the school, coming events, announcements, and reminders or suggestions. I write it in both languages (proofread by a native Spanish speaker) and we have it translated into Portuguese, as well, for about 10 of our families. Our PTO has its own translators and they send everything to me to be proofread. We pay close attention to the

Vamos a Barbieri/Let's Go to Barbieri

*Hay un lindo lugar
para estudiar
en el pueblo donde yo vivo.
Donde hay respeto,
aprender es mi reto.
Donde juego con mis amigos.*

Coro:

*Vamos, vamos a Barbieri,
Donde esfuerzo mi mente, con toda mi gente,
Vamos, vamos a Barbieri,
Mi escuela bilingüe que vale por dos.*

Learning's the key
to be all we can be
in this special place that we care for.
With respect and love
we can be so proud of
all the effort we share so we learn more.

Chorus:

Let's go, let's go to Barbieri,
Where I open my mind and the people are kind,
Let's go, let's go to Barbieri,
To our bilingual school where we care for our friends.
Let's go!

quality of all translations, as a poor translation or incorrect Spanish does not send a positive message.

Our bilingual staff allows us to be consistently bilingual in our interactions with families and community. Assemblies, school events, PTO meetings, our website, Facebook page, Connect Ed messages, parent information nights—all are bilingual. Our school library and our leveled reading library contain almost as many titles in Spanish as in English. We continue to work on the quality of Spanish reading material in our classroom libraries. This year, we started a little free library in the lobby of our school. We are finding that both Spanish- and English-speaking parents are using it frequently, taking books home, and bringing others in when they have finished reading.

Staff is encouraged to use Spanish among themselves and with the children in informal settings such as recess, hallway conversations, and in the office. Non-bilingual staff understand the importance of elevating the status of Spanish, the instructional expectations of dual language programs, and why Spanish is used in informal settings.

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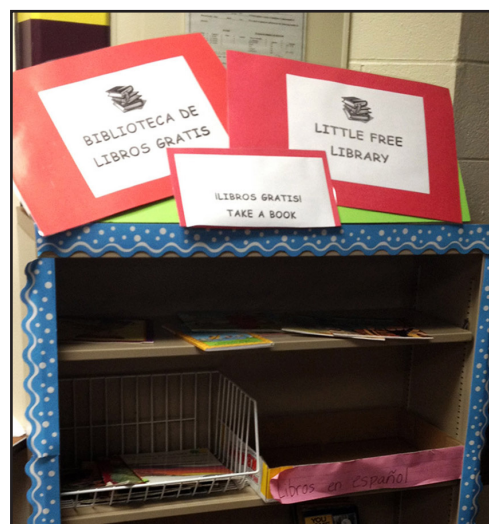
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Hiring Practices

In our school, we have worked hard over the years to hire bilingual staff. The principal and assistant principal, secretary, guidance counselor, social workers, psychologist, speech therapist, special educators, custodians, and cafeteria staff—in addition to the two-way teaching staff—are all bilingual. Many of these are native Spanish speakers and, like many of our students, hail from various parts of Latin America and Spain. This diversity of Spanish language models enriches the Spanish instruction. It also creates a natural environment for staff to serve as bilingual role models. If children see staff who look like them and their families and hear important adults in their lives speaking Spanish, they place a higher value on Spanish proficiency.

Finding high quality, bilingual staff is not easy—it requires commitment and tenacity. This past year when we needed to hire a behavior specialist, central office administrators joked that finding a bilingual candidate with the necessary skills and training would be like finding a unicorn. That was just the challenge we needed to be persistent. Our efforts were rewarded when we hired not only a native Spanish speaker, but also a male—a rare occurrence in an elementary school!

Even with many native Spanish speakers in the school, we must all be aware of when and how we use each language. Language equity means more than following the time in each language required for our program model. Do we use Spanish or English to correct behavior? Which is used when greeting children or bidding them farewell at the end of the day? How are the languages used during instruction? Is Spanish used as much during English instruction as English is used during Spanish instruction—for bridging purposes of course, *not for translation*. These questions are always present in our thinking, and the use of language is consistently discussed in grade level, committee, and staff meetings. All curricular conversations also include this language focus, as we work to adhere closely to our modified 90:10 program model: 80:20 in kindergarten and first grade, 70:30 in second, and 50:50 in the third through fifth grades. Both in the classroom and out, it's all too easy for the balance to swing to English or for unintentional messages to be given to students and families. We must be constantly vigilant about our use of language.



The Little Free Library, with titles in Spanish and English, is well used by families.

Testing and Assessment

What you measure and report is what is valued and considered important. I acknowledge that our assessments in Spanish will never carry the weight or value of the PARCC or whatever mandatory assessment your state uses, but assessing students in Spanish and reporting the results sends a strong and important message, as well as informing the program assessment. We use the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* (BAS) to assess reading levels at the lower grades and the *Rigby* for the upper grades (the BAS is not yet available beyond level N). We use *Clay's Observation Survey* and the *Estrellita* assessment for kindergarten and first grade Spanish literacy. The mid- and end-of-module assessments for *Engage New York*, our math program, are in Spanish. We use the *Apranda* in third and fifth grades for achievement testing and are piloting the CAL (Center for Applied Linguistics) *Early Language Listening and Oral Proficiency Assessment* (ELLOPA) at the kindergarten level, with the hopes of continuing with the *Student Oral Proficiency Assessment* (SOPA) for grades 2-5.

Elevating the status of Spanish has been an ongoing process for us—one we continually re-evaluate. We are always looking at ways to improve in this area, but most important is that we hold it as a priority in our school. It's time for a new program evaluation with the Guiding Principles, and we look forward to learning where that will take us!

The Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education, 2nd Edition (Howard, E. R., Sugarman, J., Christian, D., Lindholm-Leary, K. J., & Rogers, D., 2007, Center for Applied Linguistics), is available for purchase at www.cal.org or download (PDF) at the Resource Center, www.dlenm.org.

